Creative Writing Workshop

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Sponsored by Troy University Department of English

*Imagery*- the mental pictures produces by a literary work

Quality writing is full of images. An *image* is a word or series of words that appeals to one or more of the five senses. Writing is far stronger when the author draws images. For example, the author can say “the ocean is beautiful” or the author can say:

The rhythmic green waves crash, cooling the white hot sand squished between your toes.  
The wave’s white peaks sprawl across the beach, reaching out and inviting you in.

Many authors use *metaphors* and *similes* to bring intensity and higher interest to their

images. This type of figurative language compares two seemingly unlike things and asks the mind to find them similar. A *metaphor* states the comparison without acknowledging that it is a comparison: her hair is seaweed and she is the sea. A *simile* makes a comparison between two things using the words like or as: my head is light as a balloon, his teeth rattled like dice in a box.

Directions: Read the following poem by Robert Frost. Pay attention to the use of metaphor in the poem.

Fire and Ice

Some say the world will end in fire,

Some say in ice.

From what I’ve tasted of desire

I hold with those who favor fire.

But if it had to perish twice,

I think I know enough of hate

To say that for destruction ice

Is also great

And would suffice.

1. What seemingly unlike things are being compared in this metaphorical poem?

WRITING WORKSHOP:

Write this poem: The first line consists of an abstract noun, plus a verb, plus a place. In the second line, describe the attire or clothing of the abstract noun. The third line summarizes an action. Make sure that the poem flows; don’t worry too much about it making sense.

*Abstract nouns*- name an idea or concept which cannot be visualized, such as *love*, *anger*, *intelligence, criticism.*

Beauty creeps out the window Hunger sneaks up in the hallway

Wearing nothing but taut bare skin. Clothed in cymbals, carrying drums

Leaving a trail of wrinkles behind her. Screaming, “Do you hear me now?”

Imagery: Exercise Two

I’m Busy, You’re Ugly,

Have a nice day!

Wife and dog missing…

Reward for Dog!

Take your Ex out tonight

One bullet ought to do it.

I know right from wrong…

Wrong is the fun one!

Being perfect isn’t as easy

As I make it look

The worst failure

Is the failure to try

Think Globally

Act Locally

Ever stop to think…

And forget to start again?

Keep honking

I’m reloading

WRITING WORKSHOP:

Write down a bumper sticker you like, or use one from above. Describe the car (van, truck) this bumper sticker might be stuck on- make, model, year, color, and condition. Is there anything else on the body of the vehicle? Why are you looking at the vehicle? Open the door. Name three smells you encounter. Describe two textures. Name three objects you see on the seats, floor. Name a fourth object that is surprising to find there. You look up. Here comes the owner of the vehicle. Who, wearing what, moving how? The owner says something to you. What?

How to Use This Body

by David Kirby

Remove clothes and put to one side.

Body will look awkward, which is normal.

Arrange body on sheets, adjust temperature,

and turn out lights.

At this point,

any number of things can go wrong:

phone can ring, vase or book can fall

from shelf, memory can quicken, love can beat

its wings against the window, and so on.

In that case read to body, give body

hot drink or bath, return body to bed,

and repeat steps two through four (above).

After several hours, remove body from bed

and wash.

Put body into clothes again.

Feed and love body. Do not cut, shoot,

hang, poison, or throw body from window.

Keep body from drafts and solitude.

Write us if you are happy with body.

WRITING WORKSHOP:

Pick an *ordinary* activity that you do every, or nearly every, day. Write instructions for how to do it. The instructions may be in the form of a list, a poem, a paragraph, a speech, or whatever you like, BUT make them so detailed and specific that someone who had never done this particular thing could see how it is done. How to make a peanut butter sandwich. How to back out of the driveway. Hot to feed the cat.

*Voice*- an author’s voice is the style and tone used in their writing

Voice lets the reader know, just as if they picked up the telephone, “this is so-and-so talking.” An author’s voice is made up of style and tone. *Style* is the way in which something is written. *Tone* is the author’s attitude toward what they are writing about. It is important to remember that the characters and narrator may feel differently about the topic than the author.

Voice is one of the hardest things to develop in writing. You can begin with your own voice, but with practice, you can develop a much stronger voice that is expansive and flexible in vocabulary and able to play with different human voices. We already have different voices. We speak differently while in class then we do at home or on a football field. The voice that we choose to write with (when we are writing as ourselves) is the *persona*. For example, if you are writing to the school board- you are writing with the persona of a student; if you are writing to your mother- you are writing with the persona of a son/daughter.

Every character in your writing should have a distinct voice. Start paying attention to people’s voice when you are talking to them. Do they repeat any phrases in their speech? Do they use any slang? Do they have certain pauses that they repeat?

WRITING WORKSHOP:

Imagine that you have borrowed a car and been involved in a fender bender. Write an explanation for the police report. Then write a *monologue* (a speech for one voice) explaining the accident to the friend whose car you borrowed. Write a letter telling about the accident to a friend who thinks you are truly cool. You should have three separate pieces of writing about the same incident but with different voices when you are finished.

WRITING WORKSHOP:

Go back to the character in your bumper sticker exercise. Think of a few more details to describe that character. Then pick a trigger line from below and use it to start a *monologue* in that character’s voice.

* I don’t normally dress this way, but
* I had a dream last night
* I’ll tell you what doesn’t make any sense
* I’m sorry, I didn’t see you
* What I need is some kind of work that
* I remember when you could

Remember the voice of the character is not your voice. Make it a distinct voice!