

# Anecdote, Imagery, Epiphany, and Rant: Voice in the Essay



Contemporary essays and speeches reveal these four elements that are crucial to developing and analyzing voice in an essay. DIDLS – diction, images, details, language and sentence structure – will be used as a strategy for analysis.

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## Finding Your Voice

### **an·ec·dote** ( 'a-nik-"dOt ) **n.**

1. a usually short narrative of an interesting, amusing, or biographical incident 2. entertaining and often oral account of a real or fictitious occurrence. 3. personal story, tale, yarn, fable  
[syn. sketch, story, tale, narrative; joke ]

### **im·ag·ery** ( 'i-mij-rE, -mi-j&- ) **n.**

1. a vivid representation; graphic description 2. figurative language, esp. a metaphor or simile  
3. mental images; *a picture in the mind*  
[syn. invention, fancy; tropes, metaphors, similes, analogies ]

### **e·pi·ph·a·ny** ( i-'pi-f&-nE ) **n.**

1. a usually sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature or meaning of something  
2. an intuitive grasp of reality through something (as an event) usually simple and striking 3. an illuminating discovery; a revealing scene or moment  
[syn. revelation, insight, understanding; transcendence ]

### **rant** ( 'rant ) **n.**

1. a bombastic extravagant speech 2. noisy, excited, or declamatory manner; vehement expression 3. wild or uproarious merriment  
[syn. rage, rave, scold, nag, harangue ]

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**folly**

**vice**

# THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WORDS

by Hugh A. Mulligan

London—As the novelist Henry James said one day to the novelist Edith Wharton, “Summer afternoon—summer afternoon. To me, those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language.”

He repeated them, of course, because James was never a man to use two words where 2,000 would suffice.

There is a story told of Henry James’ ordering dinner at the Cafe Royal, London’s elegant Edwardian restaurant on Regent Street, and overwhelming the waiter with his compulsion to improve every paragraph, substitute more precise synonyms and pyramid phrases into elaborate teetering constructions:

“Bring me, fetch me, carry me, serve me, supply me with, in other words, and I hope you are following me, bear forth from the kitchen when it is cooked, scorched, grilled, I should say broiled, a large, considerable, meaty as opposed to fatty chop.”

T.S. Eliot said James had “a mind so fine no idea could violate it.”

So when James, from among the millions of words he wrote proceeds to choose two—summer afternoon—as the most beautiful in the language, one must pause. Personally, as far as two lovely sounding words go, I like reading letters that begin “Enclosed check . . .”

In Depressions days, “free lunch” had a nice ring to it, while [in the summer of 1981] millions would have been thrilled to hear a major league umpire intone “Play ball.”

The magic words “I will” transformed Lady Diana Spencer into a princess when spoken in the presence of the Archbishop of Canterbury. In Rome, there is great joy, white smoke in the sky over St. Peter’s and a jubilant tumbling of bells when a senior cardinal totters out on the balcony to pronounce the two Latin words “Habemus Papam.” We have a Pope.

The heart of a divorcee and her lawyer bound with unbounded bliss when a judge judiciously decrees “Decree granted,” just as a felon’s heart leaps up to hear a jury foreman announce “Not guilty.”

In Ireland, the words “God bless,” spoken by a publican, a newsdealer or even a public servant over the telephone, invest with a personal benediction that follows you about for the rest of the day. In no other country do you hear those words uttered with more warmth and sincerity.

“War Over” would be the happiest headline one could read in Ulster, Lebanon, El Salvador, wherever man’s most senseless pursuit is still pursued.

To me, a Pullman porter’s cry of “All aboard” and a ship’s loudspeaker barking “All ashore” will always spell adventure and excitement.

“Rave reviews” are words to live by for an actress or an actor, except in the case of Ronald Reagan, who probably preferred “landslide victory.”

“No smoking” seems to have gained in importance in recent years, while “Pay Raise,” “No Tipping,” “Bar Open,” and

“Year Round” remain high on the list of most everyone’s all-time favorites.

“Believe me” are probably the most doubted words in the English language, while “May Day,” “drop dead,” “please remit,” and “get lost” rank among the most disheartening.

The lovely lilt of “Spanish waters” inspired one of John Masefield’s most euphonic poems:

Spanish waters! Spanish waters!

You are ringing in my ears  
Like a slow sad piece of music  
From the gray forgotten years.

“Christmas Time!” To Charles Dickens: “That man must be a misanthrope indeed in whose breast something like a jovial feeling is not roused by those words.”

They say Samuel Goldwyn’s two favorite words were “Impossible.”

At the close of every column, always a time for shouting “huzzah,” “ole,” “egad,” and other solo expressions of exultation, we always append the words “end it” to let the editors know another handcrafted, precision-built, finely-tuned cargo of prose is coming their way.

Lovely words: End it! ❗

*Hugh A. Mulligan is a columnist and special correspondent for the Associated Press. “The Most Beautiful Words” is reprinted with permission of Associated Press. Copyright © 1982.*

## Write Now . . .

• Which two words are most beautiful to you? Make them the title of your own short column. Then tell why the words are special. If no words come to mind at once, try this: Think of significant moments in your life. What words do you associate with those moments—“Happy Birthday”? “You Won”? “Holiday Break”?



## Memories Aren't Made of This

### MY TURN/ERIC ZORN

Something terrible has happened to popular music in this country. Over the last few years it has touched its finger to the Tar Baby of television and now finds itself unable to pull away. Consider the following depressing news:

- There are 200 regular television programs in America that feature nothing but the combination of film clips and rock songs.

- Warner Amex's Music Television (MTV), the cable network based solely on these music videos, hits nearly 20 million homes and is the hottest basic cable operation in history.

- The marriage of music and television has proved to be so popular that it is credited with almost singlehandedly snapping the recording industry out of a four-year slump in 1983 and changing the face of popular music by introducing the new bands and new sounds radio wouldn't touch.

- Today's pop-music groups find that they must produce video versions of their songs if they wish to survive. Many are making video-cassette albums that customers buy instead of records.

- Really cool people now speak of "seeing" the latest songs as opposed to hearing them. More than a majority of MTV viewers recently sampled say they "play back" the video in their minds when they hear a song on the radio.

This all indicates strongly that music videos are no passing fad. They're here to stay, just like TV itself when it first came along in the late 1940s to add pictures to the old radio dramas.

I find this all terribly sad. The proliferation of music videos threatens to produce an entire generation of people who will all but miss out on the sublime, extremely personal element of music.

What nobody has bothered to point out in the course of all this hoopla attendant upon rock video is that music has always had a visual element of a sort: the images, people and places that the listener sees in his mind's eye when a favorite song or symphony comes on.

One of the truly great but least understood components of music is the way it can tap long-forgotten emotions and unlock unconscious memories. Many feelings and old visual impressions are so deeply hidden in the recesses of the mind that sometimes only

the sudden surprise of a melody can lead the way to them.

Special songs can act for us like the tea and madeleine cake in Marcel Proust's huge novel, "A Remembrance of Things Past," as a simple spark that sets off a blaze of recollections.

"Mr. Tambourine Man" by Bob Dylan brings back the long walks my best buddy and I used to take on the beach near his mom's cottage on Cape Cod; "Mrs. Robinson" by Simon and Garfunkel conjures up the kitchen in the first house my parents ever owned; "Amie" by Pure Prairie League reminds me of springtime in the old

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### Rock video threatens to rob us of the special images we conjure up to go with a song.

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college dormitory and my first train trip to Chicago.

When I hear someone fiddle "Lamp-lighter's Hornpipe," I think of a particular section of Altgeld Street near DePaul University where I first heard that tune on tape; and "Seasons in the Sun" by Terry Jacks, a terrible song, brings on the delightful memory of a young woman named Martine for whom I yearned so tragically in 11th grade I could scarcely move myself to speak to her.

For Martine, wherever she is, it is safe to say "Seasons in the Sun" has entirely different associations. That's the great thing about music. No matter how many millions of people bought that record or heard it on the radio, there will always be something about its sarmy lyrics that will be special only to me.

Not every song still has this power, however. I've already had a few of them ruined when, in idle moments, I have lingered too long in front of a TV set showing music videos. When, for example, I hear Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean," the first, overwhelming image I get in my mind is of the lithe little Mr. Jackson capering around and pointing his lithe little finger every which

way. No good memories. No bad memories. Nothing but the exact same memories that everyone else will have of this song for decades to come.

Who can hear "Suicide Is Painless," the theme song from "M\*A\*S\*H," and think of anything else but helicopters? Who can hear "Yellow Submarine" by the Beatles and not be flooded with thoughts of the brightly colored Peter Max cartoons that splashed through the movie of the same name?

**Antiseptic Music:** What we're really talking about here is the wholesale substitution of common, shared memories for individual memories; a substitution that ends up robbing us of pieces of our own lives. The personal side of music is steadily being replaced by the corporate side, so that the associations and mental pictures that go along with songs for the MTV generation don't relate to *their* lives, but to the lives of the people who conceived the videos.

We're left with popular music that has the same distant, antiseptic feel as network television: you may enjoy it, but you must admit that it doesn't, in any meaningful way, feel as though it *belongs* to you. The combination of sight and sound not only promotes passive viewing, but serves to depersonalize the entertainment offered.

Young lovers today, I suspect, do not elbow each other excitedly when an old Duran Duran clip comes on the TV screen and coo, "Look, darling, they're showing our video."

And that's depressing news: future generations will be locked into the prefabricated memories of a false musical experience, restricted by monolithic visual interpretations of songs that pre-empt and defy the exercise of individual experience, motion and memory.

Videos will not be the death of pop music, radio or the old rock groups that never thought to film themselves moving their lips to the words. But ultimately the insidious combination of film and song will sap away some of the great power of music and change how we feel about it in a very fundamental way.

I wonder how many of us are really ready for that?

*Zorn is a feature writer for the Chicago Tribune.*

JAMES TABOR

## CONCLUSIONS

### *Epiphany*



JOE McDONALD/BRUCE COLEMAN

IT SEEMED AS THOUGH I had been pushing through green walls forever, leaves tickling my neck, smooth forest gliding past my eyes, thoughts fused by insects' hiss and heat smell and fatigue until I became fluid, moving forward not step by step but as liquid falls through space, softly and unresisted.

My foot fell onto softness. Not the quiescent softness of mud, or of leaves, but living softness that drove a death-message from some ancient cave in my brain. Fear registered, but what my brain had retained through the millennia, my body had lost. And so my leg lost its race with the snake's striking head.

It was not what I had ever imagined a copperhead strike would be. Not at all like the smack of a fist, or a furious lover's slap, or even the smart crack of my father's punishing belt. This copperhead struck between knee and ankle, the bare inner flesh of my left leg, with an eerie gentleness. But he delivered a second strike with the snapping speed of an electric spark.

I discovered that I was suspended in midair, floating between sky and earth, and within that suspension another occurred, so that between two beats of my heart a vast and luminous space expanded. Still aloft, I looked down at the snake and saw it not from a distance but as though it were filling my eyes, the bright head crackling with light, forging a gleam that annealed the circuits of memory into permanence. I saw the primitive eyes perceiving me as death, and the knowledge of death came to me, in turn, through them as light through windows.

I saw lines there, the lines of our years — mine and the copperhead's — which had driven us together at that moment in that spot, and I understood that there was nothing coincidental or random about the meeting, nothing meaningless, nothing unnatural. Forever after, if I lived (and the possibility that I might not seemed real there, in deep wilderness, low on water, with only skeletal knowledge of snakebite treatment), I would never walk through woods in the same way.

And the luminous, floating moment held even more than that. I would never feel the pulse of my own life the same way, as an endless succession of beats driving me ineluctably forward, invulnerable, without notice of time or loss. I recognized the shattering possibility of interruption and saw, as clearly as I saw the snake's flame bright head, that just as there was nothing of chance in this meeting, neither was there any certainty in what until then had seemed a pure progression. That progression — my life — was no less sacred and precious than any life, but as fragile and dispensable as the flowers and ants my boots had so often crushed.

Then I landed, flailing for balance, fighting my pack's wild gyration, seeing the snake's head whipping back and forth like a severed pneumatic hose.

Oddly, there had been no pain. I awaited it, as we wait for pain to make its slow journey from stubbed toe to brain. But there was none, because clamped in the snake's jaws was a tiny rodent — snake lunch — that he had been swallowing when I crushed down on his delicate spine. That dead animal had cushioned the fangs, preventing envenomation, saving me from two sure strikes.

Then light dissolved and time contracted around me once again. The disgorged chipmunk flew free and the copperhead coiled defensively, watching me through its jewel eyes.

My legs softened then and I sat down on the rocks and stared at the snake as it stared at me. We both waited for movement, but the snake was much more accustomed to waiting than I. Eventually I stood and walked away. After ten steps I looked back, and the snake was gone. For a moment I stood, wondering. Adrenalin still sparkled in my blood and thoughts skittered too quickly. The snake was gone, and that seemed wrong.

But it was not really gone, nor would it ever be. For now, in certain moments, I remember the slow blink of ancient eyes, the flickering tongue, and feel him moving within me, flowing gently toward warmth. ☉

James Tabor, *Backpacker's* senior editor, won the 1981 O. Henry Award for his short story, "The Runner."

## **THE WORDS**

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I BITE INTO THEM, I MELT THEM DOWN . . .  
I LOVE WORDS SO MUCH . . . THE  
UNEXPECTED ONES. . . FOR GREEDILY OR  
STALK UNTIL, SUDDENLY, THEY DROP. . .  
VOWELS I LOVE . . . THEY GLITTER LIKE  
COLORED STONES, THEY LEAP LIKE  
SILVER FISH, THEY ARE FOAM, THREAD,  
METAL, DEW. . . I RUN AFTER CERTAIN  
WORDS. . . THEY ARE SO BEAUTIFUL THAT I  
WANT TO FIT THEM ALL INTO MY POEM  
. . . I CATCH THEM IN MIDFLIGHT, AS THEY  
BUZZ PAST, I TRAP THEM, CLEAN THEM,  
PEEL THEM, I SET MYSELF IN FRONT OF  
THE DISH, THEY HAVE A CRYSTALLINE  
TEXTURE TO ME, VIBRANT, IVORY,  
VEGETABLE, OILY, LIKE FRUIT, LIKE  
ALGAE, LIKE AGATES, LIKE OLIVES. . .  
AND I STIR THEM, I SHAKE THEM, I DRINK  
THEM, I GULP THEM DOWN, I MASH  
THEM, I GARNISH THEM, I LET THEM GO  
. . . I LEAVE THEM IN MY POEM LIKE  
STALACTITES, LIKE SLIVERS OF POLISHED  
WOOD, LIKE COALS, PICKINGS FROM A  
SHIPWRECK, GIFTS FROM THE WAVES . . .  
EVERYTHING EXISTS IN THE WORD . . .

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FROM *MEMOIRS* BY PABLO NERUDA (NY: PENGUIN, 1974), P. 53.

# I Killed Your Cat

*Condensed from  
NEW YORK TIMES*

JOHN M. ALLEN

I KILLED YOUR CAT early this morning. You know, the small black-and-white one, sleek-furred and friendly—about three months old, I'd say. As it lay there on the grass, wet, bleeding, its eyes open, whining gently, I folded part of a newspaper over its head, then took an old walking stick and bashed it as hard as I could. Four times, just to make sure. It broke the stick.

I thought you'd want to know, because it was your cat, and you must have loved it very much, for it always walked right in front, crisscrossing—in a trusting, brushing sort of way, trying to get picked up and petted. At least I thought you *ought* to know how it died. How two dogs in the neighborhood had cornered the cat by our front door, fought with it, and finally chewed through its backbone.

Oh, it fought hard, and the catshrieks of terror woke me up. But the dogs were too big, your cat too small, too young. So I did what I could to put it out of its misery. I had no choice.

But you did. Every year, literally scores of summer people leave their cats by our house—hoping, I'm sure, that they'll find homes with the dairy farmer across the way. And most of them do, for a while. But cats procreate, and soon there are too many. And then one day there are none. I've never asked the farmer what happens to them—I don't want to know.

And maybe you didn't want to know that I bludgeoned your kitten. All you wanted to remember was the delight your children had with it, all summer long, as it grew from an

eyes-closed fluff to hesitant staggerer to pretend hunter. I'm sure you wanted to remember it curled up on the end of a bed, with the shaft of sunlight warming its sweet-smelling fur.

But you can't remember only that, you know. For we can't escape the responsibility of our acts. You enjoyed your cat, and your kids enjoyed your cat. And somehow you were able to divorce that enjoyment from your responsibility. You may have taught your children love and playfulness and the wonder of nature. But you also taught them to throw away something that finally wasn't convenient, that didn't fit in with your plans, or your landlord's plans.

You taught them to pass a responsibility on to others—who were unknowing and unwilling. You convinced yourself—because you wanted to—that your kitten would be happy and well-fed on fresh cow's milk. I'm sure you even rationalized yourself into believing that it would be better off, really, with all those other cats.

No, I'm only talking about one cat, your cat, which must have been loved because it didn't go to the barn but across the road to our home to play with our children. And that's where the dogs bit through its spinal column. And where I had to bash its head in to relieve its agony. Because you really didn't care enough. Or you wouldn't have done it.

You wouldn't even have accepted the responsibility in the first place. If you had really cared.

## Dead, Needlessly.

By John M. Allen

*New York Times (1857-Current file); Oct 9, 1976; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times*  
pg. 19

# Dead. Needlessly.

By John M. Allen

PAWLING, N.Y.—I killed your cat early this morning. You know, the small black-and-white one, sleek-furred and friendly—about three months old, I'd say. I laid it down on the front section of yesterday's newspaper and folded a part of the paper over its head—the white side up—and then I took an old walking stick and I bashed the paper over the head as hard as I could. Four times, just to make sure. It broke the old walking stick.

I thought you'd want to know, because it was your cat, and you must have loved it very much, for it always walked right in front, crisscrossing—in a trusting, brushing sort of way, trying to get picked up and petted.

At least I thought you ought to know how it died. How two dogs in the neighborhood, one a golden retriever, the other a red setter, had cornered the cat by our front door, fought with it, and finally chewed through its backbone.

Oh, it fought hard and the cat-shrieks of terror woke me up. But the dogs were too big, your cat too small, too young. So I did all I could think of to put it out of its misery, as it

lay there on the grass, wet, bleeding, feces protruding, from fear or bite pressure or both, its eyes open, whining gently. I had no choice.

But you did. Every year, literally scores of summer people leave their cats by our house—hoping, I'm sure, that they'll find homes with the farmer across the way. And most of them do, for a while. I've seen as many as 30 cats over there, left off by their loving owners who felt, I'm sure, that a dairy farm in the foothills of the Berkshires was a perfect spot for a cat. In a way it is. For a while. But cats procreate, and soon there are too many. And then one day there are none, and I've never asked the farmer what happens to them. I care, but I don't want to know.

And maybe you didn't want to know that I bludgeoned your kitten. All you wanted to remember was the delight your children had with it, all summer long, as it grow from an eyes-closed fluff to hesitant staggerer to pretend hunter. I'm sure you wanted to remember it curled up on the end of a bed, with the shaft of sunlight warming its sweet-smelling fur.

But you can't remember only that, you know. Because life is a continuum, and we can't escape the responsibility of our acts. You enjoyed

your cat, and your kids enjoyed your cat. And somehow you were able to divorce that enjoyment from your responsibility. You may have taught your children love and playfulness and the wonder of nature. But you also taught them to throw away something that wasn't convenient, that didn't fit in with your plans, or your landlord's plans.

You taught them to pass a responsibility on to others—who were unknowing and unwilling. You convinced yourself—because you wanted to—that your kitten would be happy and well fed on fresh cows' milk. I'm sure you even rationalized yourself into believing that it would be better off, really, with all those other cats.

No, I'm only talking about one cat, your cat, which must have been loved because it didn't go to the barn but across the road to our home to play with our children (and our three cats). And that's where the dogs bit through its spinal column. And where I had to bash its head in to relieve its agony. Because you really didn't care enough. Or you wouldn't have done it.

You wouldn't even have accepted the responsibility in the first place. If you really had cared.

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John M. Allen is assistant managing editor of *Reader's Digest*.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Piece being Revised \_\_\_\_\_

### Changes Made Chart

Type of Change	WORD	PHRASE	SENTENCE	*THEME
DELETION				
SUBSTITUTION				
ADDITION				
REORGANIZATION				

Based on research by Nancy Comley et al.  
\*Theme = An Extended Statement of One Idea

In the space below, explain your choices as a writer.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Changes Made Chart

Type of Change	WORD	PHRASE	SENTENCE	THEME
DELETION	1	2	3	4
SUBSTITUTION	2	4	6	8
ADDITION	3	6	9	12
REORGANIZATION	4	8	12	16

Based on research by Nancy Comley et al.  
\*Theme = An Extended Statement of One Idea  
On the back, explain your choices as a writer.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Based on research by Nancy Comley et al.  
\*Theme = An Extended Statement of One Idea  
On the back, explain your choices as a writer.

# Using the Cubing Organizer

## Purpose

Cubing is an image organizer. It can help students do the following

- Remember a subject
- Study different aspects of a subject
- Collect information for writing
- Revise writing by “re-seeing” a subject

## How to Use

Complex subjects may be difficult to grasp. Tell students that one way to understand a complex subject is to look at it from several different perspectives. That is what Cubing attempts to do. Display the organizer and tell students that each illustration represents a different side of the same cube. Now work through an example. Show students a reproduction of a famous work of art and tell them to imagine that they have been assigned an essay about it. Write the name of the work of art at the top of the organizer. Then, starting with the cube in the upper left, ask students to describe the work of art. Write their responses on the lines under Describe it. Continue with the rest of the faces of the cube. As you work through the example, point out that students should modify the organizing questions beside each box to fit their subject. For example, when studying a piece of art, the questions next to the Argue for or against it box might be changed to Is it a masterpiece or not? or Effective or ineffective?

Now explain to students that the Cubing procedure is not limited to use with concrete subjects. Cubing can be used to understand concepts as well. Suggest a concept such as freedom and have students discuss how they would use the organizer with this subject. Ask if they would need to modify any of the questions and why.

Return to your original example and ask students to tell how they would use the organizer as the basis for writing. Elicit that students could choose some or all of the information on the organizer to use in an essay. Point out that their comments under each face of the cube provide details for paragraphs about the subject.

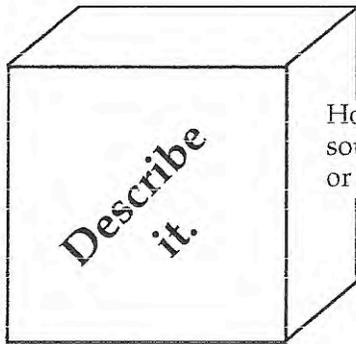
Encourage students to use the Cubing procedure to understand and remember complex subjects and as a tool for planning their own writing. Once you have demonstrated how Cubing works students can work independently or in small groups on their own activities.

## Suggested Activities

1. Divide students into collaborative learning groups of three or four for an in-depth study of a literary work. Assign each group a different poem, short story, or novel that the entire group is familiar with. Have students discuss the work from the different perspectives suggested on the organizer, recording the results of the discussion on their own individual organizers. Remind students that they may need to revise some of the questions printed on the organizer.
2. Assign a descriptive essay about an important person, place, or holiday. Instruct students to cube the subject in preparation for writing about it. Then have them select the information they want to use in their essays and number the cubes in the order they will write about them. Have students write their first drafts and then compare these drafts with the organizers. Ask if there are any details or paragraphs they want to rearrange. After revising and proofreading, have students prepare final drafts. Display their completed work on a bulletin board side by side with their Cubing organizers.
3. Use the Cubing organizer as a *revision* tool – in the strictest sense of the word. Have the student re-see a written essay and take those new perspectives into account in revising.

# Cubing

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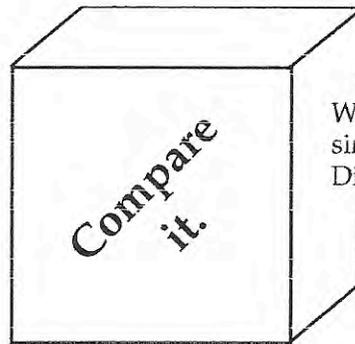


How does it look,  
sound, smell, feel,  
or taste?

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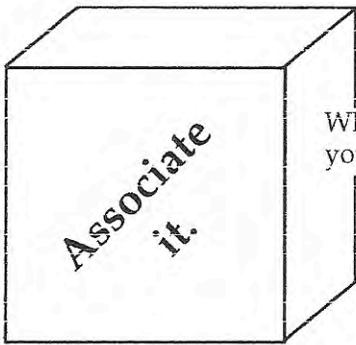


What is it  
similar to?  
Different from?

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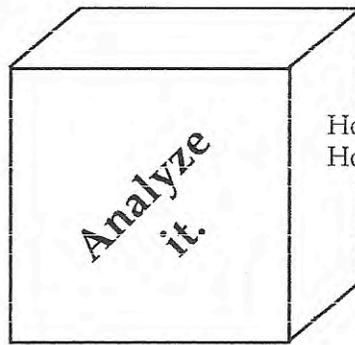


What does it make  
you think of?

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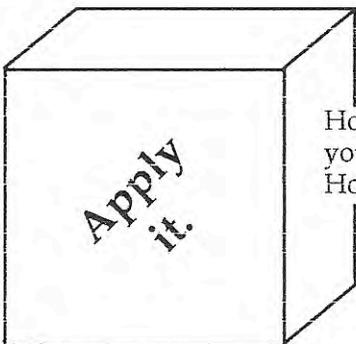


How is it made?  
How does it work?

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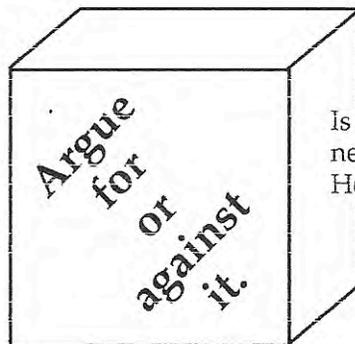


How does it fit into  
your experience?  
How can you use it?

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Is it a positive or a  
negative?  
Helpful or harmful?

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## WHAT IS AN ESSAY?

It is any brief composition in **prose** that undertakes to discuss a matter, express a point of view, or persuade us to accept a **thesis** on any subject whatever. The **essay** discusses its subject in non-technical fashion, often with a liberal use of such devices as **anecdote**, striking illustration, and humor to augment its appeal.

Essays are not always called essays. They could be called editorials, letters, speeches, sermons, or even hidden as part of a play or novel. An essay is determined by style, purpose, structure, and so on. It is almost impossible to define essay in such a way that all essays can be classified adequately.

### WHAT'S A FORMAL ESSAY?

The formal essay is relatively impersonal: the author writes as an authority, or at least as highly knowledgeable, on the subject and expounds it in an ordered and thorough fashion. Examples will be found among the serious articles on current topics and issues in any of the magazines addressed to a thoughtful audience -- *Harper's*, *Scientific American*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and so on. **Formal** essays almost always follow a rigid structure -- the statement of thesis, development of supporting details, etc. -- the five-paragraph essay, for example. The purpose of most **formal** essays is exposition or explanation; whereas the purpose of an **informal** essay may well be entertainment or merely the expression of a personal opinion.

Qualities which make an essay **formal** include:

1. Seriousness of purpose.
2. Dignity.
3. Logical organization.
4. Length.

### WHAT'S AN INFORMAL ESSAY?

In the **informal essay** (or "familiar" or "personal essay"), the author assumes a tone of intimacy with his audience, tends to be concerned with everyday things rather than with public affairs or specialized topics, and writes in a relaxed, self-revelatory, and often whimsical fashion. Accessible modern examples are to be found in any major periodical, usually labelled as editorials or essays. Some famous writers of informal essays include Francis Bacon (**aphoristic essay**), Joseph Addison and Richard Steele (periodical **essay**), and Charles Lamb (**personal essay**).

Qualities which make an essay **informal** include:

1. The personal element: self-revelation, individual tastes and experiences, confidential manner.
2. Humor: sarcasm, satire, parody.
3. Graceful style: quotation, figures of speech.
4. Rambling structure: narrative, conversational.
5. Unconventionality or novelty of theme.
6. Freshness of form: virtually unlimited.
7. Freedom from stiffness and affectation.
8. Incomplete or tentative treatment of topic.

One way of discussing essays is to describe them -- as best one can. The following are terms which can be used to consider the author's approach, purpose, and subject matter:

### **10 CHARACTERISTICS OF ESSAYS** (often any one essay may include several of these)

1. **Personal:** Tone is light, deals with author or his world. Interpretive, familiar, conversational. Has characteristics of a monologue.
2. **Formal:** Tone is serious; so is subject matter. Tendency for language to be stylized, grammatically perfect. Intended to educate and arouse.
3. **Descriptive:** Calls for close observation. Contains emotional, evocative, concrete details.
4. **Narrative:** Gives a picture of author colored by personality. Often a thread of story broken by digressions.
5. **Expository:** A process of enumeration, definition, comparison, contrast, illustration, analysis, cause and effect.
6. **Didactic:** Intended to teach, instruct or clarify some point for the reader.
7. **Character Sketch:** Portraying either individual traits, type, class or rank of person with a moral purpose.
8. **Biographical:** Thumbnail sketch often with anecdotes. Written by close associate of subject.
9. **Philosophical:** Also called "reflective." Deals with author's personal views on life.
10. **Critical:** Dealing with some form or piece of art, literature or government. May contain humor or satire.

### **HOW DOES AN ESSAYIST CREATE EMPHASIS?**

Emphasis is a principle of rhetoric dictating that important elements be given important positions and adequate development whether in the sentence, the paragraph, or the whole composition. The more important positions are, naturally, at the beginning and end. But **emphasis** may also be secured:

1. By repetition of important ideas.
2. By the development of important ideas through supplying plenty of specific detail.
3. By simply giving more space to the more important phases of the composition.
4. By contrasting one element with another since such contrasts focus the reader's attention on the point in question.
5. By careful selection of details so chosen that subjects related to the main idea are included and all irrelevant material excluded.
6. By climactic arrangement.
7. By mechanical devices such as capitalization, italics, symbols, and different colors of ink.

## The Man in the Water

As disasters go, this one was terrible, but not unique, certainly not among the worst on the roster of U.S. air crashes. There was the unusual element of the bridge, of course, and the fact that the plane clipped it at a moment of high traffic, one routine thus intersecting another and disrupting both. Then, too, there was the location of the event. Washington, the city of form and regulations, turned chaotic, deregulated, by a blast of real winter and a single slap of metal on metal. The jets from Washington National Airport that normally swoop around the presidential monuments like famished gulls are, for the moment, emblemized by the one that fell; so there is that detail. And there was the aesthetic clash as well—blue-and-green Air Florida, the name a flying garden, sunk down among gray chunks in a black river. All that was worth noticing, to be sure. Still, there was nothing very special in any of it, except death, which, while always special, does not necessarily bring millions to tears or to attention. Why, then, the shock here?

Perhaps because the nation saw in this disaster something more than a mechanical failure. Perhaps because people saw in it no failure at all, but rather something successful about their makeup. Here, after all, were two forms of nature in collision: the elements and human character. Last Wednesday, the elements, indifferent as ever, brought down Flight 90. And on that same afternoon, human nature—groping and flailing in mysteries of its own—rose to the occasion.

Of the four acknowledged heroes of the event, three are able to account for their behavior. Donald Usher and Eugene Windsor, a park police helicopter team, risked their lives every time they dipped the skids into the water to pick up survivors. On television, side by side in bright blue jumpsuits, they described their courage as all in the line of duty. Lenny Skutnik, a 28-year-old employee of the Congressional Budget Office, said: "It's something I never thought I would do"—referring to his jumping into the water to drag an injured woman to shore. Skutnik added that "somebody had to go in the water," delivering every hero's line that is no less admirable for its repetitions. In fact, nobody had to go into the water. That somebody actually did so is part of the reason this particular tragedy sticks in the mind.

But the person most responsible for the emotional impact of the disaster is the one known at first simply as "the man in the water." (Balding, probably in his 50s, an extravagant mustache.) He was seen clinging with five other survivors to the tail section of the airplane. This man was described by Usher and Windsor as appearing alert and in control. Every time they lowered a lifeline and flotation ring to him, he passed it on to another of the passengers. "In a mass casualty, you'll find people like him," said Windsor. "But I've never seen one with that commitment." When the helicopter came back for him, the man had gone under. His selflessness was one reason the story held national attention; his anonymity another. The fact that he went unidentified invested him

with a universal character. For a while he was Everyman, and thus proof (as if one needed it) that no man is ordinary.

Still, he could never have imagined such a capacity in himself. Only minutes before his character was tested, he was sitting in the ordinary plane among the ordinary passengers, dutifully listening to the stewardess telling him to fasten his seat belt and saying something about the "no smoking sign." So our man relaxed with the others, some of whom would owe their lives to him. Perhaps he started to read, or to doze, or to regret some harsh remark made in the office that morning. Then suddenly he knew that the trip would not be ordinary. Like every other person on that flight, he was desperate to live, which makes his final act so stunning.

For at some moment in the water he must have realized that he would not live if he continued to hand over the rope and ring to others. He *had* to know it, no matter how gradual the effect of the cold. In his judgment he had no choice. When the helicopter took off with what was to be the last survivor, he watched everything in the world move away from him, and he deliberately let it happen.

Yet there was something else about the man that kept our thoughts on him, and which keeps our thoughts on him still. He was *there*, in the essential, classic circumstance. Man in nature. The man in the water. For its part, nature cared nothing about the five passengers. Our man, on the other hand, cared totally. So the timeless battle commenced in the Potomac. For as long as that man could last, they went at each other, nature and man; the one making no distinctions of good and evil, acting on no principles, offering no lifelines; the other acting wholly on distinctions, principles and, one supposes, on faith.

Since it was he who lost the fight, we ought to come again to the conclusion that people are powerless in the world. In reality, we be-

lieve the reverse, and it takes the act of the man in the water to remind us of our true feelings in this matter. It is not to say that everyone would have acted as he did, or as Usher, Windsor and Skutnik. Yet whatever moved these men to challenge death on behalf of their fellows is not peculiar to them. Everyone feels the possibility in himself. That is the abiding wonder of the story. That is why we would not let go of it. If the man in the water gave a lifeline to the people gasping for survival, he was likewise giving a lifeline to those who observed him.

The odd thing is that we do not even really believe that the man in the water lost his fight. "Everything in Nature contains all the powers of Nature," said Emerson. Exactly. So the man in the water had his own natural powers. He could not make ice storms, or freeze the water until it froze the blood. But he could hand life over to a stranger, and that is a power of nature too. The man in the water pitted himself against an implacable, impersonal enemy; he fought it with charity; and he held it to a standoff. He was the best we can do.

—By Roger Rosenblatt



Courage in the line of duty: Windsor rescues a passenger

Rosenblatt, Roger. "The Man in the Water." *Time* (25 January 1982), p. 86.

# The Man in the Water

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special in any of it, except death, which, while always special, does not necessarily bring millions to tears or to attention. Why, then, the shock here? Question asked  
**2** Perhaps because the nation saw in this disaster something more than a mechanical failure. Perhaps because people saw in it no failure at all, but rather something successful about their makeup. Here, after all, were two forms of nature in collision: the elements and human character. Last Wednesday, the elements, indifferent as ever, brought down Flight 90. And on that same afternoon, human nature—groping and flailing in mysteries of its own—rose to the occasion. Cliche?

**3** Of the four acknowledged heroes of the event, three are able to account for their behavior. Donald Usher and Eugene Windsor, a park police helicopter team, risked their lives every time they dipped the skids into the water to pick up survivors. On television, side by side in bright blue jumpsuits, they described their courage as all in the line of duty (Lenny Skutnik), a 28-year-old employee of the Congressional Budget Office, said: "It's something I never thought I would do"—referring to his jumping into the water to drag an injured woman to shore. Skutnik added that "somebody had to go in the water," delivering every hero's line that is no less admirable for its repetitions. In fact, nobody had to go into the water. That somebody actually did so is part of the reason this particular tragedy sticks in the mind. So Main Point

**4** But the person most responsible for the emotional impact of the disaster is the one known at first simply as "the man in the water." (Balding, probably in his 50s, an extravagant mustache.) He was seen clinging with five other survivors to the tail section of the airplane. This man was described by Usher and Windsor as appearing alert and in control. Every time they lowered a lifeline and flotation ring to him, he passed it on to another of the passengers. "In a mass casualty, you'll find people like him," said Windsor. "But I've never seen one with that commitment." When the helicopter came back for him, the man had gone under. His selflessness was one reason the story held national attention; his anonymity another. The fact that he went unidentified invested him

with a universal character. For a while he was Everyman, and thus proof (as if one needed it) that no man is ordinary. Bring point home bread

**5** Still, he could never have imagined such a capacity in himself. Only minutes before his character was tested, he was sitting in the ordinary plane among the ordinary passengers, dutifully listening to the stewardess telling him to fasten his seat belt and saying something about the "no smoking sign." So our man relaxed with the others, some of whom would owe their lives to him. Perhaps he started to read, or to doze, or to regret some harsh remark made in the office that morning. Then suddenly he knew that the trip would not be ordinary. Like every other person on that flight, he was desperate to live, which makes his final act so stunning. Suspense - from ordinary to exceptional

**6** For at some moment in the water he must have realized that he would not live if he continued to hand over the rope and ring to others. He had to know it, no matter how gradual the effect of the cold. In his judgment he had no choice. When the helicopter took off with what was to be the last survivor, he watched everything in the world move away from him, and he deliberately let it happen. Choice



Courage in the line of duty: Windsor rescues a passenger

**7** Yet there was something else about the man that kept our thoughts on him, and which keeps our thoughts on him still. He was there, in the essential, classic circumstance. Man in nature. The man in the water. For its part, nature cared nothing about the five passengers. Our man, on the other hand, cared totally. So the timeless battle commenced in the Potomac. For as long as that man could last, they went at each other, nature and man; the one making no distinctions of good and evil, acting on no principles, offering no lifelines; the other acting wholly on distinctions, principles and, one supposes, on faith.

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Clincher

4 Main Point - PROOF 3 Free (of 4) Specific Examples 2 Thesis Paragraph 4 Descriptive Comparison

allusion  
 5 Personalized  
 6 Crisis - Moment of Choice Presented  
 7 Return to Revealed Thesis / Comparison  
 8 Opposed Detail Under the VALUE  
 9 Removal of Reveal: Thesis Restated



# What's Wrong With Black English

MY TURN/RACHEL L. JONES

William Labov, a noted linguist, once said about the use of black English, "It is the goal of most black Americans to acquire full control of the standard language without giving up their own culture." He also suggested that there are certain advantages to having two ways to express one's feelings. I wonder if the good doctor might also consider the goals of those black Americans who have full control of standard English but who are every now and then troubled by that colorful, grammar-to-the-winds patois that is black English. Case in point—me.

I'm a 21-year-old black born to a family that would probably be considered lower-middle class—which in my mind is a polite way of describing a condition only slightly better than poverty. Let's just say we rarely if ever did the winter-vacation thing in the Caribbean. I've often had to defend my humble beginnings to a most unlikely group of people for an even less likely reason. Because of the way I talk, some of my black peers look at me sideways and ask, "Why do you talk like you're white?"

The first time it happened to me I was nine years old. Cornered in the school bathroom by the class bully and her sidekick, I was offered the opportunity to swallow a few of my teeth unless I satisfactorily explained why I always got good grades, why I talked "proper" or "white." I had no ready answer for her, save the fact that my mother had from the time I was old enough to talk stressed the importance of reading and learning, or that L. Frank Baum and Ray Bradbury were my closest companions. I read all my older brothers' and sisters' literature textbooks more faithfully than they did, and even lightweights like the Bobbsey Twins and Trixie Belden were allowed into my bookish inner circle. I don't remember exactly what I told those girls, but I somehow talked my way out of a beating.

**'White Pipes':** I was reminded once again of my "white pipes" problem while apartment hunting in Evanston, Ill., last winter. I doggedly made out lists of available places and called all around. I would immediately be invited over—and immediately turned down. The thinly concealed looks of shock when the front door opened clued me in, along with the flustered instances of "just getting off the phone with the girl who was ahead of you and she wants

the rooms." When I finally found a place to live, my roommate stirred up old memories when she remarked a few months later, "You know, I was surprised when I first saw you. You sounded white over the phone." Tell me another one, sister.

I should've asked her a question I've wanted an answer to for years: how does one "talk white"? The silly side of me pictures a rabid white foam spewing forth when I speak. I don't use Valley Girl jargon, so that's not what's meant in my case. Actually, I've pretty much deduced what people mean when they say that to me, and the implications are really frightening.

It means that I'm articulate and well-versed. It means that I can talk as freely

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For many blacks,  
standard English is  
not only unfamiliar,  
it is socially  
unacceptable.

---

about John Steinbeck as I can about Rick James. It means that "ain't" and "he be" are not staples of my vocabulary and are only used around family and friends. (It is almost Jekyll and Hyde-ish the way I can slip out of academic abstractions into a long, lean, double-negative-filled dialogue, but I've come to terms with that aspect of my personality.) As a child, I found it hard to believe that's what people meant by "talking proper"; that would've meant that good grades and standard English were equated with white skin, and that went against everything I'd ever been taught. Running into the same type of mentality as an adult has confirmed the depressing reality that for many blacks, standard English is not only unfamiliar, it is socially unacceptable.

James Baldwin once defended black English by saying it had added "vitality to the language," and even went so far as to label it a language in its own right, saying, "Language [i.e., black English] is a political instrument" and a "vivid and crucial key to identity." But did Malcolm X urge blacks to take power in this country "any way y'all

can"? Did Martin Luther King Jr. say to blacks, "I has been to the mountaintop, and I done seed the Promised Land"? Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and James Baldwin did not achieve their eloquence, grace and stature by using only black English in their writing. Andrew Young, Tom Bradley and Barbara Jordan did not acquire political power by saying, "Y'all crazy if you ain't gon vote for me." They all have full command of standard English, and I don't think that knowledge takes away from their blackness or commitment to black people.

**Soulful:** I know from experience that it's important for black people, stripped of culture and heritage, to have something they can point to and say, "This is ours, we can comprehend it, we alone can speak it with a soulful flourish." I'd be lying if I said that the rhythms of my people caught up in "some serious rap" don't sound natural and right to me sometimes. But how heartwarming is it for those same brothers when they hit the pavement searching for employment? Studies have proven that the use of ethnic dialects decreases power in the marketplace. "I be" is acceptable on the corner, but not with the boss.

Am I letting capitalistic, European-oriented thinking fog the issue? Am I selling out blacks to an ideal of assimilating, being as much like whites as possible? I have not formed a personal political ideology, but I do know this: it hurts me to hear black children use black English, knowing that they will be at yet another disadvantage in an educational system already full of stumbling blocks. It hurts me to sit in lecture halls and hear fellow black students complain that the professor "be tripping dem out using big words dey can't understand." And what hurts most is to be stripped of my own blackness simply because I know my way around the English language.

I would have to disagree with Labov in one respect. My goal is not so much to acquire full control of both standard and black English, but to one day see more black people less dependent on a dialect that excludes them from full participation in the world we live in. I don't think I talk white, I think I talk right.

*Jones is a sophomore at Southern Illinois University and a free-lance writer.*

# NOT WHITE, JUST RIGHT

I believe the debate over Ebonics is flawed; to succeed kids need to master standard English

BY RACHEL L. JONES

**I**N DECEMBER OF 1982, NEWSWEEK PUBLISHED A MY TURN column that launched my professional writing career and changed the course of my life. In that essay, entitled "What's Wrong With Black English," I argued that black youngsters need to become proficient in standard English. While the dialect known as black English is a valid part of our cultural history, I wrote, success in America requires a mastery of communications skills.

Fourteen years later, watching the increasingly heated debate over the use of black English in struggling minority urban school districts, I can't help but offer my own experience as proof that the premise is greatly flawed. My skill with standard English pro-

ly for writing that column. He was biracial, and said that all his life his peers had teased him for "talking proper, for wishing [he] was *all white*." He said he was frustrated that so many black kids believed that speaking articulately was a white characteristic.

He thanked me so often it was almost unnerving. I hung up the phone in a sort of daze. Something I had written, communicated from my heart, had touched him so deeply he had to reach out to me. It brings tears to my eyes remembering it; I related to him so well.

I, too, had been ridiculed as a youth for my proper speech. But I had lots of support at home, and many poor urban black youths today may not share my advantages. Every afternoon my eight older brothers and sisters left their schoolbooks piled on every available surface, so I was poking through "The Canterbury Tales" by age 8. My sister Julie corrected me every time I used "ain't" or "nope." My brother Peter was a star on the high-school debate team. And my mother, Eloise, has one of the clearest, most resonant speaking voices I've ever known. Though she was a poor housekeeper when I was growing up, she was articulate and plain-spoken.

Knowing the price that was paid for me to develop my abilities, it's infuriating to hear that some young blacks still perceive clear speech as a Caucasian trait. Whether they know it or not, they're succumbing to a dangerous form of self-abnegation that rejects success as a "white thing." In an age of backlash against affirmative action, that's a truly frightening thought.

To me, this "whitewashing" is the crux of the problem. Don't tell me that calling Ebonics a "bridge" or an "attempt to reach



because he'd clipped the column and used it in a class he'd taught.

Recently, a professor from Brigham Young University requested permission to record the material on a tape used for blind students. But perhaps the most humbling experience of all occurred in 1991, when I was on fellowship in Chicago and received a phone call from a 20-year-old college student. He had just read the essay in one of his textbooks and, on impulse, dialed directory assistance, seeking my name. Because the column was written in 1982, when I'd been a student in Carbondale—and Chicago wasn't my hometown—there was no reason for him to have found me; I could have been anywhere in the world.

We talked for about an hour that night. He thanked me profuse-

pelled me from a life of poverty and dead ends to a future I could have scarcely imagined. It has opened doors for me that might never have budged an inch for a poor black girl from Cairo, Ill. It has empowered me in ways I can't begin to explain.

That empowerment still amazes me. The column, one that Ralph Waldo Emerson might have described as "a frank and hearty expression of what force and meaning is in me," has assumed an identity of its own, far beyond what I envisioned. It has been reprinted in at least 50 college English texts, anthologies and writing course books. I still have a scrapbook of some of the letters that poured in from around the country, from blacks and whites, overwhelmingly applauding my opinion. An editor in Detroit said he recognized my name on a job-application letter

children where they are" will not deepen this perception in the minds of disadvantaged young blacks. And though Oakland, Calif., school administrators have amended their original position on Ebonics, it still feels like a very pointed political statement to me, one rooted in the ongoing discussions about socioeconomic justice and educational equity for blacks. As much as I respect the cultural foundations of Ebonics, I think Oakland trivializes these discussions and stokes the fires of racial misunderstanding. Sen. Lauch Faircloth may have been too hasty in calling the Oakland school board's plan to introduce Ebonics "political correctness gone out of control," but he's hardly to be condemned for raising the flag of concern.

When immigrants worldwide fight to come to the United States, many seeking to gain even the most basic English skills, claiming a subset of language for black Americans is a damning commentary on our history of inequity and lack of access to equal educational opportunities in this country. Frankly, I'm still longing for a day when more young blacks born in poverty will subscribe to my personal philosophy. After a lifetime of hard work to achieve my goal of being a writer, of battling racism and forging my own path, I've decided that I really don't care if people like me or not. But I demand that they *understand* me, clearly, on my own terms. My mastery of standard English gave me a power that no one can take away from me, and it is important for any group of people hoping to succeed in America. As a great-granddaughter of slaves, I believe success is my birthright.

As I said back in December of 1982, I don't think I "talk white, I think I talk right." That's not quite grammatically correct, but it's a blessing to know the difference.

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JONES is a national correspondent for Knight-Ridder newspapers and president of the Journalism and Women Symposium.

# The Washington Post

## Happiness Springs Eternal

by Art Buchwald

Thursday, December 7, 2006

A lot of people want to know: What is happiness?

Obviously, what makes one person happy doesn't necessarily make another person happy. It is my opinion that age plays an important part. I'm in the senior citizen bracket, so my happiness quotient of "feeling good" is different from that of my children and grandchildren.

This is what makes me happy:

When my doctor says I passed all my medical tests with flying colors.

When the dentist tells me I have no cavities.

Sitting in my lounge chair in front of the TV set.

Someone making me popcorn and hot chocolate in front of a log fire, but I don't have to bring in the logs.

An evening in bed with a good book. (My book.)

A Visa card bill informing me they made a mistake in my favor.

Any ailment I have that is covered by Medicare.

A parking place.

Enough money in my pension account to let me spend four months in Florida.

Not having to go to a cocktail party for someone I don't know (or a wedding, bar mitzvah or any occasion where I have to travel outside of the city).

Playing poker and winning the pot by bluffing -- one of my big highs.

A new electronic toy (digital camera, iPod or a computer that's immune to viruses).

Any music-free restaurant.

As you can see, it doesn't take much to make me happy. I'm extremely happy when I get a phone call from my son or daughters.

Happiness is somebody else cutting my lawn.

In the winter, it's a fur hat, earmuffs and a heavy jacket. (And not losing a glove.)

A good night's sleep.

Remembering where I put my house keys.

Someone calling me back when I've left a "call me" message.

A grandson who offers to clean the snow off my driveway and also fix my computer.

And the list goes on:

A dream of being one of the richest people in the world, and giving my money to Bill Gates.

Loving my neighbor as much as I love myself -- provided he doesn't have a barking dog.

Telling war stories (true or not true) at the local bar with someone else buying the drinks.

I am happiest when not shaving, if I don't have to go out.

It gives me great pleasure to send e-mails to the president, Congress and TV talking heads, telling them what dummies I think they are.

Winning an argument with a friend.

What makes me really happy? Things that remind me of my youth: comfort food, such as chicken soup with matzo balls, meat loaf, spaghetti with tomato sauce, bread pudding, tapioca, cream soda and anything I can buy at a delicatessen. I'm happy just writing about these things.

Nothing in politics makes me happy, though I must confess I do have fantasies about Saddam Hussein. I know it is not politically correct, but I picture him buried completely in the sand, with only his head above ground. Someone, not me, pours maple syrup on him, and all the embedded ants in the desert are notified.

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*So, happiness is more than a warm puppy?*

# Columbus

by Leo Rosten

From the "They Made Our World Series," *Life* magazine  
What 1000 words can say. . .

<sup>1</sup>He strained his eyes for some sign of land, some omen from God --who, he was sure, was guiding him. They had left Spain ten long weeks ago. But where were they now -- the Indian Ocean? the China Sea? nowhere in a chartless sea? No map could guide him. His sailors had mutinied. If land were not sighted soon, he would turn the three ships back. Somewhere, somehow, some shred of land must be near. Land? No -- far more than land: fabled India, or Cipangu (Japan), or China itself!

<sup>2</sup>For ten years he had begged the kings of Portugal and Spain to finance this fantastic mission: to sail westward across the Atlantic, in hope of reaching the Orient, that treasury of the gold, jewels, perfumes, silks which crawled to Europe in caravans. He even carried (what optimism!) a letter to the Grand Khan, Kubla, whose dynasty had been overthrown a hundred years before...For the thousandth time, he strained his eyes for some sight of shore. His instruments were so crude that he could only guess at speed and distance; he was following the flight of birds. But where, O God, was land?

<sup>3</sup>The late moon rose. And at 2 a.m., October 12, 1492, a lookout shouted, "Tierra!" At dawn, they probed the reef and landed on a coral beach. "And all having rendered thanks to our Lord, kneeling on the ground, embracing it with tears of joy...the Admiral rose and gave this island the name San Salvador (Holy Saviour)."

<sup>4</sup>He was an arresting figure, this "Admiral: tall, blue-eyed, blondish-red of hair. He had that sense of his own

importance which is the essence of command. Mystery still attends him: Born Cristoforo Colombo, he had called himself Cristóbal Colon in Portugal, Coloma in Spain, then Colón, by which half the world still knows him. He was a weaver's son, yet dropped grandiose hints about a family coat of arms. He had sailed to England and, possibly, Greenland and Iceland. He was a passionate Catholic, forever fasting, praying, penitent -- but his forebears were probably Jewish. He spoke a Genoese dialect most Italians could not understand. He could not read or write until his twenties (when he arrived in Portugal -- by swimming ashore from a ship sunk in battle); then he devoured Marco Polo's romancings and Cardinal d'Ailly's *Imago Mundi* -- especially the idea that the earth is round.

<sup>5</sup>He was a mass of contradictions. He was magnanimous; he was mean. He was proud; he was petty. He was humble, vain, generous, jealous, morbidly thin-skinned. He was a prude who tolerated no profanity (not even among his sailors!), but he had a mistress and an illegitimate son. He endured frightful hurricanes with surpassing courage; he wallowed in self-pity for minor misfortunes. He was driven by a dream of converting the heathen to Christianity; he was blinded by a mania for fame. He treated the natives (who thought the pale men in shining armor had come down from the sky) with great gentleness; then he let the Spaniards hunt them down with vicious hounds and horses, (the first the "Indios" had ever seen) and slaughter them by the hundreds. He was, the first missionary-colonist in America -- and the first to take slaves. He wrote beautiful prose, but with wayward spelling and no punctuation. He was a matchless mariner

and a wretched administrator. He was so mad with a sense of mission that he insisted that Cuba was Marco Polo's "Mangi," Haiti the land of Sheba, Venezuela the Garden of Eden!

<sup>6</sup>He had a rare flair for drama; he organized flamboyant processions in Spain, dressing his "Indios" in feathers and ornaments, making them carry parrots in cages, and sent trumpeters ahead to bring out the crowds. When the Jamaicans refused to give him food, he consulted an almanac and announced that God would punish them by blotting out the moon! When the eclipse came, the Indians went wild with terror; and he calmly retired to his cabin, emerging only when he knew the eclipse was due to end, saying he had intervened with God -- and the shadow moved from the face of the moon.

<sup>7</sup>He brought Europe its first hammock, its first corn, sweet potato, yam. He was the first white man to describe that strange narcotic weed which, when smoked, was to give men more pleasure than any gold he could have found. On his second voyage, he was the proud commander of 17 ships and 1500 colonists. On his third voyage, he fell cat's-paw to the king's governor, who shipped him back to Spain in chains, and for six weeks he rotted in Seville, pleading for justice, before the chains were removed. He always kept them in his chamber to underline his bitterness.

<sup>8</sup>At the height of his glory, he was acclaimed "Very Magnificent Admiral of the Ocean Sea"; after his last "unsuccessful" voyage (no gold, no jewels, no silks, no spices), he was reviled as "Admiral of the Mosquitoes." He kept crying that he had discovered another world, but in one of history's cruelest ironies, the immense double continent he found was named not after him, but after another Italian navigator, Amerigo Vespucci.

<sup>9</sup>This lonely, harassed, invincible megalomaniac made four astounding voyages -- unparalleled for adventure and significance. He discovered the Bahamas, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Haiti and Santo Domingo, Jamaica, Panama, the Virgin Isles, the mouth of the Orinoco -- without grasping the full importance of what he had achieved. He even came within 30 miles of the Pacific no European so much as dreamed existed.

<sup>10</sup>He did not know that he had opened the greatest chapter in history; nor that he had doubled Christendom's empire after the disastrous Crusades had left the West shamed before Islam's triumphant infidels. He presented the restless, imaginative and insatiable white race with greater lands, and riches and prospects than any conqueror who ever lived. He did more than revolutionize geography; he flung the old world into a golden age. He changed more than the map of the world; he galvanized thought by enlarging its horizons.

<sup>11</sup>In his last years, plagued by malaria and gout, he often raved in delirium that God's voice told him He had done as much for him as for Moses and David. He had neither friends nor defenders now. Hated by the colonists, despised by the Spaniards, "I have reached the point where there is no man so vile but thinks it his right to insult me." He donned rough monk's habit, wandered from one monastery to another and tormented himself by forever asking why God was tormenting him.

<sup>12</sup>No person of consequence was present at his deathbed. He demanded that his chains be buried with him, willed his money to "the conquest of Jerusalem" and summoned a priest. His last words were: "Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commit my spirit." The official chronicles did not even mention his death.

# Writing to Us, and Writing for Us

Over the years, our business and advertising staffs have conducted a great deal of research. It establishes, they tell us, that among magazines for a college audience, NEWSWEEK ON CAMPUS is the "most respected" and "best read" by students. That's fine, but we would rather hear it from you. And we do, notably in the many thoughtful letters you send us about every issue. (Despite what parents think, college students do write letters.)

We pay attention to what you say, because that is one of

the best ways to judge the impact we're having. We appreciate that people take the trouble to communicate with us in this way, some to criticize, some to correct, some to praise. Examples of each appear in this month's letters column on page 5. Note, particularly, the serious responses to the fake-ID story that ran in our September issue.

And speaking of writing, we publish a MY TURN column in every issue, always written by a student. The MY TURN for October described one student's re-

action to noticing, suddenly, that her parents were growing older. Months ago she had sent us a note asking whether we would be interested in such an essay. We encouraged her, and we were extremely pleased with the result. We think our readers were, too. In response to frequent inquiries, we describe a MY TURN this way: a personal statement on a subject of interest to many students. The essays should be between 1,200 and 1,500 words. We welcome your contributions and your thinking.

## Entertainment

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- The lasting allure of old TV shows **Page 14**

## Education

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## College Life

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## The Arts

- Music:** A guide to classic jazz recordings **Page 34**
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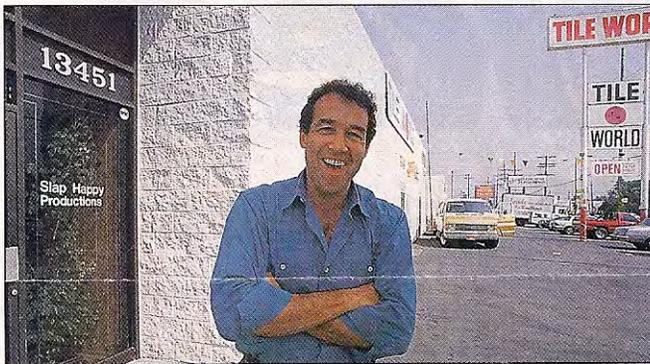
## Departments

- Multiple Choice:** Columbia "wins" a record streak; Colorado's official fool; a penny-pinching freshman at Illinois collects \$20,000; shrimp and ham provoke a controversy over keeping kosher at Brandeis; Laser Palace at Lawrence University; Georgia Tech wrecks WREK **Page 26**
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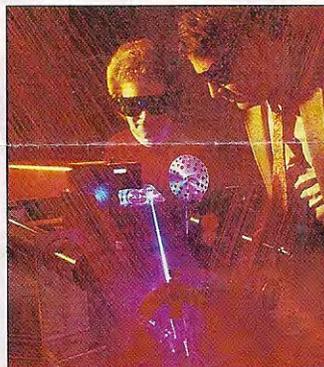
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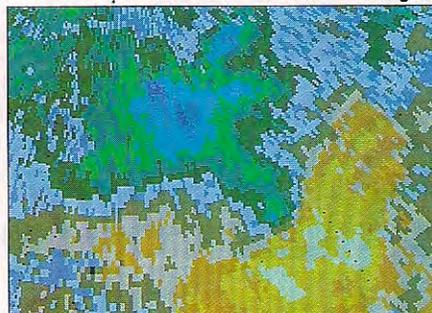
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# **D.I.D.L.S. A mnemonic for literary analysis**

**D**iction: the denotative and connotative meanings of words What words does the author

choose? Consider his/her word choice compared to another. Why did the author choose that particular word? What are the connotations of that word choice?

- different words for the same thing often suggest different attitudes (happy vs. content vs. ecstatic)
- denotative vs. connotative (dead vs. passed away)
- concrete vs. abstract (able to perceive with 5 senses, tangible, vs. an idea or concept that exists in one's mind, intangible)
- monosyllabic vs. polysyllabic (Cats eat meat; felines are carnivorous animals.)
- simple vs. ornate
- positive vs. negative (slender vs. skinny, determined vs. stubborn)
- colloquial / informal / formal / technical
- cacophonous vs. euphonious (e.g., harsh sounding, raucous, croak **or** pleasant sounding, languid, murmur)
- 

**I**mages: Vivid appeals to understanding through the five senses – sight, sound, touch, taste, smell. (What images does the author use? What does he/she focus on in a sensory way? How do the kinds of images the author puts in or leaves out reflect his/her style? Are they vibrant? Prominent? Plain? (NOTE: Images differ from detail in the degree to which they appeal to the senses. A farmer and a real estate developer would use different imagery to describe the same piece of land. Imagery would differ in a romantic vs. realistic description of the countryside.)

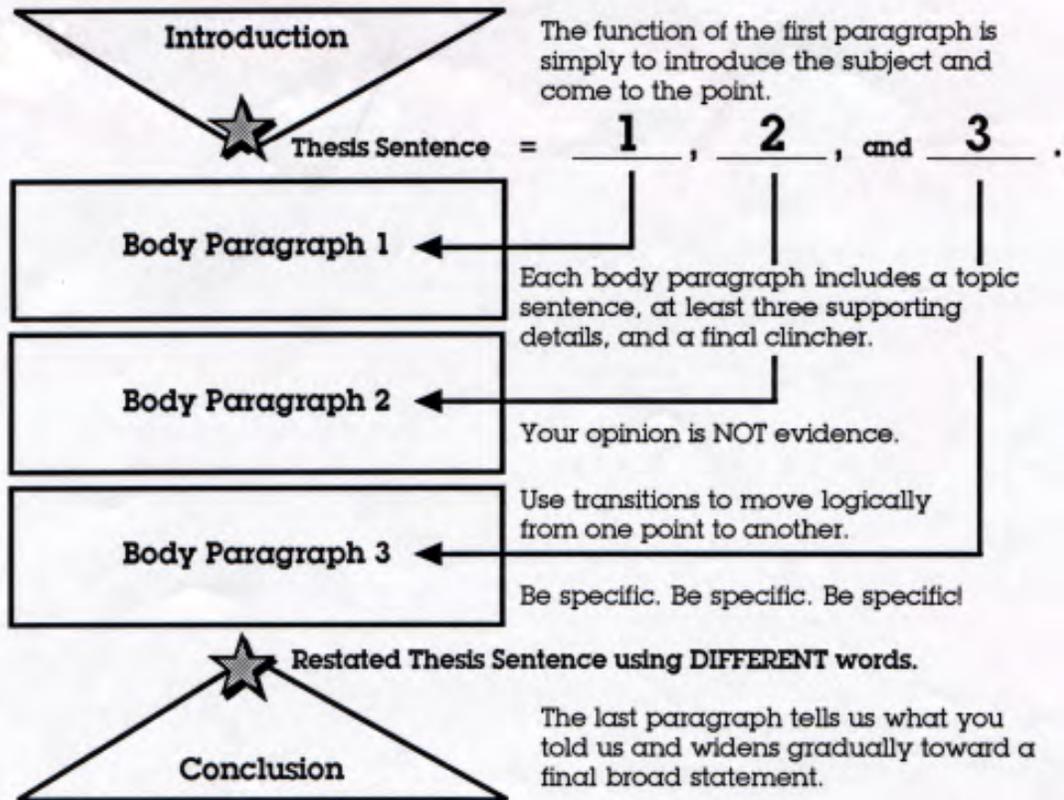
**D**etails: Facts that are included or those that are omitted. What details does the author choose to include? What do they imply? What does the author choose to exclude? What are the connotations of the choice of details? (NOTE: Details are facts or fact-lets. They differ from images in that they don't have a strong sensory appeal. Hard Copy vs. CNN vs. NPR)

**L**anguage: The overall use of language such as formal, clinical, informal, slang What is the overall impression of the language the author uses? Does it reflect education? A particular profession? Intelligence? Is it plain? Ornate? Simple? Clear? Figurative? Poetic? Make sure you don't skip this step. Ambassador will speak differently than a cop or a kid.

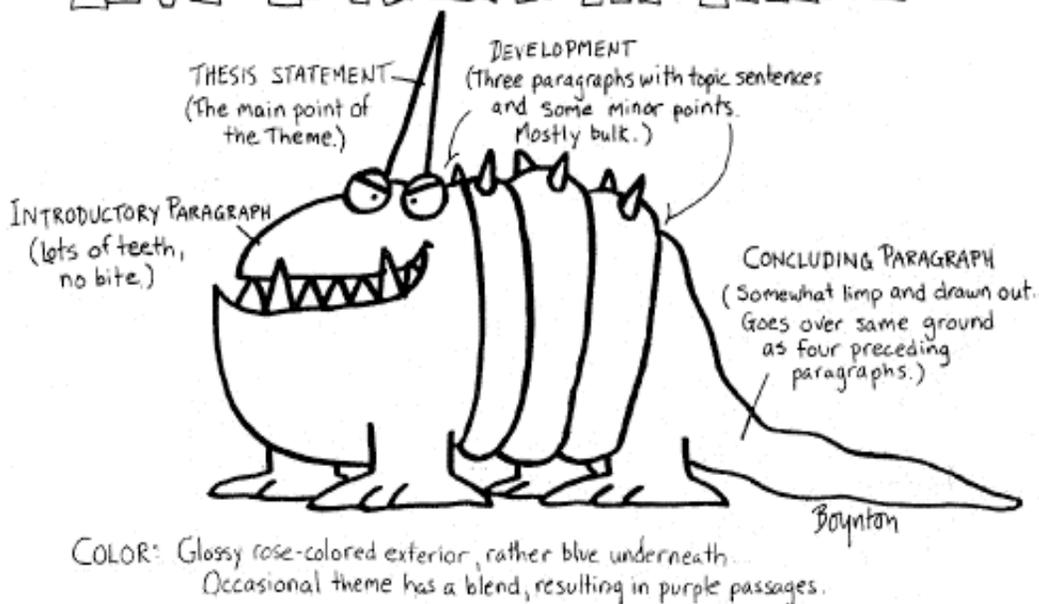
**S**entence Structure: How the author's use of sentence structure affects the reader What are the sentences like? Are they simple with one or two clauses? Do they have multiple phrases? Are they choppy? Flowing? Sinuous like a snake? Is there antithesis, chiasmus, parallel construction? What emotional impression do they leave? If we are talking about poetry, what is the meter? Is there a rhyme scheme? Long flowing sentences give us a different feeling than short choppy ones. If the narrator has awkward sentence structure, we might think he is uneducated or fearful. Sophisticated mature sentences might suggest artistic creativity.

## **So What?**

# Traditional Essay Structure



# The FIVE-PARAGRAPH THEME



# Anecdote, Imagery, Epiphany, and Rant: Voice in the Essay

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