

# synecdoche, n.

**Pronunciation:** Brit. /sɪˈnɛkdəki/ , U.S. /səˈnɛkdəki/

## Forms:

α. ME **sinodoches**, ME **synadochie**, ME **synodoche**, ME **synodoches**, 15 **sinecdochine**, 15–16 **senechdoche**, 15–17 **senecdoche**, 15–17 19– **synechdoche**, 16 **sinecdoche**, 16 **synechdochie**, 16 **syneckdoche**, 16 **synegdoche**, 16– **synecdoche**.

β. 15 **sinecdoch**.

**Etymology:** < classical Latin *synecdochē* (in post-classical Latin also *synodoche* (13th cent. in British sources)) < Hellenistic Greek *συνεκδοχή* understanding one thing with another < *συν-* [syn- prefix](#) + ancient Greek *ἐκδοχή* receiving from the hands of another, succession, in Hellenistic Greek also taking in a certain sense, interpretation ( < *ἐκ-* (see [ex- prefix](#)<sup>2</sup>) + *δοχή* receptacle < an ablaut variant (o -grade) of the base of *δέχεσθαι* to receive: see [pandect n.](#)<sup>1</sup>), after *συνεκδέχεσθαι*, lit. ‘to take with something else’.

Compare Middle French *synecdoche* (1541; 15th cent. as *synodoche*; French *synecdoque*), Catalan *sinècdoque* (1696), Spanish *sinécdoque* (1580 or earlier; formerly also as †*sinédoque*), Portuguese *sinédoque* (15th cent. as †*sinodoche*), Italian *sineddoche* (14th cent.), and also German *Synekdöche* (1536 as †*synecdocha*).

The form [sinecdochine](#) is after the accusative forms classical Latin *synecdochen* , Hellenistic Greek *συνεκδοχήν* . Forms in *-es* are inferred nominatives from the Latin accusative form; compare the forms *syncopis* , *syncopin* at [syncope n.](#) and discussion at that entry.

## Grammar and Rhetoric.

A figure of speech in which a more inclusive term is used for a less inclusive one or vice versa, as a whole for a part or a part for a whole. Formerly sometimes used loosely, or explained differently.

a1450 (►a1397) *Prol. Old Test.* (Harl. 1666) in [Bible \(Wycliffite, L.V.\)](#) (1850) xii. 47 Bi a figure clepid synodoches [a1450 Harl. 6333 synadochie], whanne a part is set for al, either al is set for oo part.

- 1475 (1425) tr. R. Higden [Polychron.](#) (Harl.) (1872) IV. 263 Criste was seide to be in the..herte of therthe thre daies and iij nyghtes by a figure callede sinodoches [L. *synecdochen*, v.r. *sinodochen*], after Seynte Austyn, sythe Criste reste not in his sepulcre but by xlti howres.
- 1548 R. Hutten tr. J. Spangenberg [Sum of Diuinitie](#) F viij b, The subtyll cauillacyons, whereby they fayne Sinecdochine
- 1551 T. Wilson [Rule of Reason](#) sig. Sij, Therefore, where as I saie, the church doth not erre, it is called *Synechdoche*, that is to saye, when the party is vsed for the whole [*sic*].
- 1602 J. Marston [Hist. Antonio & Mellida](#) v. sig. H2, I did send for you to drawe me a deuise, an *Imprezza*, by *Sinecdoche* a *Mott*.
- 1612 J. Mason [Anat. Sorcerie](#) 56 By these two blessings (to wit) the sunne & raine meaning al other earthly benefits whatsoever, by the figure synechdoche.
- 1660 Bp. J. Taylor [Worthy Communicant](#) i. iii. 58 It is by a Metonymy and a Sacramental Manner of speaking, yet it is also a synecdoche of the part for the whole.
- 1731 J. Trapp in tr. Virgil [Wks.](#) I. 11 (*note*) *Aristas*, by a Metonymy of the Adjunct, for Harvests; and Those by a Synecdoche, for Years.
- 1828 [Southern Rev.](#) Aug. 36 (*note*) It is no objection to the distinctive meaning and derivation of ‘rhyme’ and ‘rhythm’, that we find the former used by a synecdoche, for poetry generally, for verse.
- 1872 W. Minto [Man. Eng. Prose Lit.](#) Introd. 15 Metaphors, personifications, synecdoches and metonymy in almost every sentence.
- 1900 R. J. Drummond [Apost. Teaching](#) viii, This ordinance was frequently by synecdoche spoken of as the Breaking of Bread.
- 1930 [Jrnl. Royal Statist. Soc.](#) 93 237 Naturally a man who could combine a synecdoche and a metalepsis with intent to deceive would be capable of anything.
- 1991 [N.Y. Rev. Bks.](#) 28 Mar. 14/1 He creates a tale of three cities and their interaction..as a synecdoche for the larger patterns of urban policy.
- 2012 [Church Times](#) 27 Jan. 33/1 A dysfunctional family a synecdoche for a dysfunctional society.