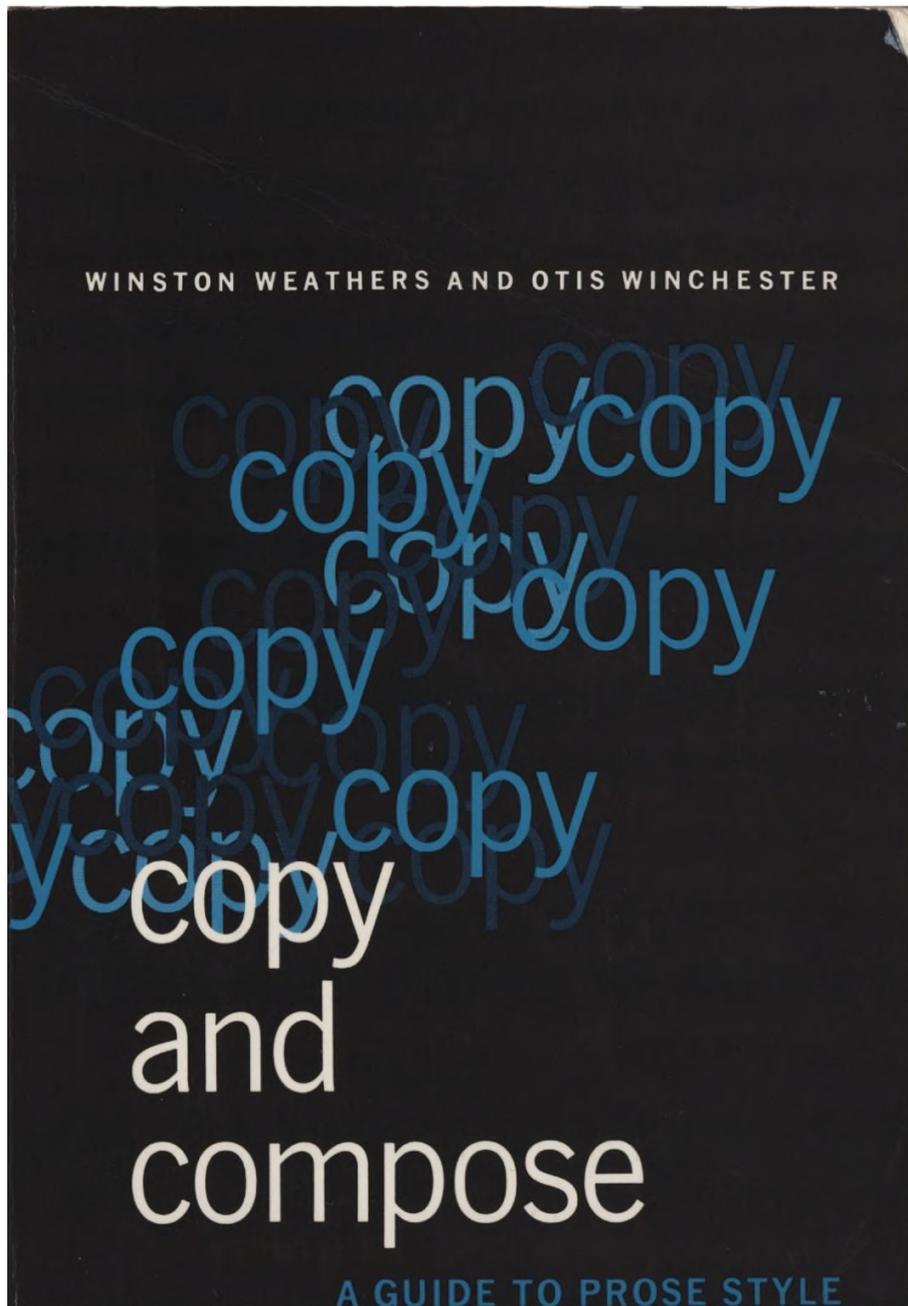


COPY AND COMPOSE: A GUIDE TO PROSE STYLE

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INTRODUCTION

Writing is a skill, and like playing the violin or throwing a discus, it may be learned by observing how others do it—then by trying to imitate, carefully and thoughtfully, the way it was done. In writing, we can "observe" by copying sentences and paragraphs written by master stylists. And we can consciously imitate these sentences and paragraphs in our own writing, making them a part of our basic repertoire.

Many writers keep a notebook in which they jot down eloquent and imitable passages of prose, passages selected not so much for their sense as for their style. A collection of such model writing can be invaluable to a student who is trying to improve his own writing technique. Professional writers, who keep such a notebook, are frequently candid about the place that conscious and careful imitation has had in their literary apprenticeship. For instance, as W. Somerset Maugham says in his autobiography, *The Summing Up*:

I studied Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Dying*. In order to assimilate his style I copied out passages and then tried to write them down from memory.

Later the prose of Swift enchanted me. I made up my mind that this was the perfect way to write and I started to work on him in the same way as I had done with Jeremy Taylor. ... As I had done before, I copied passages and then tried to write them out from memory. I tried altering words or the order in which they were set. I found that the only possible words were those Swift had used and that the order in which he had placed them was the only possible order. It is an impeccable prose...

The work I did was certainly very good for me. I began to write better...

Surely, only the rankest amateurs subscribe to the fallacious philosophy of writing that counsels us simply to "look into our hearts and write." Writing, after all, is a civilized art that is rooted in tradition. It draws upon the experience and practices of the masters, and all successful experimentation and novelty in writing is ultimately based upon techniques that have already been successfully demonstrated. Certainly, no serious writer can be so smug as to ignore what others have produced and are producing; nor can he be so dull as to be unaware of past achievements and present ventures in the realm of style and techniques.

Every writer strives, of course, for his own distinctive style, his own particular way of handling words; but originality and individuality in composition (or in any other art for that matter) do not spring entirely from one's own mysterious depths. Originality and individuality are outgrowths of a familiarity with originality in the

work of others, and they emerge from a knowledge of words, patterns, constructions, and procedures that all writers use. Even the most original and exceptional styles are ultimately but variations on common locutions, structures, and designs; and as Winifred Lynskey observed in *College English*: “Just as imitation practiced by a student . . . does not destroy originality, so, too, the student seems never so free as when he is bound to an imitation.”

To imitate the masters, to make successfully established devices part of our own writing repertoire, we need, of course, to understand what is happening in the words in front of us. Copying is a most successful and expedient method of achieving that understanding. Copying the passage—physically copying it in our own handwriting—breaks the spell of the passage, and the words we have copied help to suggest words of our own. Our ultimate goal is to approximate the manner and style of the great writers so that we may present more effectively and powerfully the ideas and observations that originate in our own minds. But first, we must follow the great writers through their own words and copy down their expressions of their ideas. In the beginning we must “serve an apprenticeship” by imitating these highly competent writers. It is an apprenticeship that promises, upon completion, the achievement of a true creation of originality.

To copy another writer’s words successfully, however, requires a certain skill. First, we must read the model sentence or paragraph carefully and thoughtfully; we must understand what is being said; and we must ponder our own response to the way the sentence or paragraph is written. In our reading of the passage, we must try to grasp the sense of structure and the style that prevail in the model. Then, we should make a copy of the model in ink on clean white paper in our most legible handwriting. This copy should be made with a great deal of concentration; it should be made thoughtfully and accurately. We must copy the model exactly—with every comma, every dash, and every period. Since making this copy calls for attention, we should not work at it for more than fifteen or twenty minutes at a time. Too much copying at one time can result in oversights and errors and negate the effect of the copying.

Edward P. J. Corbett advocates a similar program of emulation in *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*. Having copied a model, word for word, in our own handwriting, we next choose a subject of our own, one as distinct and different from the content of the model as possible. Then we write our own passage, keeping in mind the general syntax, diction, phrasing, and any special characteristic of the model. Saying what we want to say, giving expression to our own concepts, observations, ideas, and beliefs, we imitate the manner and style, the structure and syntax, and the formality and texture of the model. Our own version is what is sometimes called a pastiche. In many European schools, students

regularly learn the art of writing by composing pastiches or short pieces of composition in the style of another.

Using as our model a quotation taken from Martin Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd*:

The madness of the times lies precisely in the existence, side by side, of a large number of unreconciled beliefs and attitudes—conventional morality, for example, on the one hand, and the value of advertising on the other; the conflicting claims of science and religion; or the loudly proclaimed striving of all sections for the general interest when in fact each is pursuing very narrow and selfish particular ends.

the student would write his own sentence similar to the model in structure and style. Perhaps he would write something like:

The happiness of life comes, unquestionably, with our accommodation, time after time, to life's paradoxes and dualities—our need, for instance, for organization and our contrary need for individuality; the conflicting demands of flesh and spirit; or our well-articulated commitments to excellence, in all areas of human endeavor, placed in strange juxtaposition with a necessary and practical mediocrity.

If we do the work of imitation well, we can become familiar with the styles of accomplished writers. For instance, we learn that cumulative adjective modifications are a property of John Ruskin, who used them so magnificently, or that strong, simple declarative sentences are a characteristic of Hemingway. We, too, can use the locutions and patterns of such noted writers; we can learn from them—as they themselves learned from others.

Ben Jonson, in his famous bit of "Advice to the Writer," said:

For the mind and memory are more sharply exercised in comprehending another man's things than our own; and such as accustom themselves and are familiar with the best authors shall ever and anon find somewhat of them in themselves: and in the expression of their minds, even when they feel it not, be able to utter something like theirs, which hath an authority above their own. Nay, sometimes it is the reward of a man's study, the praise of quoting another man fitly; and though a man be more prone and able for one kind of writing than another, yet he must exercise all. For as in an instrument, so in style, there must be a harmony and consent of parts.

And Gilbert Highet, in *A Clerk at Oxenford*, observes that:

...Lincoln was a literary artist, trained both by others and by himself. The textbooks he used as a boy were full of difficult exercises and skillful devices in formal rhetoric, stressing the qualities he practiced in his own speaking: antithesis, parallelism, and verbal harmony. Then he read and reread many admirable models of thought and expression: the King James Bible, the essays of Bacon, the best plays of Shakespeare.

Winston Churchill once said about his own style:

I affected a combination of the styles of Macaulay and Gibbon, the staccato antithesis of the former and the rolling sentences and genitival endings of the latter; and I stuck in a bit of my own from time to time.

Reading, copying, and imitating are not an end in themselves, of course. They are means toward the development of our own style and our own mode of expression. By becoming thoughtful, practicing copyists, we can more easily achieve the goal of good writing. Instead of waiting to discover the methods of effective and powerful writing in a time-consuming trial-and-error way, we can become familiar with the work of the masters and benefit from their achievements. We can more quickly reach an effective level of composition that will give us power to communicate.

Often when we read a fine piece of writing, do we not later imitate it? We read a great essay, and the next week write an essay of our own. We read a powerful report, and remember it when next we prepare our own report. Do we not remember the model we valued, and are we not, unconsciously perhaps, trying to imitate it? We make better products—whether automobiles, apple pies, or works of art—by examining the products that already exist and making improvements in them. We will always benefit by knowing as thoroughly as possible the writing that has already been done, by reading, copying and imitating it, then producing something significant of our own.

BASIC SENTENCES

Although contemporary grammarians have applied more sophisticated definitions to a sentence, the familiar, traditional one is as useful as ever for the writer. A sentence is a group of words, consisting of at least a subject and verb, which expresses a complete thought. Sentences may be described as simple, compound, complex, compound-complex, elliptical, or by more specific rhetorical terms depending on their structure. Sentences are active or passive; loose or periodic; declarative, interrogative, exclamatory, imperative, or something else, depending largely on the order of their words. The sentence can be infinitely adapted by varying its length, structure, or the order of its parts. Virtually all sentences can be shortened or extended, compounded or complicated to fit any communication purpose. The order of elements in almost any sentence can be rearranged to make the sentence more articulate or eloquent.

- There are certain rules of thumb for writing clear, effective sentences. First, never let your reader lose sight of the central thought—the subject-verb or subject-verb-complement—upon which the sentence turns. In long sentences always put important thoughts at the beginning or, better, at the end. Second, keep in mind that complicated thoughts need to be expressed as simply as possible. The more difficult an idea happens to be the more obligated you are to present it clearly and directly. Third, always be prepared to use—\for the sake of effective writing—the full range of sentence forms.

- A repertoire of basic sentence forms can be quickly acquired if you go about the process methodically. You begin by learning to size up the thought itself: A truly solitary and independent thought may be expressed as a simple sentence; related thoughts of equivalent value may be expressed in a compound sentence; a principal thought with some corollary or aside may be expressed in a complex sentence; and two or more related thoughts that are also subject to incidental comment may be expressed in some form of the compound-complex sentence. These are the sentence forms with which the writer works. Even the most basic decisions about sentence length, structure, and order are largely up to the writer. He will exercise this freedom of choice for the sake of variety and pattern, for the proper control of emphasis, and for reinforcing his meaning in still more subtle ways.

On the pages that follow are a number of basic sentences, ranging from the most succinct elliptical to the more elaborate compound-complex. Each is labeled, exemplified, and described. To understand what they do and how they do it, copy the model sentence word for word. Then, to make this sentence form part of your own writer's stock, compose a sentence of similar length, structure, and order that

is at the same time entirely original. For instance, the elaborated complex sentence can take many forms. You can make the term part of your vocabulary by studying the sentence, copying out an example, and then by composing a similar sentence of your own.

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

I read the works of Marquis de Sade because I wished to know also the decadent, to find out about the sordid side of life, and see if I could not learn something of its artistic appeal, and not, after having read only what was sublime, discover that I knew nothing of the degraded.

If you follow this process, you will add the elaborated complex sentence form to your repertoire.

1 The Loose Sentence

I remember one splendid morning, all blue and silver, in the summer holidays when I reluctantly tore myself away from the task of doing nothing in particular, and put on a hat of some sort and picked up a walking-stick, and put six very brightly coloured chinks in my pocket.

G. K. Chesterton, *A Piece of Chalk*

Most of the sentences you write will probably be loose. Loose sentences are those in which you express the main thought at the outset and afterward add whatever details you wish. In the Chesterton sentence the subject and predicate, "I remember," express the main thought. The object, to some degree, "one splendid morning," and certainly all other phrases in the sentence are an expansion of that initial, grammatically complete statement. In the above example the loose structure of the sentence is appropriately reflective and casual. And the modifying and compounding of elements is a source of rhythm. This sentence, which is more extended than most, shows for how long a loose sentence may be sustained.

Chesterton's loose opening sentence is made effective by the clarity and excitement inherent in the specific, concrete language, by the alliteration, and by the over-all simplicity of both the statement and the grammatical structure.

Although you may wish to use a higher proportion of periodic to loose sentences as you become a more conscious stylist, remember that the loose pattern is more expected and natural. Partly because of this the loose sentence is apt to be diffuse, anticlimactic, and overworked. A succession of loose sentences is almost inevitably monotonous.

Copy Chesterton's sentence; then compose a similar loose sentence, enlarging upon the initial, main thought by the addition of other details. Extend the sentence as long as you dare, sustaining interest as long as possible.

2 The Periodic Sentence

Crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature*

As you gain skill in writing, an increased proportion of your sentences will be periodic, that is, sentences in which you delay completing the main thought until the end, or near the end. Delaying phrases and clauses postpone statement of the

main thought, "I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration," until the end of Emerson's sentence. Notice how the parallelism of the prepositional phrase "in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky" keeps the structure of the sentence simple and contributes to its suspense. There is a sense of development in the movement from the series of phrases to the final independent clause.

There are, of course, degrees of periodicity, depending on how late in the sentence the main thought is completed. Complex sentences are easily written as periodic; compound sentences cannot be periodic but their separate clauses can be. Most loose sentences can be changed to periodic ones by adding or moving forward a modifier, by inverting the sentence, or by beginning the sentence with "It was." You will shift from loose to periodic to give variety and add emphasis, to make the most important idea stand out more, and in a long sentence to sustain interest and suspense. You must, however, avoid using too many periodic sentences, especially in an informal context, for they will tend to reduce the ease and fluency of your style.

Copy Emerson's sentence; then compose a similar periodic sentence. Force the reader to keep all the details in mind by using preliminary phrases to delay the main thought as Emerson has done. For additional practice, you may wish to take several loose sentences and experiment with various ways of changing them into periodic sentences.

3 The Inverted Sentence

Immoral Ovid was, but he had high standards in art.

Gilbert Highet, *Poets in a Landscape*

The great majority of your sentences will follow the expected subject-verb-complement order, regardless of what modification or other elaboration complicates the sentence pattern. This is almost always the case with declarative sentences; in interrogative sentences the subject is often preceded by the verb; while in imperative sentences the subject may be implied rather than stated. Sometimes, however, to shift the emphasis in a sentence, you will alter the normal order of the basic sentence elements. The result will be an inverted sentence. Since the reader is surprised to encounter a complement or predicate before the subject, the entire sentence in which an inversion occurs is always emphatic; the upstart element is especially emphatic. Any type of sentence, from simple to compound-complex, can be inverted to serve the writer's purpose.

The first clause of Highet's two-part compound sentence, "Immoral Ovid was," is clearly inverted with the complement placed before the subject and verb. Had this

been a simple sentence of only the three words, the inversion would have been justified as a means of achieving emphasis and variety. As one of two clauses in a compound sentence, the inversion is even more effective: The contrast of the clauses, which pivots on the punctuation and coordinator, is accentuated by the inversion of the first clause and the normal order of the second. The reader is momentarily slowed down by the opening words, but he flies through the remaining; the opening criticism of Ovid is quickly alleviated. The sentence is so constructed that the important matters, Ovid's "immoral" nature and his "art," are positioned at either end where they are certain to be noticed and associated. (Ordinarily the end position of a sentence is the most emphatic; the first position is only slightly less so. In an inverted sentence the first position is probably the stronger. Certainly the middle position in such a sentence is comparatively unemphatic.)

When the complement or verb is clearly the important element or when you simply wish to be emphatic, consider inverting your sentence. Remember, however, that it takes a good ear to distinguish between an inversion that is exactly right, perhaps even stunning, and one that is plainly awkward. Highet, for example, would not have inverted the final part of his sentence so that it read, "In art high standards he had."

Copy Highet's sentence; then compose a similar inverted sentence. Cast about for a subject that will give you such opportunity as the remark about Ovid's immorality and his art. Emphasize the comparison or contrast of thoughts in a compound sentence with a skillful inversion in one of the clauses. Then try your hand at the art of inversion with a variety of other sentence patterns.

5 The Elliptical Sentence

Six o'clock. A cold summer's evening.

William Sansom, *Eventide*

Ordinarily all of your sentences will contain these three elements: a subject, verb, and complement. Occasionally you will prefer a grammatically abbreviated, fragmentary statement that is virtually complete, not because of what it contains, but because of what is said or suggested elsewhere. Sansom might have written "It was six o'clock on a cold summer's evening." Instead he chose to condense the longer, conventional sentence into two elliptical sentences—partly to economize on the use of accessory words and thereby to shorten and simplify what, in its context, would threaten to become an ineffectively complicated statement, but

mainly to capture some of the snap and immediacy of speech patterns and thought processes.

You will, from time to time, find elliptical sentences convenient for dialogue, for descriptions, for introductions, for conclusions, for transitions, and even for emphasis. Still, the elliptical sentence is a rather special form, to be used infrequently and then for some clear purpose.

Copy the Sansom sentences, which together form the introductory paragraph to a short story; then compose similar elliptical sentences that quickly introduce and describe a setting, while presenting only the essence.

5 The Simple Sentence

Centuries passed.

Gilbert Highet, *Poets in a Landscape*

London frightened him.

H. M. Tomlinson, *A Lost Wood*

The simple sentence in its most austere and succinct form is surprisingly rare and almost always striking. This despite the fact that the subject and verb or, more often, the subject, verb and complement constitute the basic pattern in English. Still, because the minimal sentence is so striking, it is rarely written. When you wish to be forcefully clear and direct, however, you may choose to express yourself as Highet has done in “Centuries passed” (subject-verb) or Tomlinson in “London frightened him” (subject-verb-complement). Standing alone, the briefest simple sentence is emphatic; used together with longer sentences it is the basis for sharp contrasts.

Do not be misled by the artless appearance of the flat statement, for there is great power in it. Many writers are strangely diffident about using the simple sentence of two or three words and, through a habitual exuberance with words or through fear of making unqualified assertions, they seldom write such sentences—even when they should.

Copy the Highet and Tomlinson sentences; then compose similar simple sentences. Cast about for thoughts that lend themselves to the intense, almost overwhelming clarity of such two or three-word sentences.

6 The Simple Sentence / Anticipation

After skirting the river for three or four miles, I found a rickety footbridge.

Vladimir Nabokov, *Conclusive Evidence*

Even after dark the touch of the wind has the warmth of flesh.

Lafcadio Hearn, *A Midsummer Trip to the Tropics*

Compared with that of the Taoists and Far Eastern Buddhists, the Christian attitude towards Nature has been curiously insensitive and often downright domineering and violent.

Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*

Phrases that serve as the subject or complement are clearly part of the basic sentence, but phrases that modify the subject, verb, or complement are an elaboration upon the basic simple sentence. The part of speech a phrase modifies determines its location to some extent, and the length and complexity of the phrase has some bearing on how it is related to the rest of the sentence. Phrases coming at the beginning of a sentence often operate as mild anticipations, those in the middle of a sentence as interruptions, and those at the end as afterthoughts. The connection of a phrase to the basic sentence can be managed in various ways. Whether to use both a connecting word and punctuation, or whether to use punctuation alone, and if both specifically, which conjunction or punctuation mark is one of those very basic writer's decisions.

The sentence by Vladimir Nabokov, consisting of a phrase introduced by the connecting word, "after," and separated from the clause by a comma, illustrates one form of the simple sentence. Since the phrase, "After skirting the river for three or four miles," precedes the clause, "I found a rickety footbridge," it serves as an anticipation and dramatically delays the main thought. Had the phrase followed the clause, the sentence would have been just as clear, but the suspense would have been lost, along with the natural emphasis on the clause in its terminal position.

It would not have been incorrect for Lafcadio Hearn to have written "Even after dark, the touch of the wind has the warmth of flesh," with the comma after "dark," but it would not have been so effective. The brevity of the anticipation, the simplicity, and the informality of the entire sentence, and, most importantly, the close relation of the phrase and the clause, which together are part of the same impression, all justify his omission of the comma. (Did you also notice the metaphorical comparison in the sentence, "the *touch* of the wind has the *warmth*

of flesh”? There is certainly more verbal excitement in such a line than in, say, “the wind felt warm,” which is not only pedestrian but is also stated in the passive voice.)

It is clear from the first word of the Aldous Huxley sentence that a comparison, actually a contrast, is in the offing. The reader is, thus, fully prepared for the matter-of-fact comparison of Taoist and Buddhist attitudes toward nature with those of the Christian. A connecting word is simply not needed here. Indeed, if you were to rewrite the sentence employing a conjunction, you would quickly realize that such an alternative would be wordy and repetitious: “Although the Taoists and Far Eastern Buddhists have been responsive and cooperative with Nature, the Christian attitude towards Nature has been curiously insensitive and often downright domineering and violent.” Such an imitation is inferior to the original. Incidentally, as you study the model sentence, notice the capitalization of “Nature,” the surprisingly colloquial expression, downright,” and the compounding of modifiers toward the end of the sentence.

Copy the sentences by Nabokov, Hearn, and Huxley; then compose three similar sentences involving anticipation. Write at least one sentence in which the phrase is separated from the clause by a comma.

7 The Simple Sentence / Interruption

A barn, in day, is a small night.

John Updike, *The Dogwood Tree: A Boyhood*

The thought of her was like champagne itself!

John Galsworthy, *The Man of Property*

You, the listener, sit opposite me.

Ford Madox Ford, *The Good Soldier*

In each of these model sentences a phrase interrupts, either casually or dramatically, the How of the main statement. The connection of these interruptive phrases to the basic sentence can be made in a variety of ways.

The John Updike sentence, with its brief phrase introduced by the connecting word, “in,” and enclosed in commas (partly for emphasis and partly because the phrase does interrupt the syntactic How of the sentence), is one form of the interrupted simple sentence. The phrase, “in day,” by briefly stopping the movement

of the sentence transforms a perfectly ordinary statement into something more impressive and significant.

In John Galsworthy's sentence the phrase, "of her," is so mildly interruptive, so much a part of the basic sentence, so essential to explaining what sort of thought, that it would have been a mistake to isolate the phrase by surrounding punctuation. The connecting word, "of," suffices to identify the phrase.

The short appositive phrase in the sentence of Ford Madox Ford's is separated by commas as it should be, for "the listener" in this imperative sentence makes forcefully clear who "you" is. Ford could have introduced the phrase with a connecting word and written "who are the listener," but the connection is clear enough with punctuation alone.

Copy the sentences by Updike, Galsworthy, and Ford; then compose three similar sentences that contain interruptions—the first surrounding the phrase with punctuation and introducing it with a connecting word, the second relying on the connecting word alone, and the third on punctuation.

8 The Simple Sentence / Afterthought

How beautiful to die of a broken heart, on paper!

Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*

There are our young barbarians all at play.

Matthew Arnold, *Essays in Criticism*

The steadiest winds are the trades, blowing diagonally toward the equator from the northeast and southwest.

Rachel Carson, *The Sea Around Us*

In each of the above simple sentences one or more phrases follow the central statement as an afterthought. Here, the term afterthought is used in its most literal sense. It describes any syntactically subordinate thought that comes after the main thought. The afterthought may be a dramatic and significant turn or a casual and superfluous elaboration. There are three basic ways to mark the connection between the clause and afterthought: with a comma and connecting word, with a connecting word alone, with punctuation alone.

The Thomas Carlyle sentence is not the simplest possible illustration of a phrasal afterthought since it contains a pair of final phrases, "of a broken heart" and "on paper." If Carlyle had simply written, "How beautiful to die, on paper!", the phrase still would have been introduced by both a connecting word and punctuation to

emphasize the surprising turn the phrase effects in the sentence. Also, since “on paper,” which makes this an epigrammatic sentence, follows a much milder elaborating phrase that is not part of the afterthought, the comma is most essential.

In the Matthew Arnold sentence, “all at play” is such a natural extension and completion of the clause, “There are our young barbarians,” that it should not be separated from it by punctuation, “all” casually indicating the connection.

Finally, the longer phrasal afterthought in Rachel Carson’s sentence actually consists of two phrases, “blowing diagonally toward the equator” and “from the northeast and southeast.” Clearly such an afterthought requires a comma, partly because of its length and complexity, but mainly because the writer desired to express what is essentially a single afterthought by using several phrases. Of course, this is not the simplest illustration of an afterthought with punctuation alone; for example, it is not so simple as “The steadiest winds are the trades, blowing diagonally toward the equator.”

Copy the sentences by Carlyle, Arnold, and Carson; then compose three similar sentences containing afterthoughts—the first introducing the phrase by punctuation and a connecting word, the second doing so with the connecting word alone, and the third with punctuation. Elaborate on the basic sentence pattern as Carlyle, Carson, and Arnold have done.

9 The Elaborated Simple Sentence

The gulls went in slanting flight up the wind toward the grey desolate east.

Stephen Crane, *The Open Boat*

Once you begin modifying various parts of the simple sentence by adding phrases at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the sentence, you find that the basic pattern can be extensively elaborated without sacrificing its inherent lucidity. One of the most important achievements in modern literature has been the rediscovery of the simple declarative sentence. Hemingway and others of his generation demonstrated that the simple declarative sentence could be the basis of a distinctive style. Yet, when students first begin trying very hard to write well, they often forget this and abandon the simple sentence for tangled and overblown syntax. Remember, a primer style is less to be feared than a pretentious one, for clarity is the writer's first objective. If you do not overuse or overelaborate the simple sentence, it can be the most useful and trustworthy pattern in your repertoire of basic sentences.

The basic statement in Crane's sentence is contained in the subject and verb—the minimal parts of an English sentence. The verb, however, is neither explicit nor exciting. So Crane, by adding three modifying phrases (“in slanting flight,” “up the wind,” and “toward the grey desolate east”) went on to write a rather memorable elaborated simple sentence. Of course, Crane had another alternative: He could have used “slanted” as a verb and written, “The gulls slanted into the wind. . . .” Since the subject, verb, and complement of any basic sentence can be modified or compounded in not only different combinations but to different extents, the elaborated simple sentence is capable of almost infinite variation.

Copy the Crane sentence; then compose a similar elaborated sentence. Modify the verb as in the exemplary sentence. You might compose a second version of the same sentence in which you modify the subject or use a compound subject also or in which you modify the subject instead of the verb.

10 The Compound Sentence

The great tragic artists of the world are four, and three of them are Greek.

Edith Hamilton, *The Greek Way*

Made up of what are essentially simple sentences joined by conjunctions and punctuation or by only punctuation, the compound sentence coordinates grammatically independent but logically related thoughts. Poor writers often coordinate where they should subordinate, and they show a marked inclination for a prose style that abounds in simple-minded compound sentences—the idiom of excited children and gossipy women. Because of this many writers regard the compound sentence as a comparatively unsophisticated pattern. It is, on the contrary, the basis of such stylistic effects as balance, the series, and repetition. In the hands of an alert stylist, even a standard compound sentence can be most sophisticated, as when it sharply accentuates a comparison or contrast, when the clauses are of strikingly dissimilar length, when narrative events or descriptive details are presented in quick succession, or simply when the longer rhythms it creates are appropriate in the context.

Develop a large vocabulary of coordinators and use them with precision: In addition to *and*, *or*, *but*, and *however*, you also have *for*, *nor*, *so*, *consequently*, *therefore*, *then*, *still*, *yet*, *otherwise*. Do not write *also* when you mean *yet* or *thus* when you mean *furthermore*. Also develop a vocabulary of coordinating punctuation: Not only will semicolons and commas serve this purpose, but dashes and colons will also. (Remember, however, that some coordinating conjunctions—*also*, *however*, *nevertheless*, *therefore*, *consequently*, *hence*, *furthermore*, *indeed*,

still, then—require a semicolon before and a comma after.) But most of all, be sure that the clauses joined by conjunctions are, indeed, of equal importance and clearly do belong in the same sentence.

The Edith Hamilton sentence coordinates independent clauses, pivoting them on the comma and the conjunction. In this case, however, coordination implies only that the thoughts are closely related, for they are most certainly not of equal importance. Since “three of them are Greek” is the main point, you may wonder why the author did not begin with a subordinator, like *although*, and phrase the statement as a complex sentence. She chose, for two reasons, to write a compound sentence: First, consisting of succinct and strongly-worded simple declarative sentences, the statement is extremely forceful as a compound sentence. Second, the more important final clause is, because of its position and brevity, and because the longer clause has been (fe-emphasized by the modifier, unmistakably emphasized).

Copy Edith Hamilton’s sentence; then compose a similar compound sentence, one in which the final clause is the more important.

11 The Compound Sentence (with coordinator only)

We would walk out with a bottle of pop apiece and sometimes the pop would backfire up our noses and hurt.

E. B. White, *Once More to the Lake*

The compound sentence written with coordinators but without punctuation is so rare and risky that you should be wary of expressing yourself in such a sentence. Still, until you can at least appreciate the possibilities in such a form, you do not really know the compound sentence. Theoretically, none of the clauses in a compound sentence is emphasized, unless, of course, you have singled out one in some way. In practice, the final clause is emphasized slightly because of its position. To de-emphasize this and the separateness of the clauses, you may decide to drop the coordinating punctuation. Suppressing the comma before *and* is often justified, since *and* is a neutral coordinator; doing so before *but* and certainly before *yet* might be misleading, since these coordinators point up a meaningful distinction between the clauses.

Briefly, then, you may consider dropping the punctuation when you want to fuse the clauses of a compound sentence into a single, undifferentiated statement. E. B. White, by using the coordinator only in his compound sentence, has underlined the youth and informality of simple and hardly separate actions—“We would walk out with a bottle of pop . . . the pop would backfire up our noses. . . (Notice that White

used *and* rather than a more precise connecting word, which would specify a time or cause-effect sequence.) Although you might have reservations about using a sentence of this kind in a more formal context, you will sometimes find a place for it; Edith Hamilton did in *The Greek Way*: “The Greeks were the first scientists and all science goes back to them.”

Copy the E. B. White sentence; then compose a similar sentence with a coordinator only.

12 The Compound Sentence (with punctuation only)

In the morning it was sunny, the lake was blue.

D. H. Lawrence, *Twilight in Italy*

The clauses of a compound sentence are almost always separated by some form of punctuation, ordinarily a comma or semicolon. Other punctuation marks may be used, however, and each varies in strength. The comma separates and emphasizes slightly the final clause; a comma may be used when the clauses are short and similar in form. The dash points up a hesitation or delay between the clauses—a moment of suspense before a surprising turn in the final clause. The semicolon is the standard coordinating mark, and it tends to emphasize the entire sentence, especially any epigrammatic qualities it may possess. Semicolons, however, are both too heavy and too formal to be used very often. The colon, an even more formal and special mark, suggests that what follows is a distinct addition to or explanation of what came before. A colon emphasizes the promise-fulfillment relation of the clauses.

When the relationship of clauses is so clear that no coordinator is necessary, rely on punctuation alone to make the link. By doing this you will, of course, accentuate somewhat the separateness of the clauses; but often this is precisely the effect you want, especially if the final clause represents a sharp contrast or dramatic turn. The second clause of D. H. Lawrence’s compound sentence is an inevitable consequence of the first; hence, it was not necessary to show the relation of the clauses with a coordinating conjunction. To be sure, the model sentence is exceptional; many would say it had a comma splice. But it does illustrate a case in which the writer was evidently aware of the alternatives, for he chose something out of the ordinary.

Copy the Lawrence sentence; then compose a similar compound sentence using punctuation but no coordinator. Consider the alternatives and use the most effective mark, which may not be the semicolon. To observe the different effect of each

mark, you might try writing a compound sentence that could be more or less correctly punctuated in a variety of ways.

13 The Elaborated Compound Sentence

We were somewhere near Sorrento; behind us lay the long curve of faint-glimmering lights on the Naples shore; ahead was Capri.

George Gissing, *By the Ionian Sea*

Without affecting its basic pattern, the compound sentence can be elaborated in various ways. The number of clauses can be increased from the usual two to three and even more. The elements within the clauses can be inverted or compounded and modified in different ways. The alternatives of correct punctuation and effective coordinators are many.

The Gissing sentence coordinates three clauses of quite different design: The first is simple; the long second clause is not only inverted but also contains several modifiers; and the third is as brief as possible and inverted as well. Clearly, the compound sentence is capable of variation limited only by the writer's skill and imagination, the sentence pattern being fully as adaptable and sophisticated as any.

Copy the Gissing sentence; then compose a similarly elaborated compound sentence of three distinctly different clauses. Consider carefully what you are doing and why, for the effectively written elaborated compound sentence requires creative judgment.

14 The Complex Sentence/Anticipation (with subordinator and punctuation)

If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water.

Loren Eiseley, *The Immense Journey*

Thoughts of lesser importance are subordinated in the complex sentence, which consists of one independent and one or more dependent clauses. The most mature and educated styles naturally make use of many complex sentences, because the writer has made decisions that would otherwise fall to the reader—decisions that clearly distinguish the major idea from its minor details and that specifically describe their relationship. Clarity and effectiveness, the basic attributes of every stylistic statement, are largely a product of the writer's successful control over emphasis and subordination.

Whenever you write a complex sentence, keep these two fundamental rules in mind: First, always phrase the main thought as an independent clause and subordinate details as dependent clauses. It is possible to write sentences in which the main idea is contained in the dependent clause rather than in the independent clause; for example, "He said that she was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen." In such exceptional cases, however, the dependent clause comes at the end of the sentence where it is naturally somewhat emphasized. Also because of the length and content of the clause, it clearly expresses the important matter. Second, never obscure the main thought with unnecessary subordinate details or by a sequence of subordinate clauses, each one dependent upon the one before.

You should develop a large vocabulary of subordinators, and always use them with precision. Some subordinators (who, whom, where, which, that, what) are so smooth you are hardly aware of the dependent clauses they introduce. Some more surely distinguish the dependent from the main clause. Although, as, as if, so, so that, because, before, after, if, since, that, until, till, unless, when, where are among these. Clearly, many, like if and although, have rather specific meanings; while others, like as, so, and while, have more than a single meaning, and if used carelessly may lead you to write an ambiguous sentence. Your choice of subordinator, therefore, should be neither automatic nor perfunctory.

The Eiseley sentence, consisting of a dependent clause introduced by the subordinator, "If", and separated from the independent clause by a comma, illustrates one form of the complex sentence. Since the dependent clause, "If there is magic on this planet," precedes the independent clause, it is an anticipation. The term, "anticipation," accurately describes what the dependent clause does in all sentences of this kind; it dramatically delays the main thought. Had the dependent clause followed the independent clause, the sentence would have been just as clear, but the suspense that comes with periodic sentences and the natural emphasis of the terminal position would have been lost.

Copy the Eiseley sentence; then compose a complex sentence that contains an anticipation. You may wish to review what was said earlier about the periodic sentence. Use a subordinator other than if, and be sure it points up the relationship between the clauses exactly.

15 The Complex Sentence/Anticipation (with subordinator only)

Whenever people are short on ideas they tend to use long words.

Clifton Fadiman, *Plain Thoughts on Fancy Language*

If the anticipation (dependent clause) is short and its relation to the independent clause is obvious, then consider omitting the usual comma. The momentum of your sentences will be improved if you exploit the principle of open punctuation whenever ease of reading and understanding is not likely to be affected.

It would not have been incorrect for Clifton Fadiman to have retained the comma and written “Whenever people are short on ideas, they tend to use long words,” but it would not have been so effective. The brevity of the anticipation, the simplicity and informality of the entire sentence, and, most important, the close relation of the clauses, which are both part of the same impression, all justify his omission. Indeed, it would have been a stylistic lapse on Fadiman’s part to have retained the comma. Some student writers, trying very hard to be formal and correct, place a comma after the anticipation in every complex sentence—but, you see, this may not always be intelligent.

Copy the Fadiman sentence; then compose a similar complex sentence, omitting the punctuation following the anticipation.

16 The Complex Sentence/Interruption (with subordinator and punctuation)

Richard’s crown, which he wore to the last, was picked out of a bush and placed upon the victor’s head.

Winston Churchill, *The Birth of Britain*

There is some advantage in placing a dependent clause within the sentence if it would weaken the initial effect as an anticipation or assume too much importance as an afterthought. By writing a complex sentence with an interruption, you can easily place one important element from the independent clause (for example, the subject) at the beginning and another (for example, the object) at the end, the most emphatic positions. If the dependent clause is clearly incidental, you should consider writing it as an interruption; but even if it is fairly important, you can point this up by proper punctuation. Of all the complex sentence patterns, this is perhaps the most subtle—the suspended thought and the periodicity conferred by interruption. The interruption is so adaptable, so varied in its possible contributions to a sentence that it is difficult to generalize about the construction. The writer has

considerable freedom in the matter of his subordinator and punctuation and can bend the sentence to make it do his will.

The interruption in Churchill's sentence, introduced by the subordinator *which* and enclosed by commas, is incidental; but the effect of the remainder of the statement is so much stronger because of that interposed remark. The important details in this sentence are "Richard's crown" and "the victor's head"; one comes at the very beginning and the other at the end where they will be most noticed and remembered by the reader. Notice, too, the balance of the verb-complement, verb-complement after the interruption, and how it is reinforced by the alliteration of "picked" and "placed."

Copy the Churchill sentence; then compose a similar complex sentence with an interruption. Elaborate the final parts of the sentence as Churchill has done, and place the important details at the beginning and end.

17 The Complex Sentence/Interruption (with punctuation only)

This tree, I learned quite early, was exactly my age, was, in a sense, me.

John Updike, *The Dogwood Tree: a Boyhood*

If the relation of the dependent clause to the independent clause is unmistakably clear, you may drop the subordinator and use only punctuation. Before surrounding an internal clause in a complex sentence with punctuation, however, you must be certain that it is, in fact, an interruption. A restrictive clause is essential to the sense of the sentence and cannot be separated from what it modifies without changing the meaning; it is not really an interruption and should not be isolated by punctuation. A nonrestrictive clause, although it may add a great deal to the sentence, is nevertheless incidental; it is an interruption and should be punctuated as one. In the Updike sentence both of the interruptive elements are nonrestrictive and require punctuation. Although it is technically an independent clause, "I learned quite early," is clearly subordinate to the main thought, "This tree was me," and to the sentence in which it appears complex rather than compound. The other interruptive element, "in a sense," is a prepositional phrase. What appears to be a third interruption is, because of the surrounding punctuation, a secondary verbal phrase. Together the interruptions delay the movement of the sentence considerably, and thereby emphasize the complement, "me." Since heavy stress also falls on the subject, "this tree," and verb "was," the reader must keep in mind the periodicity of the sentence. Because of the short words and the rhythm, the brevity and simplicity of the statement, the sentence is complicated but not

awkward. Even the most basic complex sentence with an interruption is a somewhat special pattern, not one to be written regularly.

The commas are, of course, right for the Updike sentence, but other marks can be used to punctuate an interruption. A true interruption must be surrounded by marks of some kind—commas, parentheses, dashes, semicolons, or colons—in a pair, except where the first comma or other mark of punctuation is replaced by a conjunction. As a rule, the longer and more interjectional the interruption, the stronger the punctuation. Commas mildly distinguish the interruption from the main clause; parentheses more decisively separate an interruption that is an aside or note; dashes strongly emphasize the interruption; semicolons and colons, rarely used to enclose interruptions, are most special and emphatic. At any rate, in punctuating an interruption you must decide, first, if the clause or other element is an interruption and if it should be punctuated, and, second, what punctuation should be used.

Copy the Updike sentence; then compose a similar complex sentence with interruptions. Indicate their relation to the main clause with punctuation rather than with a subordinator. Delay the movement of the sentence, as Updike does, with a variety of interruptive elements.

18 The Complex Sentence / Restrictive Interruption (with subordinator only)

All works of art which deserve their name have a happy end.

Joseph Wood Krutch, *The Modern Temper*

The dependent clause in Krutch's sentence is, in the strictest sense, not an interruption. Read the sentence without the restrictive clause, "which deserve their name," and the meaning is utterly changed. Krutch would never have written "All works of art have a happy end," for this is obvious nonsense. Still, even restrictive elements are interruptions in that they are something interposed between the subject, verb, and complement, and they separate these parts and delay completion of the sentence. Usually, such an interruption is identified by a subordinator, like the "which" in Krutch's sentence. Of course, too many that's, which's, and who's can ruin otherwise fluent prose by making it tedious and over formal. When the relationship is clear you might consider suppressing the subordinator, but this takes a good ear and acute judgment. Ordinarily, you are better off casting about for a subordinator that accurately points up the relationship between clauses.

Copy the Krutch sentence; then compose a similar complex sentence with an interruption. Delay the movement of the sentence with a restrictive clause

introduced by a subordinator but, of course, not separated from the dependent clause by punctuation.

19 The Complex Sentence/Afterthought (with subordinator and punctuation)

Amory had decided definitely on Princeton, even though he would be the only boy entering that year from St. Regis’.

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*

Because of its position in the sentence, the dependent clause is often more emphatic when written as an afterthought, especially when punctuated by something stronger than a comma. The Fitzgerald sentence, however, is an unexceptionally loose sentence (see example, p. 8). The main thought, “Amory had decided definitely on Princeton,” is expressed in the independent clause; the longer dependent clause, “even though he would be the only boy entering that year from St. Regis’,” marked by the comma and subordinator, is an afterthought that simply adds details and extends the sentence.

Copy the Fitzgerald sentence; then compose a similar complex sentence with an afterthought. Add subordinate details to the final parts of the sentence as he has done. But first, review the discussion of the loose sentence.

20 The Complex Sentence/Afterthought (with subordinator only)

The trees stood massively in all their summer foliage spotted and grouped upon a meadow which sloped gently down from the big white house.

Virginia Woolf, *Miss Ormerod*

If the afterthought is fairly short and not decidedly subordinate to the independent clause, then punctuation alone might effectively mark the dependent clause. Of course, if it were clearly restrictive, as in this sentence of G. K. Chesterton’s, “The artistic temperament is a disease that afflicts amateurs,” then you would not consider placing a comma before the afterthought; this would change the meaning. In the model sentence, the afterthought,

“which sloped gently down from the big white house,” even though nonrestrictive, is unpunctuated and has only the subordinator. Virginia Woolf played down the separateness of the clauses as well as the subordinate relation of the afterthought, fusing them into a single unemphatic statement.

The independent clause in Virginia Woolf’s sentence is complicated by the presence of an adverb, “massively,” a minor interruptive modifier, “in all their

summer foliage,” and past participles used as adjectives, “spotted” and “grouped”. The afterthought is made more specific and varied by adverbial and adjectival modification, “gently,” and “big white.” The sentence is, indeed, an example of a diffuse and extended style of writing, which in some contexts creates exactly the right effect; certainly, the easy sweep of the model is nevertheless unmarked by any punctuation.

Copy Virginia Woolf’s sentence; then compose a similar complex sentence with an afterthought that although clearly nonrestrictive, is nevertheless unmarked by any punctuation.

21 The Elaborated Complex Sentence

Early in May, the oaks, hickories, maples, and other trees, just putting out amidst the pine woods around the pond, imparted a brightness like sunshine to the landscape, especially in cloudy days, as if the sun were breaking through mists and shining faintly on the hillsides here and there.

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

Without changing its basic subordinate pattern, the complex sentence can be variously elaborated: The number of dependent clauses can be increased from one to two or more; these can be of many forms and take different positions in the sentence; punctuation marks and subordinators can relate the dependent clauses to the independent clause in several ways.

The Thoreau sentence is a fine example of the elaborated complex pattern, and it illustrates a surprising number of possibilities. “Early in May” is an anticipation; “the oaks, hickories, maples, and other trees” make the compound subject; “just putting out amidst the pine woods around the pond” is an interruption; “imparted . . . to the landscape” states the verb and its modifier; “a brightness like sunshine” is the object and its modifier; “especially in cloudy days” and “as if the sun were breaking through mists and shining faintly on the hillsides here and there” are afterthoughts. In spite of its syntactical complexity, the sentence is perfectly clear, partly because there is nothing abstract in the matter-of-fact observation and simple comparison nor in the vocabulary, and also because Thoreau in other ways (for example, by repetition—“sunshine,” “sun,” “shining”) sped the sentence on its way.

Copy the Thoreau sentence; then see if you can compose a similar elaborated complex sentence, with anticipation, interruption, and afterthoughts. The elaborated complex sentence and, indeed, the next several sentence forms are apt to be diffuse and obscure. Since they are an essential, if infrequently used, part of

your basic sentence repertoire, you must learn to write syntactically complicated sentences that are at the same time clear and effective.

22 The Compound-Complex Sentence

Years ago the British used to run a flying-boat service down through Africa, and although it was a slow and sometimes rather bumpy journey I can remember no flight that was quite so pleasant.

Alan Moorehead, *No Room in the Ark*

As the name implies, a compound-complex sentence is a combination of the two patterns; it coordinates and subordinates several thoughts in some intricate way. At the very least the compound-complex sentence consists of two independent clauses and a single dependent clause. Despite what you might suppose, the compound-complex sentence is often no longer than any of the simpler basic patterns. Logan Pearsall Smith writes, for instance, in *All Trivia*, "People say that life is the thing, but I prefer reading." Generally, however, it is somewhat longer and provides a convenient source of variety.

Alan Moorehead's compound-complex sentence is a classic example written in response to familiar circumstances. The closely related main thoughts, "Years ago the British used to run a flying-boat service down through Africa" and "I can remember no flight that was quite so pleasant," are where they should be, at the beginning and end of the sentence. The dependent clause, "and although it was a slow and sometimes rather bumpy journey," is all the more subordinate because it is sandwiched between the main thoughts. It is introduced but not concluded by a comma because it belongs with what follows, and it delays and reinforces the final and most important clause. Although this or, for that matter, any similar sentence could be written as two simpler sentences, by using the compound-complex pattern the writer can indicate more precisely the relationship among a number of details.

Copy the Moorehead sentence; then compose a similar compound-complex sentence.

23 The Elaborated Compound-Complex Sentence

Late one September night, as I sat reading, the very father of all waves must have flung himself down before the house, for the quiet of the night was suddenly overturned by a gigantic, tumbling crash and an earthquake rumbling; the beach

trembled beneath the avalanche, the dune shook, and my house so shook in its dune that the flame of a lamp quivered and pictures jarred on the wall.

Henry Beston, *The Outermost House*

Consisting of multiple independent and dependent clauses, the elaborated compound-complex sentence represents the upper limit of the sentence spectrum. The Beston sentence is composed of a dependent clause, five independent clauses, and a final dependent clause, almost all in some way modified and all concentrated into one sentence to emphasize the suddenness of the great wave's breaking and the instantaneous sequence of sound and shaking. Study also the alliteration and repetition, onomatopoeia and stunning diction—for example, “overturned” in that context in Beston's sentence. You will encounter such a sentence now and then in a narrative or descriptive passage where the substance is relatively concrete, but rarely in expository writing, where its length and intricacy is apt to hopelessly fog a more abstract statement.

The variety of basic patterns, from the simple sentence of two or three words to the elaborated compound-complex sentence of fifty or more, affirms the flexibility and sophistication of the English sentence. By making use of the full range of basic sentence patterns you have more control over variety emphasis, and design than you would have if you drew only from the middle of the spectrum. While most of the time you will rely on elaborated simple sentences, compound sentences, and complex sentences, to express yourself always with clarity and effectiveness you must have all the basic sentence patterns in your repertoire.

Now, copy the Beston sentence; then compose an elaborated compound-complex sentence, approximating the length and involvement of the model but not necessarily duplicating the pattern clause by clause. Be sure that the intricacies of coordination and subordination in your sentence are a natural consequence of what you wish to express.

24 The Representative-Series Sentence/Two-Part

How are we to find the knowledge of reality in the world without, or in the shifting, flowing fluid world within?

Archibald MacLeish, *Why Do We Teach Poetry?*

On many occasions in your writing, you must decide on the number of items to include in a series of examples, a series of modifications, a series of qualifications, or the like. Although at times the number of items is determined for you simply by the demands of truth and accuracy, more often the series you give to your reader is a representative one: Out of many, many possible items, you select a certain

number that are representative of what you desire to say or present in the way of content.

In creating a representative list when you wish to suggest totality, certainty, and absoluteness, choose two instances, details, or examples and present them coordinately. By giving two items, and no more, as a representation of the whole, you create an alpha-omega structure, saying in effect, "Here are two examples and two only; that is all that you need to know; it is a settled matter." When you use the two-part series your writing "voice" becomes highly confident.

Archibald MacLeish, for instance, has summed up the dimensions of his concern by reducing his content to an either/or statement in two distinct parts: The two-part series, comprising two prepositional phrases, "in the world without," "in the shifting, flowing fluid world within." Although his two-part series may seem to be inevitable, it is the result of choice and decision. Could he not have said something like, "How are we to find the knowledge of reality within ourselves, within our society, within our universe?"

Copy the MacLeish sentence; then compose a sentence that includes a definite two-part series.

25 The Representative-Series Sentence/Three-Part

All history teaches us that these questions that we think the pressing ones will be transmuted before they are answered, that they will be replaced by others, and that the very process of discovery will shatter the concepts that we today use to describe our puzzlement.

J. Robert Oppenheimer, *Prospects in the Arts and Sciences*

A representative series may be presented in three parts as well as in two. Less dogmatic and absolute than the two-part series, the three-part says in effect that you are willing to give one more example for the sake of fairness. Or, as Gilbert Highet says in his essay on The Gettysburg Address, in *A Clerk at Oxenford*, the three-part series "emphasizes basic harmony and unity." You will choose the three-part series when you wish to indicate a reasonable, judicious, and normal attitude toward your subject. Echoing the structure of the classical syllogism, this type of series is the most frequently used of the representative series simply because most writers, most of the time, wish to appear within the mainstream of order and reason. It is understandable that Professor Oppenheimer, speaking about history in an essay dealing with the arts and sciences (all matters within the province of academic concern and discipline) should use the three-part series to reflect the judicious, rational mode of the academic mind.

Like all representative series, the three-part series may be constructed from various elements—words, phrases, or even clauses— as in Professor Oppenheimer’s sentence: “that these questions that we think the pressing ones will be transmuted,” “that they will be replaced,” and “that the very process of discovery will shatter. . . .”

Copy the three-part series sentence given above, and then compose two similar sentences of your own. Use a different unit (word, phrase, or clause) in the series in each sentence.

26 The Representative-Series Sentence/Four-part

London was hideous, vicious, cruel, and above all overwhelming.

Henry James, *Italian Hours*

You can also use a four-part series in those occasions when you wish to indicate a more emotional, human-oriented, or subjective attitude in your writing. The four-part series is the series of involvement. It indicates that you, the writer, are concerned or even emotional about the subject at hand, and that you are willing to add yet another example beyond the three that is “average” for the sake of making sure that your reader grasps and comprehends the situation.

In the sentence above, Henry James presents a description of London in emotional terms, and it is fitting that he used the four-part series rather than the two or three-part series. James is presenting London not as an abstraction nor as an object of study but as the dwelling-place of human beings, and he is responding to the subject evaluatively, not judiciously or definitively.

In the four-part series, as in the other types of series, the units may be words (as in James’s sentence) or phrases. They may also be clauses as in this sentence by Robert Louis Stevenson:

They have no curiosity; they cannot give themselves over to random provocations; they do not take pleasure in the exercise of their faculties for its own sake; and unless Necessity lays about them with a stick, they will even stand still.

An Apology for Idlers

Stevenson, making several quick and related observations about human beings, about idlers, has appropriately used the four-part series.

Copy James’s four-part series sentence and also Stevenson’s; then compose two sentences of your own—one with adjectives, one with complete clauses—dealing

with human beings or some emotional situation, or taking an emotional view of some place or idea.

27 The Representative-Series Sentence/Five-or-more Part

There is not a more mean, stupid, dastardly, pitiful, selfish, spiteful, envious, ungrateful animal than the Public.

William Hazlitt, *On Living to One's Self*

Although the four-part series is indicative of a human, emotional, subjective, involved attitude, each additional lengthening of the series increases and magnifies this attitude, and begins to add an element of humor, even absurdity. Hazlitt, writing about human beings, the Public, his own "kind," uses the long series to indicate great involvement, great feeling, and a certain sense of humor about it all. The Public is mean, but so ornery that we almost have to laugh.

You might consider the different effects that would have been produced if Hazlitt had written any one of these sentences:

1. *There is no more stupid or ungrateful animal than the Public.*
2. *There is no more stupid, pitiful, or ungrateful animal than the Public.*
3. *There is no more stupid and selfish, envious and ungrateful animal than the Public.*

Can you hear in these various sentences different tones of voice, different attitudes and approaches to the subject as a result of using different kinds of representative series?

Copy Hazlitt's long-series sentence, and then compose a sentence of your own in which you use a series of at least five units. Write on some subject that you think deserves just a touch of laughter.

II THE STYLISTIC SENTENCE

A stylistic sentence is a basic sentence modified or transformed to produce some special effect. Having learned to write a great many basic sentences, you are now ready to enrich or “dress up” your basic sentences in order that you may more precisely and completely achieve the exact rhetorical profile you need in a particular composition.

Stylistic sentences can do a number of things for you: They¹ can help establish emphasis; they can indicate climaxes; they can provide variation within a plain and common style; and they can help establish and maintain an elaborate and eventful literary style. In general, they can assist you in your manipulation of stylistic intensity.

If you were to write using only basic sentences, you would not be writing poorly, but you would probably not be writing as effectively as possible. If you were to paint only with primary colors, perhaps you would not paint so colorfully and flexibly as you might if you mixed these primary colors to get secondary ones. Stylistic sentences are like secondary colors: They are the more subtle, at times even more exotic, hues that the skilled artist employs.

Clifton Fadiman once wrote, “Purely purposive prose can become so dull as to fail of its purpose, which first of all presupposes the engagement of the attention.” Stylistic sentences are especially geared to engage the reader’s attention. Indeed the stylistic sentence might be called the noticeable sentence, for it not only communicates with the reader but also begins to intrigue him by the very way it is put together.

By mastering the various forms of stylistic sentences, you will be able to intrigue your reader, to engage his attention to the extent that seems best at any given time. On certain occasions you may wish your writing to be low-keyed, rather plain, but on other occasions you may wish to make it highly eventful, elaborate—even unusual. In between these two possibilities there are, of course, numerous shadings and gradations of stylistic intensity that you can establish. With the proper use of stylistic sentences along with basic sentences, you can usually produce the tone and manner that you have in mind. As you increase the number of stylistic sentences in your writing, you will increase the elaborateness and eventfulness of your prose. And, as you will soon discover, stylistic sentences themselves differ in their degrees of intensity: Some are more elaborate and eventful than others.

A stylistic sentence may be engendered from a basic sentence in various ways: by altering the basic sequence of words and their syntax; by introducing elements of design and pattern; by interrupting the normal flow of the sentence; and by adding repetitions, metaphors, alliterations, and various rhythms. Indeed, you will

find many, many ways to construct stylistic sentences, many of these ways so well established in the art of composition that they have definite (and ancient!) technical names, names you may wish to learn when they are presented.

As you practice the various stylistic sentences given on the following pages, keep in mind that they are to be used in conjunction with basic sentences. Remember, that if you are to write well, you must always draw from the full spectrum of sentence types—i both basic and stylistic. No one sentence form, no one group of sentence types, is better than another. Good writing is usually eclectic. Your goal is to build as large a repertoire as possible.

As you did in your study of basic sentences, copy the model sentence:

Our automatic response is stronger than our intellectual awareness.

E. H. Gombrich, *Meditations on a Hobby Horse and Other Essays*

and then write a similarly-constructed sentence of your own:

My unlimited expenses are always greater than my restricted income.

1 The Repetition Sentence 1 (with Key Word Repeated)

A friend in power is a friend lost.

Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams*

If your readers dislike you, they will dislike what you say.

F. L. Lucas, *Style*

Perpetual devotion to what a man calls his business is only to be sustained by perpetual neglect of many other things.

Robert Louis Stevenson, *An Apology for Idlers*

One of the things you can do to transform a basic sentence into a stylistic sentence is to repeat a key word. In Henry Adams's sentence, the repetition of the noun "friend" not only gives emphasis to "friend" itself, but also distinguishes the entire sentence from a more ordinary expression of the same thought. Adams might have written, "A friend in power is lost" or "Once a friend has power, he is lost" or "We lose our friends when they gain power." Adams chose, however, for stylistic reasons, a more structured form.

Such key-word repetition—it may be the repetition of a noun, or a verb as in F. L. Lucas's sentence, or an adjective as in Robert Louis Stevenson's sentence—often occurs in a separate phrase or clause that is clearly removed from the initial

appearance of the key word. A part of this type of sentence's effectiveness results from the reader's encountering the key word after intervening words have occurred.

Sentences with a single key-word repetition in them frequently have an aphoristic quality, and therefore are valuable to use when you are expressing something you consider an indisputable, important, or memorable truth.

Copy each of the three sentences given above; then compose three sentences of your own, one in which you repeat the major noun in the sentence, one in which you repeat a verb, and one in which you repeat an adjective.

2 The Repeated-Word Sentence (Epizeuxis)

For to mean anything high enough and hard enough is to fail, fail joyously.
John Ciardi, "Manner of Speaking" June 24, 1967

Surrounded by her listeners, she talked in a slow circle in her fine deep voice, the word 'perception' occurring again and, again and yet again like the brass ring the children snatch for as their hobby horses whirl by.

Katherine Anne Porter, *Gertrude Stein: A Self-Portrait*

They hire English nannies, if possible, always nice middling women with sensible hairdos, sensible clothes, and sensible shoes.

Tom Wolfe, *The Nanny Mafia*

Another form of key-word repetition used to achieve the stylistic sentence is the repetition of the same word in close proximity. John Ciardi, in his sentence, has repeated the word "enough" with only two words between, and he has repeated "fail" with no words intervening. Such close repetitions are technically known as epizeuxis and are an important way to emphasize particular words. They also give a sentence a certain focus and climax, and they frequently give the sentence a special rhythmical quality.

Epizeuxis can occur with any part of speech: In Ciardi's sentence it is achieved with an adverb and also a verb; in Katherine Anne Porter's sentence, with an adverb; and in Tom Wolfe's sentence, with an adjective.

Copy each of the above three sentences; then compose three sentences of your own in which you repeat words in close sequence. Vary the part of speech of the repeated words from one sentence to the next.

3 The Repeated-Word Sentence (with Extended Repetition)

All the more strange, then, is it that we should wish to know Greek, try to know Greek, feel forever drawn back to Greek, and be forever making up for some notion of the meaning of Greek, though from what incongruous odds and ends, with what slight resemblance to the real meaning of Greek, who shall say?

Virginia Woolf, *On Not Knowing Greek*

Word repetition can be extended to some length in the stylistic sentence, becoming something like a refrain or chorus. Virginia Woolf has presented the word “Greek” five times to achieve extreme emphasis and to create a sentence seemingly “nailed together” with the repeated word. We can almost hear the hammer blows as Virginia Woolf pounds in the word “Greek,” fastening the sentence together. Extended repetition is a valuable device to use when you wish to suggest a certain amount of compulsiveness, weary vexation, anger, or even irritation; it is a valuable kind of sentence to use in criticism, argument, and disputation.

Copy the above sentence; then compose a sentence of your own in which word repetition is carried on at some length. Write a sentence dealing with an issue or subject that especially concerns you or disturbs you.

4 Repositioned-Adjective Sentence

Salisbury Plain is barren of criticism, but Stonehenge will bear a discussion antiquarian, picturesque, and philosophical.

William Hazlitt, *On Going a Journey*

Consider what dreams must have dominated the builders of the Pyramids—dreams geometrical, dreams funereal, dreams of resurrection, dreams of outdoing the pyramid of some other Pharaoh!

George Santayana, *Soliloquies in England*

Another easy way to transform a basic sentence into a stylistic one is to move words from their normal syntactical position into a more unusual position, and the easiest kind of word to manipulate in such a way is the adjective. Hazlitt achieved an interesting sentence simply by moving his three adjectives from in front of the noun “discussion” and presenting them after the noun. Instead of writing “Salisbury Plain is barren of criticism, but Stonehenge will bear an antiquarian, picturesque, and philosophical discussion,” Hazlitt moved his adjectives to emphasize the adjectives themselves and to give the entire sentence a new and unusual structure and sound. In doing so, he lifted the sentence from a pedestrian level to a more

noticeable level. The repositioned-adjective sentence can be used for variation in a passage of writing that relies heavily upon adjective modification.

In Santayana's sentence we find another dramatic version of the repositioned adjective. This sentence is certainly more dramatic than a more basic version: "Consider what geometrical and funereal dreams of resurrection must have dominated the builders of the Pyramids who yearned to outdo the pyramid of some other Pharaoh!" Notice, too, that Santayana's sentence is doubly dramatic since it makes use not only of adjectives moved from their normal position but it also makes use of key-word repetition. This sentence is a good example of how a writer can begin to compound stylistic intensity and elaborateness in a sentence by doing more than one noticeable thing at the same time.

Copy the above two sentences; then compose two sentences of your own—one in which you present one or more adjectives after the noun rather than in front, and another in which you use not only unusual adjective placement but also some form of word repetition. You may wish to prepare for this exercise by first writing a descriptive sentence in which you employ a number of adjectives, all in the normal front-of-the-noun position, and then rewriting your sentence with one or two of your adjectives moved to an unusual position for the sake of emphasis or simple variation.

5 The Rhetorical Question

Are they not criminals, books that have wasted our time and sympathy; are they not the most insidious enemies of society, corruptors, defilers, the writers of false books, faked books, books that fill the air with decay and disease?

Virginia Woolf, *How Should One Read a Book?*

A standard, and in many ways easy, method of giving stylistic aura to a sentence is to convert it into a rhetorical question. Virginia Woolf could easily have left her sentence in its basic form: "Books that have wasted our time and sympathy are criminals; writers of false books, faked books, books that fill the air with decay and disease are the most insidious enemies, corruptors, and defilers of society." By converting the statement into a question, she gave it a new stylistic dimension. You will note, however, that she could have presented the rhetorical question in the positive, rather than in the negative: "Are they criminals . . . ; are they the most insidious . . . ," but by including the "not" she forces the reader into agreement and affirmation.

If you were to start with a basic statement, "The sky is dark blue," you might achieve a stylistic conversion by asking, "Is the sky dark blue?" in a context that

suggests a “yes” answer or by asking the question “Is not the sky dark blue?” so as to demand a “yes” answer. The difference in the two forms of rhetorical question is that the negative form is less subtle in its request for agreement.

Note that, stylistically, Virginia Woolf does several other things in her sentence: She shuns the ordinary syntax, “Are books not criminals,” and uses instead “Are they not criminals, books . . . and she repeats the key word “books.”

Copy the rhetorical question given above; then compose a similar question of your own, that is based upon some prior declaration or statement. Write both your basic statement and your “question form” of it.

6 The Interrupted Sentence (The Explanation)

They have observed—that is to say, they have really seen— nothing.

Arnold Bennett, *The Author’s Craft*

How then does a man—be he good or bad—big or little—a philosopher or a fribble—St. Paul or Horace Walpole—make his memoirs interesting?

Augustine Birrell, *Obiter Dicta*

Stylistic sentences may be achieved by the judicious use of interruptions. You have already copied and composed the interrupted sentence in your study of basic sentences, but now you will want to note the particular stylistic uses to which the interrupted sentence can be put.

The interrupted sentence is used in two ways. One, the interruption can draw attention to that element in the sentence that follows the interruption. In Arnold Bennett’s sentence the word “nothing” receives a special emphasis because of the suspenseful nature of the words preceding it. Two, the interruption frequently acts as a kind of brake on the rhythm of the sentence and consequently can indicate termination: The concluding sentence in a paragraph or whole composition is frequently of an interrupted nature—interrupted so as to “put on the brake” verbally, as the writer brings a particular unit of composition to its conclusion.

Interruptions may be of any length, of course, and may be of a complex nature, made up of various separate items. In Birrell’s sentence, there is a deliberate use of the interruption to create stylistic suspense and to give greater emphasis to the concluding words. In this sentence you will note that the device of interruption has been joined with the device of the rhetorical question for a more complex stylistic effect.

Copy the two interrupted sentences; then compose two of your own—one with a rather simple interruption focusing attention upon the word that follows the interruption, and one with a complex interruption of several items.

7 The Interrupted Sentence (The Aside)

Even mathematical solutions (though here I speak with trembling) can have aesthetic beauty.

F. L. Lucas, *Style*

Some interruptions are more digressive than others. While the usual interruption may be an appositive or a modification or a direct explanation, the interruption can become something like an “aside” and truly parenthetical, whether presented within parentheses or not. Such digressive interruptions may be more startling than other kinds of interruptions and are frequently placed within parentheses to indicate that they are to be “spoken with a whisper.” Digressive interruptions, the whispered asides, can be used stylistically to soften content, to give increased importance to what follows the aside, to establish the very nature of the persona in a composition, or simply to relieve the bluntness of a direct style.

Consider Lucas’s sentence. A basic statement, “Even mathematical solutions can have aesthetic beauty” has been modified by the interruption so that the reader is put in brief suspense following the word “solutions”; he is forced to wait a few words before finding out what Lucas has to say about his subject. Also, the aside, “though here I speak with trembling,” gives a new quality to the sentence by adding—to a statement that sounds like the premise of a syllogism—a certain personal, human, and subjective quality. To keep the sentence from being strictly declarative and expository, Lucas uses the digressive interruption to introduce a softening tone. The sentence becomes less didactic and slightly more dramatic. In addition, the concluding words “aesthetic beauty” take on new emphasis as a result of their delay.

Copy the sentence above; then compose a similar sentence containing a digressive interruption by using parentheses.

8 The Structured Series (Balance)

An event may seem to us amusing or pathetic.

Joseph Wood Krutch, *Experience and Art*

He who enters the sphere of faith enters the sanctuary of life.

Paul Tillich, *The Dynamics of Faith*

If we wish life to be a system, this may be a nuisance; but if we wish it to be a drama, it is an essential.

G. K. Chesterton, *Heretics*

You have written a number of basic sentences that contained representative series. Such series can be part of a stylistic sentence if you attend to the length of the units within the series. Without thinking about it, you may create units of various lengths; but, on certain occasions, you can, if you wish, take care to see that the units are the same length, are equalized into a definite architecture. Such a structure, having units that are the same length, is called an isocolon. With equal-length units, a series becomes more noticeable, more controlled, and more emphatic.

When only two units are involved, the resulting equal-length structure is called a balance. The balance may consist of two words, as “amusing” and “pathetic” in Joseph Wood Krutch’s sentence; or of longer units, as the phrases in Tillich’s sentence—“the sphere of faith” and “the sanctuary of life”; or even of clauses, as in Chesterton’s sentence. In the Chesterton example the entire sentence is involved in the balance and represents the most controlled structural form a writer can achieve with a two-part series.

Whenever you write a sentence, if you can add a dimension of perfect structure and architecture by using units of equal size, you will make your writing more noticeable and eventful—an effect you will desire when your rhetorical profile calls for some degree of heightening.

Copy the three sentences above; then compose three sentences of your own in which you balance first two individual words, then two independent clauses, and then two prepositional phrases used as adjectives.

9 Compound-Balance Sentence

The room was solid and rich; it was established and quiet.

Robert Allen Durr, *The Last Days of H. L. Mencken*

Two balanced structures can be joined in a single sentence to create an even more elaborate balance. You should master this sentence type that compounds the balancing effect. In Durr's sentence you find an overall balance—"The room was solid and rich" balanced with "it was established and quiet." Yet each item in that overall balance contains its own balance: "Solid is balanced with "rich," and "established" is balanced with "quiet." By compounding a structural effect, the dramatic quality of a sentence is doubly increased.

Copy the above compound-balance sentence; then compose a similar sentence of your own.

10 The Structured Series (Tricolon)

He was, indeed, in every sense of the word, a wise, a good, and a great man.

Thomas Jefferson, A letter on the character of George Washington

Creation, property, enjoyment form a sinister trinity in the human mind.

E. M. Forster, *My Wood*

One of the most frequently used forms of the structured series is the tricolon—a three-part series with units of equal length. The tricolon is always dramatic, and it has been used for such grandiose announcements as Caesar's "I came, I saw, I conquered" and Lincoln's "of the people, by the people, for the people." The tricolon effects a dramatic presentation of the reasonable and judicious position; and perhaps for that reason, it is one of the most popular stylistic constructions. Jefferson has an exact tricolon in "a wise," "a good," and "a great." Forster has an exact tricolon with his three trisyllabic words, "creation," "property," and "enjoyment."

Because the tricolon is so effective a device of rhetoric and style, it can be overused; therefore, a writer should keep in mind the distinctions between two-part, three-part, and four-part series in general, and if he decides to use the three-part series, he should make sure he wants the series given the extra emphasis and attention that the tricolon will confer.

Copy the two sentences above; then compose two sentences of your own in which you use the tricolon.

11 The Structured Series (Four-Part)

Logic, eloquence, wit, taste, all those things which are generally considered as making a book valuable, were utterly wanting to him.

Thomas Babington Macaulay, *Review of Crocker's Edition of Boswell's Life of Johnson*

The four-part series can also have units of approximately the same length; indeed, any series can be so structured. In the sentence above, Macaulay presents four one-word units in his series; and, while the first two words are polysyllabic and the last two words are monosyllabic, the sense of exact structure prevails. Not only does Macaulay's series connote, because of its four items, "the human being," but because of its carefully structured one-two-three-four sequence, the series is given special importance, particular emphasis. Macaulay, indeed, would seem to be saying that not only are these the characteristics that sophisticated human beings put into their writing but also that these characteristics should not be overlooked or ignored.

Copy the sentence above; then compose a sentence of your own in which the units in a four-part or even a five-part series are of approximately the same length.

12 The Symmetrical Sentence

Effeminacy is fatal.

Dixon Wecter, *The Hero in America*

Imagination means individuation.

Stephen Spender, *The Imagination in the Modern World*

In addition to balancing the units of a two-part series, you may also write a sentence in which one part is balanced against the other. This sort of symmetrical sentence is achieved by presenting units of equal length on either side of a central verb. The symmetrical sentence is usually quite short, every word in it is involved in the balance. Wecter's sentence of just three words presents a noun on one side of the pivotal verb and an adjective on the other. Stephen Spender has done even more: He has not only a noun balanced with another noun, but he has also taken care that both words begin with i and end with tion. By placing on either side of the verb words of similar sound and spelling, Spender has given an additional intensification to the symmetrical sentence.

Structured as though on a fulcrum, the symmetrical sentence is emphatic and frequently aphoristic. It is often used—because of its startling and abbreviated structural nature—in opening positions at the beginnings of paragraphs or whole compositions, usually followed by explanations and details. It is a splendid kind of sentence for startling declarations and premises, even though some sort of proof or illustration must of necessity come after.

Copy these symmetrical sentences; then compose two of your own. Limit each to three words. Use *is* as the pivotal verb in one sentence; then try to find another equalizing verb for your second sentence.

13 The Negative-Positive Sequence

A tragic writer does not have to believe in God, but he must believe in man.

Joseph Wood Krutch, *The Modern Temper*

He suddenly saw the fields, not as solid flat objects covered with grass or useful crops and dotted with trees, but as colour in astonishing variety and subtlety of gradation.

Joyce Carey, *Art and Reality*

Many times you may present a two-part series in a negative-positive form: “not this, but that.” Presenting not only the certainty of a two-part series but presenting it in so definite a no/yes or black/white version, you can create a particular and exceptional tension.

Such-negative-positive two-part series are effectively used when you wish to communicate certainty—and at the same time wish to give the second part of the series special importance. By presenting the negative, the positive becomes even stronger. By presenting the negative, you suggest that you are not only “certain” but also that you are taking into consideration any contrary argument, in order that your “certainty” will become imperative.

Consider how different Krutch’s sentence would have been if he had written, “A tragic writer may be an atheist, but he must believe in man.” The absoluteness of the two-part series would have remained, but a certain forcefulness would be lost. An additional degree of intensity was added to the sentence by Krutch’s repetition of the key word “believe.”

Consider, too, how different the effect of Joyce Carey’s sentence would have been if he had written, “He suddenly saw the fields—normally viewed as solid flat objects covered with grass or useful crops and dotted with trees—now as colour in astonishing variety and subtlety of gradation.” Carey added the negative in order to highlight his concern with the color.

Note that Carey has compounded his two-part series: the first item in the series, “not as solid flat objects covered with grass or useful crops and dotted with trees,” contains its own two-part series, “covered with grass or useful crops” and “dotted with trees.” And the first item of that interior series contains a two-part series, “grass” and “useful crops.” In addition the second item of the overall series, “but as colour in astonishing variety and subtlety of gradation,” contains an interior two-part series, “variety” and “subtlety.” Whereas Krutch combined negative-positive presentation with key-word repetition to increase the intensity of his sentence, Carey has combined negative-positive presentation with interior two-part series to increase both tension and intensity.

Copy these negative-positive sentences; then compose two of your own. Compose one containing a negative-positive sequence without any additional device of intensity. Then compose another sentence containing the negative-positive sequence along with some additional device, such as key-word repetition or interior series.

14 Positive-Negative Sequence

I was told about missionaries, but never about pirates; I was familiar with hummingbirds, but I had never heard of fairies.

Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son*

Reason can dissect, but cannot originate; she can adopt, but cannot create; she can modify, but cannot find.

Horatio Greenough, *Form and Function*

High-tension sentences can also be created by presenting two items in positive-negative order. When the positive is presented first, however, the sentence takes on a particular negative note; there is more complaint in such a sentence, more criticism. When you write in “this, not that” form, you are giving a certain stress to the negative, the absent, the weak, the unfortunate within your content.

Edmund Gosse’s sentence is essentially a complaint. It would have had a much more positive tone if he had written, “I was never told about pirates, but I was told about missionaries; I had never heard of fairies, but I was familiar with hummingbirds.” At least the complaint and criticism would have been greatly softened. Likewise, Greenough’s sentence would have been quite different if he had written, “Reason cannot originate, but can dissect; she cannot create, but can adopt; she cannot find, but can modify.” Greenough’s sentence, as actually written—in a

positive-negative sequence—is a sharper, more militant criticism of reason and the rational mind.

Copy these two positive-negative sentences; then compose two of your own dealing with something worthy of your complaint and criticism.

15 Antithesis

The loftiest edifices need the deepest foundations.

George Santayana, *Reason in Society*

Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish, I give my hand and my heart to this vote.

Daniel Webster, *Eulogy on Adams and Jefferson*

Extreme tension can be achieved in sentences by presenting balanced elements in direct opposition to each other. A balance of opposites is called an antithesis, and it is one of the most popular of the intensifying devices in style. Antithesis may be especially useful to you when you wish to emphasize discrepancies and contrasts, or wish to magnify unlikely relationships.

Santayana, in his sentence, has used antithesis to emphasize the relationship between the seen and the unseen parts of a structure; he has achieved intensification by balancing both his adjectives and nouns. Daniel Webster, in turn, has used a series of antitheses, not only to suggest the totality of his conviction, but also to suggest that this totality takes into consideration all polarities and that his conviction is so firm that it will survive whatever the circumstances.

Copy the two antithetical sentences; then compose two of your own. In your second sentence use a series of antitheses as Daniel Webster did.

16 Antimetabole

But if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought.

George Orwell, *Politics and the English Language*

An even more elaborate form of intensification occurs in a two-part series when two elements constitute one part of a balance and are then reversed to compose the second part of a balance. In Orwell's sentence we see that "thought . . . language" becomes "language . . . thought." This reversal of parts in a balance, involving exact words, is called antimetabole. It is, of course, a powerfully intense construction and, as such, is used only on rare occasions.

Copy Orwell's sentence containing antimetabole; then compose a similar sentence.

17 Asyndeton

He has had his intuition, he has made his discovery, he is eager to explore it, to reveal it, to fix it down.

Joyce Carey, *Art and Reality*

We hear the hum of life in the field; a horse champs his bit; a butterfly circles and settles.

Virginia Woolf, *The Novels of Turgenev*

You can stylistically modify any series, whatever its length, by manipulating the conjunctions within the series. You usually write a series with one conjunction, which comes between the last and next-to-the-last items. If you omit that conjunction, you have employed the device of asyndeton, and your series is pushed together into a more definite, single event or action or condition: The sense of time is speeded up and you have given your reader the impression that what you are talking about is one event occurring all-at-once.

In the sentence by Joyce Carey and the sentence by Virginia Woolf, you can anticipate the difference in effect if a conjunction had been used: "He has had his intuition, he has made his discovery, and he is eager to explore it, to reveal it, and to fix it down," and "We hear the hum of life in the fields; a horse champs his bit; and a butterfly circles and settles." With the conjunction the sentences are more ordinary; without it they are more compressed, more instantaneous, and more dramatic.

Copy these two sentences; then compose two sentences of your own containing asyndeton.

18 Polysyndeton

It was a hot day and the sky was very bright and blue and the road was white and dusty.

Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*

It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past.

William Faulkner, *Nobel Prize speech, 1950*

The opposite of asyndeton is polysyndeton: an abundant use of conjunctions in a series. Polysyndeton enables you to stretch what you are saying out over a longer piece of time and enables you to distinguish each item of a series from its companions: Polysyndeton separates each item of a series into a distinct or discrete experience.

Hemingway is famous for his use of polysyndeton; and Faulkner, in this sentence from his well-known Nobel Prize speech, makes tremendously effective use of polysyndeton in conjunction with a long series. Faulkner is calling attention to the human and the emotional, but the virtues he lists are not simply those of a single moment (if they were, asyndeton would have been used), but these virtues persist through the “glory of the past” into the present moment.

Copy the above two sentences; then compose two similar sentences in which you use many conjunctions to indicate an extension of experience over a long period of time and to indicate the distinct identity of each item in the series.

19 Anaphora

The reason why I object to Dr. Johnson’s style is, that there is no discrimination, no selection, no variety in it.

William Hazlitt, *On Familiar Style*

Art, for most Americans, is a very queer fish—it can’t be reasoned with, it can’t be bribed, it can’t be doped out or duplicated; above all, it can’t be cashed in on.

Louis Kronenberger, *America and Art*

Another intensifying device you can use in constructing a series of any length is anaphora: beginning each item in the series with the same word or words. In Hazlitt’s tricolon, you will note that he has begun each item with the word “no”: “no discrimination, no selection, no variety.” In Louis Kronenberger’s long series, each item begins with the words “it can’t be.”

You will use anaphora to give a pounding emphasis to each item in a series, and thereby elevate the entire series onto a more intense and dramatic level of writing. To create anaphora, you can employ more than one word; whereas Hazlitt uses only “no” in the anaphora, Kronenberger, uses three words, “it can’t be.” As anaphora deepens, as more and more words are repeated at the beginning of each item, the more intense the device becomes.

Copy the above two sentences; then compose two of your own in which you employ anaphora.

20 Epistrophe

To the good American many subjects are sacred: sex is sacred, women are sacred, children are sacred, business is sacred, America is sacred, Masonic lodges and college clubs are sacred.

George Santayana, *Character and Opinion in the United States*

Raphael paints wisdom; Handel sings it, Phidias carves it, Shakespeare writes it, Wren builds it, Columbus sails it, Luther preaches it, Washington arms it, Watt mechanizes it.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Civilization*

Of equal intensity with anaphora is epistrophe: ending each item in a series with the same word or words. Epistrophe is a dramatic way of showing the common denominator that unites a diverse series of subjects, and epistrophe forces a reader to an inescapable awareness of each item by placing it before a recurring terminal word or words.

Santayana, for instance, makes us hear with startling clarity the words “sex,” “women,” “children,” “business,” “America,” and “Masonic lodges and college clubs” because they are all placed against a common background: the word “sacred.” How different would Santayana’s sentence have been if it read in a simpler form: “To the good American many subjects are sacred: sex, women, children, business, America, Masonic lodges and college clubs.” In such an ordinary series, neither the word “sacred” nor any individual item in the series would have challenged our attention.

Likewise, in Emerson’s sentence we hear much more loudly and clearly the words “Raphael paints,” “Handel sings,” “Phidias carves,” “Shakespeare writes,” “Wren builds,” and so on because they are noticeable variations placed in contrast with the constant “it.”

With epistrophe, a sentence is given a rich, driving power. You will find this device valuable to use when you have to present a number of items that have some common characteristic or feature.

Copy the above two sentences; then compose two sentences in which you use epistrophe. Use a three-part series in one sentence and a five-part series in the other.

21 Symploce

*I was born an American; I will live an American; I shall die
an American.*

Daniel Webster, *Speech, July 17, 1850*

Finally, you can combine anaphora and epistrophe to create the inescapable effect of symploce. By beginning each item with the same word and by closing each item with the same word, you achieve a double-barreled stylistic effect that is especially dramatic and emphatic.

Copy the above sentence; then compose one in which you use the device of symploce. Begin each item in the series, whatever its length, with the same word or words, and close each item in the series with the same word or words.

22 Anadiplosis

*And there they have it, the color called Landlord's Brown, immune to time, flood,
tropic heat, arctic chill, punk rumbles, slops, blood, leprotic bugs, cockroaches the
size of mice, mice the size of rats, rats the size of Airedales and lumpenprole
tenants.*

Tom Wolfe, *Putting Daddy On*

*We have lost our concern with the ends because we have lost our touch with reality
and we have lost our touch with reality because we are estranged from the means
to reality which is the poem—the work of art.*

Archibald MacLeish, *Why Do We Teach Poetry?*

*This is great poetry, and it is dramatic; but besides being poetic and dramatic, it is
something more.*

T. S. Eliot, *Poetry and Drama*

*Passing bells are ringing all the world over. All the world over and every hour,
someone is parting company with all his aches and ecstasies.*

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Aes Triplex*

In a long-series sentence where the series has been extended to the point of absurdity, Tom Wolfe has used yet another stylistic transformation: ending one item in the series with the word that begins the next item—"the size of mice, the size of rats, rats the size of Airedales. . . ." This device is called anadiplosis. You will use anadiplosis to give a sentence—or at least that part of the sentence in which it

occurs—a greater continuity and a slower tempo (anadiplosis puts a sentence into something like slow motion) . You will also use this device to give additional emphasis to the words involved.

You are not limited to the series in the use of anadiplosis, however. It can be used in any sentence that has two or more phrases or clauses. In Archibald MacLeish's sentence the words "we have lost our touch with reality" are repeated at the beginning of the next clause, "and we have lost our touch with reality."

Anadiplosis is sometimes muted—that is, more suggested than actually achieved in the technical sense. In T. S. Eliot's sentence the words "poetry" and "dramatic" are taken from the first part of the sentence and "poetic" and "dramatic" are used to begin the second part. The effect is that of anadiplosis, and the same continuity, emphasis, overlapping, and slow-motion is achieved.

Anadiplosis may occur at the end of the one sentence and the beginning of the next sentence, as in the sentences from Stevenson's *Aes Triplex*.

Copy the four sentences; then compose two sentences of your own containing anadiplosis.

23 The Circular Sentence (Epanalepsis)

Across the United States of America, from New York to California and back, glazed, again, for many months of the year there streams and sings for its heady supper a dazed and prejudiced procession of European lecturers, scholars, sociologists, economists, writers, authorities on this and that and even, in theory, on the United States of America.

Dylan Thomas, *A Visit to America*

Beginning and ending a clause or a sentence with the same word or words is called epanalepsis. Epanalepsis creates something like a circular sentence in that it ends where it began. Using epanalepsis, Dylan Thomas has written a razzle-dazzle sentence one that boasts a complex series and high diction as well—typical of the intense, elaborate style for which he is famous.

This fairly long sentence makes a complete circle: "United States of America . . . United States of America." Thomas has used it at the beginning of an essay to get the essay off to a rollicking start. Many writers do such a thing: Start a composition with an attention-getting sentence, employing some elaborate stylistic device, such as the circular sentence.

Copy Dylan Thomas's sentence; then compose a similar sentence that begins and ends with the same words.

24 The Circular Sentence (Modified Epanalepsis)

His illness was beyond all hope of healing before anyone realized that he was ill.

James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*

America had to be made before it would be lived in, and that making took centuries, took extraordinary energies and bred an attitude of life that is peculiarly American.

D. W. Brogan, *The American Character*

Different ages have answered the question differently.

Virginia Woolf, *The Patron and the Crocus*

Sometimes circular sentences make use of modified epanalepsis, employing not the same word at the beginning and end but some form of the same word. (Whenever you use a variant form of a word, you are using the device of polyptoton.) In Baldwin's sentence "illness" and "ill" create a modified epanalepsis and effect a circular sentence. The circular sentence is especially effective if there is one central theme a writer wishes to emphasize, as James Baldwin wishes to emphasize illness. By beginning and ending with the same idea, Baldwin seems to say that illness was the sum of his father's final days; it was an all-encompassing and total event and experience.

Likewise, in Brogan's sentence no one can mistake the main concern: The subject, "America," is absolutely reinforced by being placed at the beginning and, as "American," at the end of the sentence. In Virginia Woolf's sentence the modified epanalepsis creates an aphoristic quality—closing the sentence off, rounding it into completeness, as though to say there is nothing beyond this sentence.

Copy these three sentences; then compose three of your own in which modified epanalepsis is used. Write one expressing the total domination of a subject that you name at the beginning and end of the sentence. Write another that expresses what you consider a truth about life, again naming the subject at the beginning and end of the sentence.

25 The Figurative Sentence (Simile)

Like a piece of ice on a hot stove the poem must ride on its own melting.

Robert Frost, *The Figure a Poem Makes*

Ah, what a mistress, this Etna! with her strange winds prowling round her like Circe's panthers, some black, some white.

An idea is frequently presented in a most intense manner when it is compared—startling, dramatically, and unexpectedly—with some highly picturable object, person, or event. Comparisons that are literal are not especially exciting, but comparisons made between different worlds of experience, differing planes of reality become dramatic figures that are an essential part of a writer’s stylistic material. Adding a figure to a literal basic sentence is a sure way to transform the basic into the stylistic.

Figures traditionally have a tenor—the idea or subject you are actually talking about—and a vehicle—the object, person, or event that you introduce for the sake of the startling comparison. In Robert Frost’s figure, the “poem” is the tenor and “a piece of ice” is the vehicle. By comparing a poem to a piece of ice, Frost has concretized and made picturable something he wants to say about the nature of the poetic art. And by making the comparison very explicit, by using the word like so the reader will be certain to notice the comparison, Frost has used what is technically known as a simile.

Similes can be combined with other stylistic devices, of course. D. H. Lawrence, in his sentence, has combined the simile with another form of figurative language, personification, and has, in addition, used a two-part series, “some black, some white,” intensified by balance, antithesis, and anaphora. Whereas Frost has compared an abstraction “poem” with the concrete “ice,” Lawrence has compared the unseeable “winds” with living animals; the difference between the two similes suggests how diverse and creative a writer can be in composing figurative sentences.

Copy these two figurative sentences; then compose two of your own. Remember a good simile—or, in general, any good figure—is one that is novel and fresh, and that truly adds new insight to the subject you are discussing.

26 The Figurative Sentence (Metaphor)

Nay, to conclude upon a note of grandeur, it is by ignorance alone that we advance through the rough seas of this our mortal life.

Hilaire Belloc, *In Praise of Ignorance*

Less explicit than the simile is the metaphor, wherein the words like or as are omitted. As figures become less explicit, they become stylistically more effective and intense. A metaphor may be presented in this fashion: “Our mortal life is a rough sea.” Or it may be presented, as Belloc has done, in an even more subtle

way: "the rough seas of this our mortal life." This form of metaphor is sometimes called a condensed metaphor, and it is one of the most effective devices you can use in your writing.

Copy Belloc's sentence; then compose a sentence containing a condensed metaphor.

27 The Figurative Sentence (Reification)

The winds that scattered the Spanish Armada blew English Literature, which had been merely smouldering for generations, into a blaze of genius.

J. B. Priestley, *Literature and Western Man*

By comparing such an intangible subject as "English Literature" with so tangible a phenomenon as a fire "smouldering . . . into a blaze," Priestley has constructed a figurative sentence by means of reification: Reification simply means making whatever you are talking about into a *thing*. The tenor is abstract, the vehicle is concrete. Reification is one of the standard ways of establishing a figure, whether that figure is presented as a simile or a metaphor.

Copy Priestley's sentence; then compose a figurative sentence containing an example of reification.

28 The Figurative Sentence (Personification)

Far off, a little yellow plane scuttles down a runway, steps awkwardly into the air, then climbs busily, learning grace.

Robert Penn Warren, *Segregation*

Death stands at attention, obedient, expectant, ready to serve, ready to shear away the peoples en masse; ready, if called on, to pulverize, without hope of repair, what is left of civilisation.

Winston Churchill, *World Crisis*

Another way of establishing a figure is to compare a nonliving or inanimate subject with something alive. A figure whose vehicle is living and animate is called a personification. Robert Penn Warren has compared a plane (tenor) with a human being (vehicle) or at least with some sort of animal that can "step" and "climb" and "learn."

Winston Churchill has also used personification. He has compared death, an abstraction, with a soldier who can "stand at attention."

By knowing how to create personification and reification you can achieve different kinds of figurative sentences and thereby maintain variety in your composition even when writing at a highly intense figurative level.

Copy the two sentences above; then compose two similar sentences using personification as the means of achieving your figures.

29 The Complex Figurative Sentence

When the struggle with somnolence has been fought out and won, when the world is all-covering darkness and close-pressing silence, when the tobacco suddenly takes on fresh vigour and fragrance and the books lie strewn about the table, then it seems as though all the rubbish and floating matter of the day's thoughts have poured away and only the bright, clear, and swift current of the mind itself remains, flowing happily and without impediment.

Christopher Morley, *On Going to Bed*

A sentence may contain several separate figures, and some of these figures may be extended to considerable length. In Morley's sentence, you will notice various metaphors such as: "somnolence" (tenor), "something to fight with" (vehicle); "silence" (tenor), "something that can physically press in on a person" (vehicle); "tobacco" (tenor), "something that can be vigorous" (vehicle); "thoughts" (tenor), "something that can produce rub-

bish and floating matter" (vehicle); and "mind" (tenor), "a swift current" (vehicle). The metaphors concerning the day's thoughts and the mind are actually akin to each other and are an extension of the basic metaphor that the mind is a stream that can become contaminated, but that also can be purified.

Copy Morley's sentence; then compose one, just as long, in which you use at least two different and separate figures of any kind, similes, metaphors, reifications, or personifications. Extend one of the figures through several clauses.

30 The Alliterative Sentence

All beauty comes from beautiful blood and a beautiful brain.

Walt Whitman, *Preface to Leaves of Grass*

A moist young moon hung above the mist of a neighboring meadow.

Vladimir Nabokov, *Conclusive Evidence*

Even if the facts are false, they are still very strange.

G. K. Chesterton, *On Certain Modern Writers and the Institution of the Family*

On occasion, you will transform a basic sentence by making use of noticeable alliteration. Alliteration can make a statement unified and more memorable. A sentence in which many words are alliterated becomes a sentence with a common phonetic theme running through it, a thread of sound tying the meaning together. As a consequence alliterative sentences are more easily remembered.

Alliteration is achieved by repeating a consonant sound at the beginning of several words. Whitman, for instance, has alliterated the words "beauty," "beautiful," "blood," "beautiful," and "brain." There is a limit, of course, to the number of words that can be alliterated in any given sentence, and Whitman's use of the consonant b five times represents a maximum sort of use.

Nabokov uses the letter m four times in "moist," "moon," "mist," and "meadow"; but he has spread out the alliteration a bit with more intervening words. Perhaps the secret of good alliteration is to limit the number of accented words involved and to avoid too heavy a concentration of the consonant sound.

Many times more than one alliterative consonant is used in a sentence. Chesterton, for instance, alliterates f twice, then shifts to the letter s. This can create an especially delightful effect, as one sound is contrasted with another, and as a result each is heightened, without becoming monotonous.

Copy the three alliterative sentences; then compose three of your own. Write two sentences, each with a different letter used in alliteration. Write a third sentence that uses two different letters for alliterative effect.

31 The Rhythmical Sentence

He is capable of being shown of what consciousness consists.

Stephen Spender, *The Imagination in the Modern World*

Curiosity is a form of desire.

Marchette Chute, *Getting at the Truth*

Though perhaps all good sentences should be rhythmical, certain sentences have a much more obvious cadence and flow to them and are therefore more useful stylistically. The sentence that attracts us by its patterned flow is a sentence that can be used for all stylistic effects from simple emphasis to calculated grandeur.

In Stephen Spender's sentence we find a two-part rhythm, echoing old biblical rhythms, old Anglo-Saxon rhythms, and the free verse rhythms that Walt Whitman popularized in *Leaves of Grass*. "He is capable of being shown" is the first phrase in

the rhythm, “of what consciousness consists” is the balancing phrase. This pendulum-like rhythm, swinging back and forth, could become monotonous and stupefying if it were the prevailing rhythm in a piece of writing; but as a special effect on special occasions, it is a delightful and enjoyable device.

In Marchette Chute’s sentence you will notice a three-part rhythm: “Curiosity” phrase one, “is a form” phrase two, “of desire” phrase three. Three-part rhythms can be used in contrast with two-part rhythms in passages of writing that need to “sing forth,” yet cannot be maintained with one single rhythmic form.

Copy the two rhythmical sentences above; then compose two of your own. One should have a two-part rhythm, the other a three part rhythm.

32 The Metrical Sentence (Four Beats)

The sentence is a single cry.

Herbert Read, *English Prose Style*

Hitch your wagon to a star.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Civilization*

The world is very different now.

John F. Kennedy, *Inaugural Address*

On rare occasions you may wish to make a sentence actually metrical; that is, make its accents fall in a regular and patterned way. In Herbert Read’s sentence, you can hear the beat: “The sentence is a single cry.” The beat is a 1-2-3-4 beat or march step, the most common form of the metrical sentence. Metrical sentences are highly memorable because they are almost singable.

Emerson took advantage of the metrical sentence to make his transcendental philosophy understandable and popular; at least he took advantage of it in his famous sentence: “hitch your wag on to a star”.

The modern writer sometimes uses the metrical sentence to make his points: John F. Kennedy included the metrical sentence in his Inaugural Address—a composition that is a rich display of most of the stylistic sentences you are encountering in this text.

Copy the three four-beat sentences above; then compose three of your own.

33 The Metrical Sentence (Various Beats)

May in Venice is better than April, but June is best of all.

Henry James, *Portraits of Places*

He was the man that cannot steer, that cannot splice, that dodges the work on dark nights; that, aloft, holds on frantically with both arms and legs, and swears at the wind, the sleet, the darkness; the man who curses the sea while others work.

Joseph Conrad, *The N**** and the Narcissus*

Henry James also makes use of word accents to create a strongly metrical sentence: MAY in VENice is BETter than APRil, but JUNE is BEST of ALL. In the first clause the metrical feet are a mixture of trochaic and dactylic measures, but in the second clause James shifts to straight iambic feet. The total effect of the sentence is something like a dance, a measured lilt around the room, an appropriate meter for the “vacation” atmosphere of the sentence.

In Conrad’s metrical sentence, you will find an element of rhyme (“splice” “nights”) added to meter, and the effect is almost singsong. After the opening clause, “He was the man,” the sentence becomes very metrical; it becomes almost a quatrain of iambic dimeter lines:

*that cannot steer,
that cannot splice,
that dodges the work
on dark nights.*

Then each succeeding clause establishes a definite meter of its own, especially the last clause, which is basically iambic pentameter. This exaggerated form of the metrical sentence is rarely used. You may, however, have need for it on some special occasion: perhaps to be funny, if nothing else.

Copy the two metrical sentences above; then compose two metrical sentences of your own, experimenting as you wish with different kinds of metrical measures and feet.

34 The Master Sentence 1

The worst part of war is not death and destruction but just soldiering; the worst part of soldiering is not danger but nostalgia; and the worst part of a soldier’s nostalgia is the lack of intimacy, the lack of privacy, and the deprivation of the rights of self-determination and ownership.

Master sentences are achieved by using a rich number of stylistic devices and by combining, weaving together, and juxtaposing various stylistic modifications and transformations. Robert Henriques has written such a master sentence. In it you will recognize alliteration—"worst," "war," "death," "destruction"; balanced two-part series—"death and destruction," "self-determination and ownership"; negative-positive sequence—"not death and destruction but just soldiering," "not danger but nostalgia"; modified anadiplosis—"soldiering; the worst part of soldiering is not danger but nostalgia; and the worst part of a soldier's nostalgia"; key-word repetition—"lack," "lack"; three-part series with anaphora "the worst part of war . . . ; the worst part of soldiering . . . ; and the worst part of a soldier's nostalgia . . ."; and three-part series without anaphora—"lack of intimacy, the lack of privacy and the deprivation of the rights. . . Such a rich mixture of stylistic modifications does not make for confusion, but for a tremendously effective sentence, remarkably clear and sturdy.

Copy Robert Henriques's sentence; then compose a sentence that employs at least three of the stylistic devices that Henriques used.

35 The Master Sentence 2

Vengeance then is forbidden; sacrifice is forbidden; justice is impossible: what remains? the fourth choice? forgiveness? and how then forgiveness?

Charles Williams, *The Forgiveness of Sins*

In this sentence Charles Williams opens with a three-part series—a tricolon: "Vengeance then is forbidden; sacrifice is forbidden; justice is impossible." Then he dramatically concludes the sentence with a series of rhetorical questions: "what remains? the fourth choice? forgiveness? and how then forgiveness?" In the course of the three-part series and the four rhetorical questions, Williams uses key-word repetition: "forbidden," "forbidden" (not quite an epistrophe because the third item in the series differs) and "forgiveness," "forgiveness."

Also in the sentence are some splendid subtleties: Do you notice that the second word in the sentence is "then" and the next to the last word in the sentence is "then"? Do you also notice that the sentence opens with "vengeance" and closes with "forgiveness," two opposed or antithetical words?

Copy Charles Williams's sentence; then compose a sentence that opens with a tricolon and closes with a set of rhetorical questions. Add as many subtle stylistic devices as you can.

36 The Master Sentence 3

Now the trumpet summons us again—not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need; not as a call to battle, though embattled we are; but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation," a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself.

John F. Kennedy, *Inaugural Address*

Opening with a metaphor, this splendid sentence proceeds through the negative-positive sequences—"not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need; not as a call to battle, though embattled we are; but a call to bear. . . ." It continues with such modifications as a balanced two-part series of which the negative-positive sequences are part; repositioned adjectives—"embattled we are"; balance with anaphora—"year in and year out"; and a concluding four-part series.

John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address has become famous because of the use of such stylistic sentences. It serves to show that in all forms of writing, public and private, objective and subjective, logical and impassioned, stylistic sentences play a vital and important role.

Copy John F. Kennedy's sentence; then compose a similar sentence. Open with a metaphor, continue through a negative-positive sequence and through a separate and distinct balance, and conclude with a four-part series.

37 The Master Sentence 4

I was born in a large Welsh town at the beginning of the Great War—an ugly, lovely town (or so it was and is to me), crawling, sprawling by a long and splendid curving shore where truant boys and sand field boys and old men from nowhere, beach-combed, idled and paddled, watched the dock-bound ships or the ships steaming away into wonder and India, magic and China, countries bright with oranges and loud with lions; threw stones into the sea for the barking outcast dogs; made castles and forts and harbours and race tracks in the sand; and on Saturday afternoons listened to the brass band, watched the Punch and Judy, or hung about on the fringes of the crowd to hear the fierce religious speakers who shouted at the sea, as though it were wicked and wrong to roll in and out like that, white-horsed and full of fishes.

Dylan Thomas, *Quite Early One Morning*

In this magnificent sentence, loose and long, constituting an entire paragraph, great use is made of details placed in various forms of the series. After the initial statement the sentence proceeds descriptively, using double adjectives in front of nouns—"ugly, lovely town"—and double participles after the noun—"crawling, sprawling"—along with many instances of balance—"so it was and is to me," "long and splendid," "idled and paddled," and "bright with oranges and loud with lions." Note also the four-part series used: "castles and forts and harbours and race tracks." In the sentence abundant use is also made of sound devices: alliteration—"wicked and wrong"—and rhyme—"crawling, sprawling." And you will note the terminal rhythm of the sentence, after the long sweep of clauses and phrases: "as though it were wicked and wrong to roll in and out like that, white-horsed and full of fishes," with "white-horsed," a repositioned adjective, acting as a brake on the rhythmical flow.

You would rarely write so splendid a sentence, of course. But you may want to try it, just to say that you have done it. Someday you might even want to use such a sentence if you find yourself

wanting to recreate some vital, exuberant experience.

Copy the sentence by Dylan Thomas; then compose a similar sentence: long, detailed, descriptive; with great attention paid to balanced constructions, various forms of the series, and repositioned adjectives; and with special attention paid to bringing your sentence to a rhythmical and cadenced conclusion.

III BASIC PARAGRAPHS

The paragraph is more difficult to describe than the sentence, for it is not a definite grammatical unit but a flexible rhetorical convention. Ordinarily, the paragraph is a five or six sentence, one or two-hundred word discussion of a single, rather concise idea; but it is sometimes much shorter or much longer. It may simply be a collection of loosely related, somewhat coordinate ideas you wish the reader to consider together. The most important thing to remember about paragraphs is that they are an expanded statement. While a sentence makes a grammatically complete statement, it usually cannot be as comprehensive or self-sufficient as a paragraph. Generalities demand particulars, abstractions demand concrete illustrations, and opinions require reasoned evidence. Furthermore, the quantity of detail is tailored to your purpose and to that of your readers, and the details are themselves selected partly because they represent still other unmentioned details. A paragraph is commonly described according to the location of its topic sentence, its relative length, or its purpose and method.

As with sentences, there are certain rules of thumb regarding the paragraph. First, try to project what you have to say in terms of a paragraph. Paragraphs are in many respects essays in miniature. If you can write an effective paragraph, you are clearly capable of writing a much longer work successfully; for the paragraph is, even more than the sentence, the basic unit of composition. Second, center most of your paragraphs around a topic sentence, and if the topic sentence does not itself conclude the paragraph, climax it with a terminal sentence. An effective topic sentence either names the subject or makes some definite statement about the subject; it suggests the kind of detail the paragraph will contain and something of the order; and it makes a quick transitional reference to the preceding paragraph. A successful terminal sentence is either the last in what has been a series of points or, more often, a quick summary of the main thought; the terminal sentence often contains a final transition, and, if cast in the form of a stylistic sentence, it rises briefly to a rhetorically more intense pitch. Third, plan for a sufficiently long orderly paragraph. Be certain there is enough detail in the sentences composing your paragraph to richly develop its central idea, and be certain that the sentences themselves are logically and stylistically related. Fourth, learn the full range of paragraph forms thoroughly. The choice of a general paragraph pattern and the specifics of its execution are among the most premeditated decisions you will make as a writer.

In the section following are a number of the more common paragraph forms—each labeled, exemplified, and described. You will learn something of the structure of such paragraphs and also where these paragraphs would appropriately be used.

You will copy the model paragraphs and compose similar ones of your own invention: approximating the length, tone, and general structure but not duplicating the design of the individual sentences. Here, for example, is a somewhat abbreviated, topic-sentence-first paragraph:

For the architect is of all artists the least able to indulge in airy dreams. Bricks and mortar, strains and stresses, the relentless drag of the earth and the buffets of the stormy sky are no playthings. A Shelley may build his palaces in the clouds and launch his paper boats down the stream of Time; an earthly architect, who listens like Ibsen's Master Builder to 'harps in the air,' will soon break other men's necks as well as his own.

F. L. Lucas, *Ten Victorian Poets*

And here is a paragraph loosely modeled after the basic pattern of the original:

For of all natural beauties a forest is the least replaceable. Douglas firs and western hemlocks, redwoods and ponderosa pines are not grown in a day. Lumbermen may speak piously of reforestation, but 94.6 percent of our original woodlands have been cleared, and it takes fifty years to replace the fastest growing tree. Except for the more inaccessible forests of Alaska and Canada, and those in national forests, the last North American woods will be cut in our lifetime.

1 The Topic-Sentence First Paragraph

The characteristic motive of English poetry is love of nature, especially of nature as seen in the English rural landscape. From the "Cuckoo Song" of our language in its beginnings to the perfect loveliness of Tennyson's best verse, this note is ever sounding. It is persistent even amid the triumph of the drama. Take away from Shakespeare all his bits of natural description, all his casual allusions to the life and aspects of the country, and what a loss were there! The reign of the iambic couplet confined, but could not suppress, this native music; Pope notwithstanding, there came the "Ode to Evening" and that "Elegy" which, unsurpassed for beauty of thought and nobility of utterance in all the treasury of our lyrics, remains perhaps the most essentially English poem ever written.

George Gissing, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*

Since virtually all your paragraphs will be written around a topic sentence of some kind, your real decision is the location of this sentence. In most standard expository paragraphs, the topic sentence is stated first. Indeed, the deductive, generalization-followed-by-details pattern has so many obvious advantages and is

so expected by the reader that you will rely on it routinely—except, of course, when there is clear advantage in one of the other alternatives.

In this paragraph by George Gissing, the first sentence, the topic sentence, names the subject and makes a general assertion about it: “The characteristic motive of English poetry is love of nature, especially of nature as seen in the English rural landscape.” Following are four sentences which explain and support the generalization by naming several English literary works—“Cuckoo Song,” “Ode to Evening,” and “Elegy [Written in a Country Churchyard]” —and writers—“Tennyson,” “Shakespeare”—in which this “characteristic motive” is apparent. The topic sentence is in effect restated in each of the subsequent sentences: “this note is ever sounding,” “It is persistent. . . .” “habits of natural description . . . casual allusions to the life and aspects of the country,” “this native music.” To further emphasize the truth of his assertion, Gissing declares that this *nature* element persists *even* in drama and despite the iambic couplet and Pope’s influence. The terminal sentence expresses the thought that one of the most pastoral lyrics is also “perhaps the most essentially English poem ever written,” echoing the “characteristic motive of English poetry” of the topic sentence. The topic sentence is reasonably terse and straightforward, as most effective topic sentences are; the subsequent sentences are with a single exception more complex and suggestive; and the paragraph is rounded out by a magnificently long and elaborate terminal sentence, effectively climaxing Gissing’s whole statement.

This topic-sentence-first paragraph is not part of a long and detailed treatment of the subject but rather a kind of allusion: a concise and, as far as it goes, complete appreciation of the love of nature revealed in English poetry.

Copy Gissing’s paragraph; then compose a similar topic-sentence-first paragraph. Express a general assertion in the first sentence, explain and support it in several subsequent sentences, echo the general assertion from time to time and certainly refer to it once again in the terminal sentence.

2 The Title-Sentence First Paragraph

First, then, a few general remarks about the Sun. It is the nearest of the stars—a hot self-luminous globe. Though only a star of moderate size, the Sun is enormously greater than the Earth and the other planets. It contains about 1,000 times as much material as Jupiter, the largest planet, and over 300,000 times as much as the Earth. Its gravitational attraction controls the motions of the planets, and its rays supply the energy that maintains nearly every form of activity on the surface of the Earth. There are some exceptions to this general rule: for instance, the upheaval of mountain ranges and the outbursts of volcanoes.

The title sentence names the subject but does not go on to make any assertion about it as a conventional topic sentence would. In narrative and descriptive writing, especially in fiction where regular use of a standard topic sentence is apt to seem overly formal, you may simply wish to identify the subject without saying anything specific about it. Even in expository writing, introductory, transitional, and summary paragraphs are frequently begun with a title sentence rather than a topic sentence. And if a complement in the first sentence is to be the topic of the paragraph, you may wish to invert the sentence, as Charles Doughty did when he wrote “Pleasant, as the fiery heat of the desert daylight is done, is our homely evening fire” at the head of a paragraph in which he listed a number of other things which were also pleasant. Or you may, as is often done, phrase the title sentence as a question. While a title sentence may be placed anywhere in the paragraph, it rarely appears in any but first place.

In the exemplary title-sentence-first paragraph, Fred Hoyle tells the reader that he is going to make “a few general remarks about the Sun,” declining at this time to make any particular point about the subject. Even though this sentence does not occur in the first paragraph, it is nevertheless an introduction, background for what is to come later. The paragraph is unified by the reference pronouns, “it” and “its” that refer always to “the Sun,” and by the sentences that are parallel in structure, especially the second, fourth, and fifth. Since this paragraph of quite short, uncomplicated sentences was written simply to express a variety of basic facts about the sun, a title sentence was sufficient. Such a paragraph does not call for a standard terminal sentence, there being nothing to reiterate or summarize. The title-sentence-first paragraph is by nature unemphatic; it is not intended as a prevailing paragraph pattern but only as an occasional alternative.,;

Copy Hoyle’s paragraph; then compose a similar title-sentence-first paragraph. Make sure that the context supports such an exceptional pattern; compensate for the inherent problems—chief among them an apparent lack of any definite purpose—by keeping the paragraph short and simple, and by maintaining its unity and momentum through pronoun reference, parallel structure of some of the sentences, and other means.

3 The Topic-Sentence Last Paragraph

There are naive people all over the world—some of them scientists—who believe that all problems, sooner or later, will be solved by Science. The word Science itself has become a vague unreasonable noise, with a very ill-defined meaning and a

powerful emotional charge; it is now applied to all sorts of unsuitable subjects and used as a cover for careless and incomplete thinking in dozens of fields. But even taking Science at the most sensible of its definitions, we must acknowledge that it is as imperfect as all other activities of the human mind.

Gilbert Highet, *Man's Unconquerable Mind*

The inductive, details-followed-by-generalization pattern is useful in persuasive writing, where you are often wise in giving reasons before expressing your opinions; in expository writing, where your conclusion might not be understood without some preliminary explanation; and in narration and description, where a certain amount of suspense is always desirable. When a topic sentence replaces the terminal sentence, it assumes some of the functions of the terminal sentence and is likely to be something of a summary or conclusion. Since the main statement of the paragraph is expressed at the climax, the topic-sentence-last paragraph is a somewhat emphatic pattern.

Gilbert Highet's is a persuasive paragraph, relying rather more upon emotional appeals and sheer verbal force than reasoned arguments. Still, if the reader accepts the implications and assertions expressed in the earlier sentences of the paragraph, then the final sentence—the topic sentence since it is clearly the main point of the paragraph—is in the broad sense an inductively derived conclusion. At any rate, coming where it does at the end of an unusually short and charged paragraph, the topic sentence is not likely to be overlooked.

Copy the Highet sentence; then compose a similar topic-sentence-last paragraph in which the earlier sentences explain and support the major assertion at the end of the paragraph.

4 The Internal-Topic Sentence Paragraph

The Olympic Hermes is a perfectly beautiful human being, no more, no less. Every detail of his body was shaped from a consummate knowledge of actual bodies. Nothing is added to mark his deity, no aureole around his head, no mystic staff, no hint that here is he who guides the soul to death. The significance of that statue to the Greek artist, the mark of the divinity, was its beauty, only that. His art had taken form within him as he walked the streets, watched the games, noted perpetually the people he lived among. To him what he saw in those human beings was enough for all his art; he had never an impulse to fashion something different, something truer than this truth of nature. In his eyes the Word had become flesh; he made his image of the eternal what men could be. The Winged Victory is later Greek; the temple on the Acropolis was built to the Wingless Victory.

Edith Hamilton, *The Greek Way*

When you feel that preliminary explanation and support is needed for your topic sentence and you also wish to elaborate upon the main thought after it has been expressed, you may choose to place the topic sentence somewhere within the paragraph. Such a deductive-inductive paragraph would seem to combine the best of both the topic-sentence-first and-last alternatives, and to some extent it does. At the same time, however, it so obscures and deemphasizes the main thought of the paragraph by placing it in the middle that the internal-topic-sentence paragraph is seldom written. Still, at times this will be the most natural kind of paragraph to write, and you must simply do what you can to compensate for any inherent drawbacks.

In the Edith Hamilton paragraph the topic sentence, "The significance of that statue to the Greek artist, the mark of the divinity, was its beauty, only that," is preceded by three sentences. Each of the sentences makes some essential preliminary observation—"The Olympic Hermes is a perfectly beautiful human being . . . shaped from a consummate knowledge of actual bodies . . . nothing is added to mark his deity." And the topic sentence is followed by another three sentences, excluding the terminal sentence, all emphasizing the preoccupation of the Greek artist with "man" and "what man could be." In the first clause the terminal sentence expresses something of a new thought—that the "Winged Victory," a notable exception to the artists' normal preoccupation, "is later Greek"—but in the final clause it implies that the best Greek art was inspired by the actual appearance of things. You do not have to read very far in the paragraph to realize that even the first sentence, although not a topic sentence, encompasses much of the meaning of the paragraph. Thus, Edith Hamilton compensates for the unemphatic position of the topic sentence by alluding to it in the first sentence and in the last and, indeed, at other points in the paragraph.

Copy the Hamilton paragraph; then compose a similar internal-topic-sentence paragraph. Be sure the topic sentence is more effective for having both a kind of prologue and epilogue, and emphasize the topic sentence through some means other than position which is, by the nature of this pattern, lost to you.

5 The Reiterated-Topic Sentence Paragraph

Language, of course, is our prime instrument of conceptual expression. The things we can say are in effect the things we can think. Words are the terms of our thinking as well as the terms in which we present our thoughts, because they present the objects of thought to the thinker himself. Before language communicates ideas, it gives them form, makes them clear, and in fact makes them

what they are. Whatever has a name is an object for thought. Without words, sense experience is only a flow of impressions, as subjective as our feelings; words make it objective, and carve it up into things and facts that we can note, remember, and think about. Language gives outward experience its form and makes it definite and clear.

Susan K. Langer, *Philosophical Sketches*

Paragraphs in which the topic is stated in the first sentence and again in the last or more than once anywhere in the paragraph are fairly common. To be sure, in many paragraphs you will allude from time to time to the topic in some way even though you do not actually restate the topic sentence. However, in longer, more difficult paragraphs it is often wise to, in essence, repeat the topic sentence. When you wish to emphasize an idea rather forcibly, you will certainly consider writing the reiterated-topic-sentence paragraph.

In the model paragraph, Susan Langer makes a general assertion in the first sentence, explains it in the middle sentences, and restates the generalization in the final sentence. Both statements of the topic, "Language, of course, is our prime instrument of conceptual expression" and "Language gives outward experience its form and makes it definite and clear," are eminently clear and succinct. Indeed, the entire paragraph is an example of first-class formal expository prose and a fine illustration of the inverse relation between the comparative difficulty of a thought and the simplicity of its expression. Obviously, this is a key paragraph, for the author's concern at this point is not so much with moving on in the essay as with making doubly sure that this particular idea is understood absolutely; hence, the middle sentences in the paragraph are devoted to a discussion of the topic rather than to a presentation of details.

Copy the Langer paragraph; then compose a similar reiterated topic-sentence paragraph. Since your readers, having learned something from the discussion coming before, will be better informed the second time they encounter the topic, you can state it as a more explicit and categorical generalization.

6 The Dual-Topic-Sentence Paragraph

The great and simple appeal of fiction is that it enables us to share imaginatively in the fortunes of these created beings without paying the price in time or defeat for their triumphs and frustrations. One moves, with them in lands where one has never been, experiences loves one has never known. And this entrance into lives wider and more various than our own in turn enables us more nicely to appreciate and more intensely to live the lives we do know. It is impossible to say how much novelists teach us to look at our fellow beings, at "their tragic divining of life upon

their ways." The novelist is, in one sense, your true philosopher. For any marshaling of people into a story implies a conception of fate and a philosophy of nature. The least obviously philosophical of novelists, in the choice he makes of events, in the construction he makes of circumstances, indicates and implies what the world, his world, is like. Where novelists, like some of those in our own day, Hardy and Anatole France and Thomas Mann, are philosophers, they are so in a more rich and living sense than the philosophers of the academy. They imply themselves or express through their characters a total appraisal of existence. They document their estimates with the whole panorama of human experience. They not only judge but create a world. It is difficult to find in current philosophy a universe more complete and comprehensive than that of a novelist whose mind has ranged over eternity and whose eyes and imagination have traveled widely in time.

Irwin Edman, *Arts and the Man: A Short Introduction to Aesthetics*

Most paragraphs develop a single, rather unified idea; but some few, among them dual-topic-sentence paragraphs, do not. The train of thought in such a paragraph moves in a systematic way from the consideration of one idea to the consideration of a closely related second idea. In no sense does the paragraph begin here, lose its direction, and wind up over there. Rather, the writer chooses to fuse thoughts that, like clauses in a compound sentence, are so much a product of the same deliberation that it seems only natural to keep them together. Such a paragraph is written around two separate but related topic sentences, one stated at or near the beginning and the second at or near the end.

Irwin Edman's dual-topic-sentence paragraph begins with one generalization, "The great and simple appeal of fiction is that it enables us to share imaginatively in the fortunes of these created beings without paying the price in time or defeat for their triumphs and frustrations," and concludes with a second, "It is difficult to find in current philosophy a universe more complete and comprehensive than that of a novelist whose mind has ranged over eternity and whose eyes and imagination have traveled widely in time." Each is stated in the most reasonable and emphatic place. But coming as it does at the end, the final topic sentence in Edman's paragraph, and in most dual-topic-sentence paragraphs, is the more important and emphasized. The first couple of sentences develop the first idea, the final several the second. The discussion moves in a clear way from one idea to the next, making the turn in these two sentences, "It is impossible to say how much novelists teach us to look at our fellow beings, at 'their tragic divining of life upon their ways.' The novelist is, in one sense, your true philosopher."

(Incidentally, when the source of a short quotation is not relevant, you can insert the quotation into your own prose, and use quotation marks to identify it as borrowed; you do not need to name the author.)

Copy the Edman paragraph; then compose a similar dual-topic-sentence paragraph in which a second principal idea emerges logically and inevitably from the first.

7 The Implied-Topic Sentence Paragraph

The fields and old farm, the little river, the village church among elms, the formal gates of the park with the roofs of the Great House beyond, all made, in the evening air, a dreamlike picture. I was strangely happy; and how familiar was every detail of the scene before me! There was the trout-stream I had fished in, there were the meadows I had galloped over and through how many countless, quiet English years had I not lived here, and loved and hunted, courting innumerable vicars' daughters from cover to cover of all the countless, mild, old fashioned novels of English country life which I have dreamed away my own life in reading?

Logan Pearsall Smith, *All Trivia*

You will write a great many paragraphs in which the topic is, for one reason or another, not stated at all in so many words. In narrative and descriptive writing the topic of a paragraph is often obvious enough. And summary and transitional paragraphs that contain a number of related ideas but do not develop any particular one of them are sometimes not written around a topic sentence. Such implied-topic-sentence paragraphs expect more of the reader than conventional paragraphs: He must, in effect, put together a topic sentence for himself from the details in the paragraph or do without what is, in expository prose at least, something of a necessity. Such paragraphs demand more of the writer as well, for he can just as easily lose his way. To compensate for the apparent lack of any definite point, special attention must be given to selecting and arranging details and to connecting sentences in a way that gives an extraordinary sense of momentum in the paragraph.

The model implied-topic-sentence paragraph by one of the finest stylists in English, Logan Pearsall Smith, is a descriptive-expository paragraph without a conventional topic sentence. The final sentence is almost one; at least in a surprising way it locks all the previously expressed details into place. It is, however, as complicated and ranging a sentence as any of the three in the paragraph and is even phrased as a question. But you would not expect a short personal reverie to employ the familiar patterns of informative prose. This is, by the way, a good illustration of the possibilities of the paragraph, for the essay, *Paradise Regained*, consists of only this one paragraph.

Copy the Logan Pearsall Smith paragraph; then compose a similar, short implied-topic-sentence paragraph. Conclude it with a sentence that does not express the topic matter-of-factly but contains what the reader needs to know to organize the paragraph in some meaningful way.

8 The Single-Sentence Paragraph

If the wealth resulting from prosperous industry is to be spent upon the gratification of unworthy desires, if the increasing perfection of manufacturing processes is to be accompanied by an increasing debasement of those who carry them on, I do not see the good of industry and prosperity.

T. H. Huxley, *Science and Culture*

The usual full-length paragraph consists of five or six sentences, one or two hundred words. Exceptions are the single-sentence paragraph, the abbreviated paragraph, and the extended paragraph.

Now and then you will write a paragraph of only one sentence. When introducing a series of paragraphs, or making a transition from one part of an essay to another, or quickly summarizing the discussion up to that point, or emphasizing an important point—say the thesis of your essay—by simple isolation, the single-sentence paragraph might well serve. While this is an exceptional paragraph pattern, there will be times when a sentence alone will suffice, when additional explanation and support will be superfluous.

T. H. Huxley chose to express a major idea from his essay as a single-sentence paragraph. The sentence stands as an effective paragraph partly because it is clearly and forcefully stated and partly because it summarizes by repeating, most emphatically, an assertion that is basic to the essay and one about which the author has already said a good deal. The paragraph has, you will note, periodicity, parallelism, and repetition—of “prosperous industry” as “industry and prosperity.”

Copy the Huxley paragraph; then compose a similar single-sentence paragraph—one which, while it may serve as an introduction, transition, or summary—is mainly a device for emphasis. Take special pains with the design of the sentence, for no ordinary statement deserves the prominence of being a single-sentence paragraph.

9 The Abbreviated Paragraph

Philosophy commonly distinguishes between what we may conveniently call "Experience" and "Nature." In the first of these categories is included the whole realm of human perception; in the second the whole realm of phenomena which occur outside of man; and philosophy is concerned with the traffic which goes on between them.

Joseph Wood Krutch, *Experience and Art*

An abbreviated paragraph is simply an exceptionally short one. You will write short paragraphs when the materials of your essay are sharply divided or cursorily treated or hurried and excited or for the same reasons you may have written single-sentence paragraphs, that is, for introductions, transitions, or summaries. There is a world of difference between an abbreviated paragraph and an underdeveloped one. If you try to write without thinking through and researching your subject or if you do not know how to expand your ideas, you are probably writing underdeveloped paragraphs—a bad habit even the trend toward shorter paragraphs will not hide. In the long run giving too many details is less destructive to effective writing than giving too few. The abbreviated paragraph is short because its objectives have been carefully limited not because it has been arbitrarily abridged. Furthermore, the abbreviated paragraph should be written only occasionally and then only where a shorter paragraph clearly serves the purpose better than one of more usual length.

Joseph Wood Krutch's model abbreviated paragraph is a kind of internal introduction devoted expressly to defining certain important terms and laying out the subject of inquiry. Krutch wants to make sure the reader understands that "Experience," "Nature," and "Philosophy" are key words having particular meanings. For the sake of clarity and emphasis and because he preferred not to enlarge upon the subject at this point, Krutch chose to write an abbreviated paragraph of only two sentences—the first setting forth the terms "Philosophy," "Experience," and "Nature," and the second defining each of these key words in relation to the others.

Copy the Krutch paragraph; then compose a similar abbreviated paragraph of no more than two or three average-length sentences.

10 The Extended Paragraph

I was witness to events of a less peaceful character. One day when I went out to my wood-pile, or rather my pile of stumps, I observed two large ants, the one red, the other much larger, nearly half an inch long, and black, fiercely contending with one another. Having once got hold they never let go, but struggled and wrestled and rolled on the chips incessantly. Looking farther, I was surprised to find that the chips were covered with such combatants, that it was not a duellum, but a bellum, a war between two races of ants, the red always pitted against the black, and frequently two red ones to one black. The legions of these Myrmidons covered all the hills and vales in my wood-yard, and the ground was already strewn with the dead and dying, both red and black. It was the only battle which I have ever witnessed, the only battlefield I ever trod while the battle was raging; internecine war; the red republicans on the one hand, and the black imperialists on the other. On every side they were engaged in deadly combat, yet without any noise that I could hear, and human soldiers never fought so resolutely. I watched a couple that were fast locked in each other's embraces, in a little sunny valley amid the chips, now at noon-day prepared to fight till the sun went down, or life went out. The smaller red champion had fastened himself like a vice to his adversary's front, and through all the tumblings on that field never for an instant ceased to gnaw at one of his feelers near the root, having already caused the other to go by the board; while the stronger black one dashed him from side to side, and, as I saw on looking nearer, had already divested him of several of his members. They fought with more pertinacity than bulldogs. Neither manifested the least disposition to retreat. It was evident that their battle-cry was Conquer or die. In the meanwhile there came along a single red ant on the hill-side of this valley, evidently full of excitement, who either had despatched his foe, or had not yet taken part in the battle; probably the latter, for he had lost none of his limbs; whose mother had charged him to return with his shield or upon it. Or perchance he was some Achilles, who had nourished his wrath apart, and had now come to avenge or rescue his Patroclus. He saw this unequal combat from afar—for the blacks were nearly twice the size of the red—he drew near with rapid pace till he stood on his guard within half an inch of the combatants; then, watching his opportunity, he sprang upon the black warrior, and commenced his operations near the root of his right fore-leg, leaving the foe to select among his own members; and so there were three united for life, as if a new kind of attraction had been invented which put all other locks and cements to shame. I should not have wondered by this time to find that they had their respective musical bands stationed on some eminent chip, and playing their national airs the while, to excite the slow and cheer the dying combatants. I was myself excited somewhat even as if they had been men. The more you think of it, the less the difference. And certainly there is not the fight recorded in Concord

history, at least, if in the history of America, that will bear a moment's comparison with this, whether for the numbers engaged in it, or for the patriotism and heroism displayed. For numbers and for carnage it was an Austerlitz or Dresden. Concord Fight! Two killed on the patriots' side, and Luther Blanchard wounded! Why here every ant was a Buttrick, — "Fire! for God's sake fire!" — and thousands shared the fate of Davis and Hosmer. There was not one hireling there. I have no doubt that it was a principle they fought for, as much as our ancestors, and not to avoid a three-penny tax on their tea; and the results of this battle will be as important and memorable to those whom it concerns as those of the battle of Bunker Hill, at least.

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

An extended paragraph is, of course, an exceptionally long one. When the materials of your essay fall naturally into larger blocks, when the subject lends itself to greater detail and depth, and when the mood is leisurely and absorbed, you will tend to write longer paragraphs. Closely reasoned, formal prose for the critical reader, because it contains more detail, is conceived in terms of longer paragraphs. Even here, however, when a writer wishes to be absolutely clear, he will shift to paragraphs of average or even shorter length. An unusually long paragraph even in a scholarly work is a special paragraph pattern written to serve a specific purpose. For example, the extended paragraph in a passage of otherwise normal-length paragraphs is a device of emphasis.

Henry David Thoreau chose to write an extended paragraph because he wanted to project the episode of the ants as something complete and coherent, a kind of essay within an essay. He could have broken the passage into four or five paragraphs of average length; but since the subject, which was neither obscure nor difficult, lent itself to the extended paragraph, Thoreau saw every reason to regard the paragraph as a flexible convention capable of infinite variation and elaboration. Long paragraphs are apt to become dull affairs; however, this one is not. Conflict, the basic ingredient of a fictional plot, is present in the narrative and so is suspense; there is in Thoreau's description an abundance of solid perceptible detail; the expository reflections are quick and pertinent. Thoreau has, in short, compensated brilliantly for any tediousness that may result from an abundance of words.

Copy the Thoreau paragraph; then compose a similar extended paragraph. Overcome any inclination to dullness by being especially lively and vivid.

11 The Paragraph of Narrative Details

Once, thinking it might be my maternal duty to catch an inside glimpse of the houses to which my son has entree, I committed the error of calling for him at a residence whose marble exterior and wrought-iron garage door should have forewarned me of the elaborate juvenile goings-on in there. A butler answered the bell. Butlers have an over-refining effect on me and in their presence I hear myself using the broad "a" on words like "hat." I murmured my son's name and the fact that I had come to fetch him. After I had made it plain that I was my child's mother and not his governess, the butler reluctantly led me up a carved stone stairway, opened a period door, and thrust me into a completely dark room. I was greeted by the whoops and catcalls of fifteen small boys and it was some moments before I realized that a moving picture was being shown and that I was standing between the screen and the projection machine. There was nothing to do but drop to a crouching position. My eyes were by now getting focussed—the way they do in the Blue Grotto—and in the dusk I could distinguish, over on a couch across the room, a pair of adults whom I presumed to be the parents of the child host. Fearing to cut off any more breathless moments of "Our Gang," I approached their presence in a crouching shuffle that must have seemed like a definite throwback to the Neanderthal Man. This startled them a good deal, but what startled them much more was my announcement that I was the mother of such-and-such a boy. Even in the gloom I could see their shocked astonishment. It was all very well for the nursemaids, waiting below, to crash the gate, but for a parent! They did manage, though, to utter a few polite phrases and we all three simulated an animated interest in the film, which was blessedly nearing its custard-pie finale. The lights flashed on and the party was pronounced over. My son and I thanked our hosts and departed, I sheepishly, he triumphantly with a considerable quantity of loot in the way of candy, favors, and, I later found out, a few of the birthday gifts of the unsuspecting host.

Cornelia Otis Skinner, *It's a Wise Parent*

When you are confronted by a topic of paragraph size in which chronology or age considerations are a major factor, a story or a historical occurrence or some kind of process, you will likely discover yourself writing a paragraph of narrative details. In such a paragraph you will probably take up the details in sequence moving from earlier to later, older to newer, past to present, or possibly even from the past to the future. Time, however, is something that can be managed in a variety of ways. You could order the details within a paragraph regressively almost as well as progressively, moving from later to earlier, newer to older, or present to past. Or you might, even in the framework of a single paragraph, be able to accommodate a *in medias res* beginning, a flashback, or foreshadowing. But taking the art of

storytelling, specifically at the paragraph level, the problem is one of selecting and arranging the details in such a way as to provide for a good deal of motivated action, anticipation or surprise, character development, natural and lively dialogue, and casually introduced description.

The model passage is a conventional paragraph of narrative details, moving from “I committed the error of calling for him,” through a sequence of related acts, to “my son and I thanked our hosts and departed.” The paragraph is also a classic example of the most instinctive form of verbal art, storytelling. Notice in Cornelia Otis Skinner’s anecdote how the basic narrative is expanded and somewhat delayed by a variety of allusions and asides. In the first three sentences the only strictly narrative details are probably “I committed the error of calling for him” and “a butler answered the door.” The descriptive “marble exterior and wrought-iron garage door” and the reflective “butlers have an over-refining effect on me and in their presence I hear myself using the broad ‘a’ on words like ‘hat’ ” are nevertheless essential if the passage is to be effective or, indeed, to have any point at all. Here, as in most instances, the story line—the narrative thread—is not really as significant as the related observations and commentary. The best raconteurs are not necessarily people with a good story but are people who know how to use the narrative to best advantage—not only for expressing events in some chronological way but as a compelling framework for other kinds of expository details.

Copy the Skinner paragraph; then compose a similar paragraph of narrative details, making it an equally complete and, if possible, entertaining anecdote. The humor in this passage is more obvious than subtle, but it is successful because it is neither exaggerated nor familiar. Everyone has felt ridiculous at one time or another upon being thrust into a novel and awkward situation, and certainly you would react so under the circumstances Cornelia Otis Skinner describes.

12 The Paragraph of Descriptive Details

A marvelous stillness pervaded the world, and the stars, together with the serenity of their rays, seemed to shed upon the earth the assurance of everlasting security. The young moon recurved, and shining low in the west, was like a slender shaving thrown up from a bar of gold, and the Arabian Sea, smooth and cool to the eye like a sheet of ice, extended its perfect level to the perfect circle of a dark horizon. The propeller turned without a check, as though its beat had been part of the scheme of a safe universe; and on each side of the Patna two deep folds of water, permanent and sombre on the unwrinkled shimmer, enclosed within their straight and diverging ridges a few white swirls of foam bursting in a low hiss, a few wavelets, a few ripples, a few undulations that, left behind, agitated the surface of the sea for an instant after the passage of the ship, subsided splashing gently, calmed down at

last into the circular stillness of water and sky with the black speck of the moving hull remaining everlastingly in its centre.

Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim*

When you are dealing with a paragraph topic in which physical or spatial considerations are most prominent, as when you are writing about an object or scene, you will undoubtedly compose a paragraph of descriptive details. In such a paragraph you take up the details in sequence, moving from top to bottom, left to right, center to periphery, large to small, east to west, and so on. Unlike narration, in which there is a natural progression of details, description has no real standard; you have greater freedom in ordering paragraph details to fit the circumstances. If the reader is familiar with the subject, you can “skip around” as long as you have good reasons and do not lose your reader.

The problem of selection is sometimes greater in descriptive writing than in narrative, where it is easier to separate the relevant from the irrelevant. In description the object or scene is before you, imaginatively if not actually, and the parts and materials and shapes and colors and textures are so varied and so complex that you have difficulty deciding what details are essential to convey the picture. Generalized observations are not as a rule especially effective; overall impressions and essences can best be suggested by more detailed impressions. Choose those details which describe features of the subject pertinent to the discussion. Select each detail to represent a whole class of details. Whenever you can, express descriptive detail in terms of motion. And avoid those clichés which seem especially prevalent in descriptive writing.

Joseph Conrad's is a remarkably effective paragraph of descriptive details. Even more than the night passage of a ship through the Arabian Sea, he is describing an atmosphere of “marvelous stillness.” Every detail, every image, every reflective observation is selected and expressed accordingly. Everything about the passage suggests serenity and permanence, even the frequently alliterated sounds of the words—the mellifluous *m*'s and *l*'s, *s*'s and *r*'s—and the long rhythms. The paragraph begins as an unearthly vision, focuses for a moment on the Patna, slides away on the waves trailing behind, and ends on the same detached note upon which it opened. The language is the most striking feature of the paragraph; every word is so explicitly descriptive and so evocative of the scene Conrad wished to describe.

Copy the Conrad paragraph; then compose a similar paragraph of descriptive details. The secret of writing lyrical prose—and, indeed, of writing poetry—is learning to present a quantity of specific descriptive detail. So even though atmospheric and scenic effects are basic objectives of the paragraph, begin with the clearest possible view of your subject and describe it in the most exact language.

Imaginative descriptive writing is not so different from the most literal, scientific kind as you might suppose; indeed, the methods and problems of both are quite similar.

13 The Paragraph of Examples and Illustrations

The worship of the oak tree or of the oak god appears to have been shared by all the branches of the Aryan stock in Europe. Both Greeks and Italians associated the tree with their highest god, Zeus or Jupiter, the divinity of the sky, the rain, and the thunder. Perhaps the oldest and certainly one of the most famous sanctuaries in Greece was that of Dodona, where Zeus was revered in the oracular oak. The thunderstorms which are said to rage at Dodona more frequently than anywhere else in Europe, would render the spot a fitting home for the god whose voice was heard alike in the rustling of the oak leaves and in the crash of thunder. Perhaps the bronze gongs which kept up a humming in the wind round the sanctuary were meant to mimic the thunder that might so often be heard rolling and rumbling in the coombs of the stern and barren mountains which shut in the gloomy valley. In Boeotia, as we have seen, the sacred marriage of Zeus and Hera, the oak god and the oak goddess, appears to have been celebrated with much pomp by a religious federation of states. And on Mount Lycaeus in Arcadia the character of Zeus as a god both of the oak and of the rain comes out clearly in the rain charm practised by the priest of Zeus, who dipped an oak branch in a sacred spring. In his latter capacity Zeus was the god to whom the Greeks regularly prayed for rain. Nothing could be more natural; for often, though not always, he had his seat on the mountains where the clouds gather and the oaks grow. On the Acropolis at Athens there was an image of Earth praying to Zeus for rain. And in time of drought the Athenians themselves prayed, "Rain, rain, O dear Zeus, on the cornland of the Athenians and on the plains."

James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough*

You can make a general statement clearer and more meaningful by citing concrete and specific cases. This is, to be sure, the *raison d'être* of the great majority of paragraphs: Most consisting of a general statement supported and explained by details. The examples and illustrations may be intended to prove the general statement or simply to make it more vivid. The examples may come before or after the general statement. And the paragraph may consist of a great number of such details; several examples, each stated in a sentence or two; or a single, extended example. At any rate, the richness such detail provides is essential to effective writing, and the fluent writer is one who has learned to expand his basic ideas with the most apt and lively detail.

The paragraph of examples and illustrations by James George Frazer is in the tradition of popular scholarship. Frazer uses examples to prove the general truth of the assertion that “the worship of the oak tree or of the oak god appears to have been shared by all the branches of the Aryan stock in Europe.” At the same time, the specific examples are almost equally important, as much the point of the essay as the basic idea. Finally, the examples are so sensitively set forth and so ranging that Frazer’s classic on mythology is a rich work quite apart from its historical facts and learned hypotheses.

Copy the Frazer paragraph; then compose a similar paragraph of examples and illustrations in which you cite specific, representative cases to make a general statement more valid, pertinent, and, above all, more vivid.

14 The Paragraph of Comparisons or Analogies

Yet if one looks closely one sees that there is no essential difference between a beggar’s livelihood and that of numberless respectable people. Beggars do not work, it is said; but then, what is work? A navvy work[^] by swinging a pick. An accountant works by adding up figures. A beggar works by standing out of doors in all weathers and getting varicose veins, chronic bronchitis, etc. It is a trade like any other; quite useless, of course—but, then, many reputable trades are quite useless. And as a social type a beggar compares well with scores of others. He is honest compared with the sellers of most patent medicines, high-minded compared with a Sunday newspaper proprietor, amiable compared with a hire-purchase tout—inshort, a parasite, but a fairly harmless parasite. He seldom extracts more than a bare living from the community, and, what should justify him according to our ethical ideas, he pays for it over and over in suffering. I do not think there is anything about a beggar that sets him in a different class from other people, or gives most modern men the right to despise him.

George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London*

In a paragraph of comparisons or analogies you illuminate the subject by demonstrating its similarity to something else. If the ideas or things are from the same plane of experience, whether the reader immediately recognizes this or is surprised to discover the resemblances, it is a case of simple comparison; but if the ideas or things are from quite different planes of experience, you have an analogy, a metaphorical comparison. Sometimes in such a paragraph you compare only to clarify some aspect of the main topic; while at other times, the object of the paragraph is the fact that these ideas or things are in a real way similar, and the comparison itself is most important. In a paragraph of comparisons or analogies you can point out how two or more items are alike by describing first one and then

the other or by describing each of them part by part. Whatever form the paragraph takes, you select details according to how pertinent they are to the comparison.

The George Orwell quotation is a paragraph of comparisons. He makes this clear in the first sentence when he writes, "there is no essential difference between a beggar's livelihood and that of numberless respectable people." He then proceeds to compare a beggar's work favorably with that of navvys, accountants, sellers of patent medicines, Sunday newspaper proprietors, and hire-purchase touts. And he concludes with what is the immediate reason for the comparison, "I do not think there is anything about a beggar that sets him in a different class from other people, or gives most modern men the right to despise him." Orwell is, of course, less concerned with the status of beggars than with exposing the social hypocrisy that condemns some men to inhuman labor and others to exceedingly dull work, extols some respectable tradesmen while despising others no less useless and parasitical. (Incidentally, notice the transitional touches in "Yet . . . ," emphasized words set apart in roman, and Orwell's use of the dash.)

Copy the Orwell paragraph; then compose a similar paragraph of comparisons. If you would prefer to write a paragraph of analogies, find an effective and well-written example upon which to pattern your own.

15 The Paragraph of Contrasts

At first sight those Great Twin Brethren of the Victorian era, Tennyson and Browning, are wildly unlike. What greater contrast could there be than between a tall black-cloaked, black-bearded, black-blooded recluse in the Isle of Wight, and a sociable frisking little gentleman, who drew from Tennyson the growl that Browning would certainly "die in a white tie," and from a lady who had met him at dinner the question— "Who was that too exuberant financier?"; between a poet whose style was as meticulously polished as he was himself shaggy and unkempt, and a poet who might wear evening dress himself, but often left his hastily scribbled poems as fuzzy and prickly and tangled as a furze-bush; between the writer of Tithonus, with an immeasurable sadness underlying his talk about "the larger hope," and the writer of Rabbi Ben Ezra, who looked on the world and, behold, it was very good, with an even better one to follow? They are as different as the lady in the Japanese story, who kept butterflies, from her neighbour, the lady who preferred creeping things and caterpillars. The contrast had already struck contemporaries. FitzGerald found in Tennyson unforgettable things, in Browning only "Cockney sublime, Cockney energy": Carlyle wrote, "Alfred knows how to jingle, Browning does not," and again of Browning, "I wish he had taken to prose. Browning has far more ideas than Tennyson, but is not so truthful. Tennyson means what he says, poor fellow.

Browning has a meaning in his twisted sentences, but he does not really go into anything or believe much about it. He accepts conventional values."

F. L. Lucas, *Ten Victorian Poets*

A paragraph can as easily be based upon a contrast as upon a comparison, or it can involve both contrast and comparison. In the paragraph of contrasts, you illuminate a subject by pointing out the ways in which it is unlike something else. Sometimes the contrast itself is the object of the paragraph; sometimes one or the other or even both subjects are vivified by the contrast. As with comparisons you can contrast ideas or things by first discussing one and then turning to the other or by shifting from one to the other and then back again, taking up the differences part by part. In any case, you expand the paragraph with details relevant to the contrast. In the first sentence of the model paragraph of contrasts, F. L. Lucas presents the subjects, "Tennyson and Browning," noting that they are "wildly unlike." With the words "what greater contrast could there be," he introduces a quick review of superficial differences in physical appearance, social grace, and poetic method. With the observation that "the contrast had already struck contemporaries," he moves on to FitzGerald's and Carlyle's assessment of more basic dissimilarities between the poets. It would be difficult to present a more vivid sketch of two personalities in so brief a paragraph than F. L. Lucas has done here, principally because the contrast serves to emphasize strongly the distinctive qualities of each.

Copy Lucas's paragraph; then compose a similar paragraph contrasting two objects, two ideas, two experiences, two persons, two places, or what have you. After establishing your basic contrast, give a vivid series describing the side of the contrast that is most pleasant and appealing. Then conclude your paragraph by restating the contrast.

16 The Paragraph of Causes and Consequences

The angle of the earth causes the rays of the sun to fall more directly on the equatorial than on the polar regions. As a result, the air at the equator is warmed more rapidly than elsewhere and, according to the well-known behavior of the warm air, rises; this expanding warm air flows poleward aloft, resulting in an increased weight of air over the poles. Hence the equatorial low pressure areas and the polar highs. The earth, of course, is constantly rotating on its axis from west to east and this sets up deflections and eddies in the returning air near the surface. The general result is a secondary low pressure area at about 60° (the subpolar low), and a secondary high pressure at about 30° (the horse latitudes), with prevailing east winds in the polar regions and near the equator (the polar easterlies and the trades), and prevailing west winds in the middle latitudes (the westerlies).

The details in a paragraph are often the causes of an event or situation or the consequences of one. Such a paragraph of causes and consequences usually emphasizes one or the other: Either it is a quick statement of a cause and a more detailed discussion of the consequences; or else it is a brief account of a consequence and a more exhaustive treatment of the causes. Sometimes causes and consequences are one and the same, as when you have a series of events, each the result of some previous condition and each giving rise to yet another.

Marston Bates's is clearly a paragraph of causes and consequences. The prime cause of this particular series of meteorological consequences is stated in the first sentence, "The angle of the earth causes the rays of the sun to fall more directly on the equatorial than on the polar regions." The sentences following describe events that are both consequences of this situation and at the same time operate as causes in a complex sequence of events clarified by Bates's methodical use of transitional terms: "as a result," "resulting," "hence," "and this sets up," and "the general result." In this moderately brief and carefully explicit paragraph, the author has expressed an amazing quantity of information about weather (notice even the parenthetical detail), and more important than that, he has demonstrated the complex causal relation of the phenomena. In this case the pattern inherent in the subject is reflected rather clearly in the pattern of the paragraph.

Copy the Bates paragraph; then compose a similar paragraph of causes and consequences. Simplify what is actually a collection of almost simultaneous events by showing how each one is in a sense the result of an earlier event and the cause of a later one. Remind the reader of the causal relations by a generous use of the most exact transitional expressions.

17 The Paragraph of Restatements

One of the greatest dangers of living in large towns is that we have too many neighbors and human fellowship is too cheap. We are apt to become wearied of humanity; a solitary green tree sometimes seems dearer to us than an odd thousand of our fellow citizens. Unless we are hardened, the millions of eyes begin to madden us; and for ever pushed and jostled by crowds we begin to take more kindly to Malthus, and are even willing to think better of Herod and other wholesale depopulators. We begin to hate the sight of men who would appear as gods to us if we met them in Turkestan or Patagonia. When we have become thoroughly crowd-sick, we feel that the continued presence of these thousands of other men and women will soon crush, stamp, or press our unique, miraculous

individuality into some vile pattern of the streets; we feel that the spirit will perish for want of room to expand in: and we gasp for an air untainted by crowded humanity.

J. B. Priestley, *A Road to Oneself*

In order to be clear if not emphatic you can spend an entire paragraph enlarging upon a general statement not by going into detail about it or by going on to another related idea, but by in effect repeating the original thought. Each of the subsequent sentences in J. B. Priestley's paragraph, even though differently phrased and somewhat extended by the addition of new detail, is basically a restatement of the first. Priestley has simply said "One of the greatest dangers of living in large towns is that we have too many neighbors and human fellowship is too cheap" in a variety of ways. When you encounter a thought over which you wish to linger or about which you want to be absolutely clear and emphatic, consider writing a paragraph of restatements.

Copy the Priestley paragraph; then compose a similar paragraph of restatements in which every sentence is a variation on a theme. To do so without seeming to spin your wheels demands a lively, vivid, and provocative style.

18 The Paragraph of Denials and Negations

How does war look when pinned out in the biologist's collection? In the first place, he is able to say with assurance that war is not a general law of life, but an exceedingly rare biological phenomenon. War is not the same thing as conflict or bloodshed. It means something quite definite: an organized physical conflict between groups of one and the same species. Individual disputes between members of the same species are not war, even if they involve bloodshed and death. Two stags fighting over a harem of hinds, or a man murdering another man, or a dozen dogs fighting over a bone, are not engaged in war. Competition between two different species, even if it involves physical conflict, is not war. When the brown rat was accidentally brought to Europe and proceeded to oust the black rat from most of its haunts, that was not war between two species of rat; nor is it war in any but a purely metaphorical sense when we speak of making war on the malaria mosquito or the boll-weevil. Still less is it war when one species preys upon another, even when the preying is done by an organized group. A pack of wolves attacking a flock of sheep or deer, or a peregrine killing a duck is not war. Much of nature, as Tennyson correctly said, is "red in tooth and claw"; but this only means what it says, that there is a great deal of killing in the animal world, not that war is the rule of life.

Julian Huxley, *On Living in a Revolution*

You can sometimes most effectively explain a topic by telling what it is not as a means of indicating precisely what it is. Usually, such a paragraph of denials and negations is accompanied by a more conventional and positive explanation, but in order to clear away any misconceptions it is often essential to eliminate the popular alternatives—especially in dealing with subjects about which a good deal of prejudice, misinformation, and ignorance have accumulated.

Julian Huxley, in the model paragraph, poses a question in the first sentence and answers it in the second, a negatively phrased topic sentence, “In the first place, he is able to say with assurance that war is not a general law of life, but an exceedingly rare biological phenomenon.” Then in a series of “is not” statements supported by numerous examples, Huxley explains and supports the paragraph’s basic assertion by alluding to several forms of biological competition and dispute and predatory killing which, though physical conflict is involved, are not war and are not suggestive “that war is the rule of life,” as he concludes in the final reiteration of the topic sentence. Clearly, a repetition of denials and negations is almost always emphatic, so much so that such a paragraph is written chiefly for that reason.

Copy the Julian Huxley paragraph; then compose a similar paragraph of denials and negations, with an opening rhetorical question, a negatively phrased topic sentence, a series of “is not” sentences supported by examples, and a closing reiterated topic sentence.

IV THE STYLISTIC PARAGRAPH

Just as a writer has need to transform basic sentences into stylistic sentences, he has need at certain points in his writing to transform basic paragraphs into stylistic ones. Any one of the basic paragraphs you have just studied can be given additional characteristics of structure and form that will make it special and noticeable.

Admittedly, you will write basic paragraphs most of the time, and you will choose one basic paragraph or another depending on what you have to say: The logic of your arguments and the rationale for your illustrations will determine the kind of basic paragraph you write. Your decision to write a topic-sentence-first paragraph or a topic-sentence-last paragraph will depend primarily upon content and the general direction of your thinking in any particular composition.

You will always be faced, however, with certain stylistic considerations: the need for variation, the need to indicate emphasis, and the need to establish a much more elaborate and extraordinary style in certain compositions. To satisfy these needs you may wish to give some of your basic paragraphs a more stylistic posture, a more precise architecture, or some particular turn in arrangement and length. In general, a stylistic paragraph will result when you pay careful attention to sentence forms, sentence lengths, and sentence repetitions, and when you give a casually structured paragraph a definite pattern and design.

As you study the stylistic paragraphs on the following pages, concentrate upon the specific characteristic that lifts each out of the ordinary and gives it its noticeable quality. Then after copying the paragraph, compose one that employs the same characteristic. Choose an entirely different subject for your paragraph. If, for instance, the following were your model you would note the many different stylistic characteristics. You would, however, concentrate on the major characteristic, the prevalence of questions. And you would compose a paragraph similarly based upon such questions.

Who has flown and not felt the paradox of man's power: the perfect, self-righting balance of this delicate machine, the pitiful mark left by human hands on the vast panorama stretching below? Who has flown and not gloried in the illusions of power created by gunning the ship on the runway, clearing a section of steel fence for the first time by learning to look for the wind's least messengers? for understanding the ten feet, slipping wing wise with ailerons and rudders opposed into the uprushing earth? Who has flown and not felt closer to nature for reasons for diminishing thrust as one climbs into the atmosphere's rarity? for seeing the wonder of the sun go down as the tight blanket of darkness draws in from the compass'

quarters, making the very air small and the hangars' cylindrical black mouths fade away as the roads become rivers of light?

Seldon Rodman, *The Poetry of Flight*

When shall the nations of the earth find a lasting and enduring peace? When shall human beings truly lay down their arms and work together, rather than fight together? When shall men find it more profitable to cooperate? more advantageous to unite against the common enemies of poverty and disease? more realistic to build highways than weapons, to venture lunar probes rather than territorial invasions? When will men make a serious effort to solve the problems that lead to war rather than wage war itself?

Or you might even write such a paragraph as:

Is there any place in the Western World comparable to the Acropolis in Athens? Where else can one encounter, so dramatically, the grandeur of the human experience and the human dilemma? Where else does one find in fallen marble, in fluted columns, in the well-worn marble steps the very essence of the human achievement? Where else can one see in the grand pediments and the shattered roof both the aspiration and the failure of the mortal spirit? Where else do unwearied caryatids lift up the marble beams? Where else does one walk among the fallen slabs of ancient glory? Where else does ruin mingle with such majesty? Where else is there such a marriage of grandeur and pathos?

Your paragraph will not, of course, be the same as your model. You will have said what you wanted to say: Made your own observations, presented your own judgments, drawn your own conclusions, gathered your own evidence, attacked what you wished to attack, and praised what you wished to praise. You will have followed the model paragraph in its general form, and you will be prepared to write such a paragraph when the stylistic considerations of your composition call for it.

1 The Series Paragraph

There were two stores in the village. My uncle, John A. Quarels, was proprietor of one of them. It was a very small establishment, with a few rolls of "bit" calicoes on half a dozen shelves; a few barrels of salt mackerel, coffee, and New Orleans sugar behind the counter; stacks of brooms, shovels, axes, hoes, rakes, and such things here and there; a lot of cheap hats, bonnets, and tinware strung on strings and suspended from the walls; and at the other end of the room was another counter with bags of shot on it, a cheese or two and a keg of powder; in front of it a row of

nail kegs and a few pigs of lead, and behind it a barrel or two of New Orleans molasses and native corn whisky on tap. If a boy bought five or ten cents' worth of anything, he was entitled to half a handful of sugar from the barrel; if a woman bought a few yards of calico she was entitled to a spool of thread in addition to the usual gratis "trimmin's"; if a man bought a trifle, he was at liberty to draw and swallow as big a drink of whisky as he wanted.

Mark Twain, *Autobiography*

In writing either descriptive or narrative paragraphs, you may well make use of a number of series sentences to create a series paragraph. In such a paragraph nearly every sentence contains one kind of series or another, and the series are presented in some kind of order—from a long series to a short series, or vice versa. The overall effect of such a paragraph is quantity and abundance; and if the series order is from long to short, the effect may be one of increasing order and meaningfulness; if from short to long, the effect may be an increasing disorder and chaos. You can profitably use the series paragraph when presenting descriptive details, narrative events, or catalogues of people, things, or places.

Mark Twain's series paragraph is a good example. After the introductory sentences, he begins his various series in the third sentence.

The first series is, "a few rolls of 'bit' calicoes on half a dozen shelves; a few barrels of salt mackerel, coffee, and New Orleans sugar behind the counter; stacks of brooms, shovels, axes, hoes, rakes, and such things here and there; a lot of cheap hats, bonnets, and tinware strung on strings and suspended from the walls." Within this first four-part series there are interior series: "a few barrels of salt mackerel, coffee, and New Orleans sugar" (three-part); "stacks of brooms, shovels, axes, hoes, rakes, and such things" (six-part); "a lot of cheap hats, bonnets, and tinware" (three-part); and "strung . . . and suspended" (two-part).

A second major series reads, "and at the other end of the room was another counter with bags of shot on it, a cheese or two, and a keg of powder" (three-part). A third series follows, "in front of it a row of nail kegs and a few pigs of lead" (two-part), and "and behind it a barrel or two of New Orleans molasses and native corn whiskey on tap" (two-part). The concluding three-part series reads, "If a boy . . . if a woman . . . if a man . . ."

You will notice that the series generally grow shorter as the paragraph continues. The general meaning is that, among the great abundance of items in the uncle's store, there was a definite scheme to things: The store may have looked crowded and confined, but there was system and order to it.

Copy Mark Twain's series paragraph; then compose a similar paragraph, keeping in mind that there is a difference between ordering content and ordering the

presentation of content: Mark Twain could have used the same general spatial order that prevails in his paragraph without ordering the items into definite series that decreased in length. A good writer always organizes and orders his content in some way, but he may not always resort to such stylistic ordering unless he wishes to produce the effect of variation or emphasis.

You may find it convenient to first write a descriptive paragraph in which you present the details of your description in a set of series following a spatial order. Then, you should rewrite the paragraph, manipulating the length of the series—shortening the first series and lengthening the concluding series, or lengthening the first and shortening the final. If you decide to make the geographically ordered paragraph move from short series to long, you will be suggesting that what you are describing seems simple on first glance but as one continues to look at it appears more complicated. If you move from long series to short, you suggest that what you are describing, though rich in details at first glance, actually has a certain simplicity to it as one's familiarity with it increases.

2 The Antithesis Paragraph

Winter and summer, then, were two hostile lives, and bred two separate natures. Winter was always the effort to live; summer was tropical license. Whether the children rolled in the grass, or waded in the brook, or wam in the salt ocean, or sailed in the bay, or fished for smelts in the creeks, or netted minnows in the salt-marshes, or took to the pine-woods and the granite quarries, or chased muskrats and hunted snapping-turtles in the swamps, or mushrooms or nuts on the autumn hills, summer and country were always sensual living, while winter was always compulsory learning. Summer was the multiplicity of nature; winter was school.

Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams*

Basic paragraphs dealing with contrasting ideas, events, persons, or objects may be transformed into stylistic paragraphs by presenting the contrast in its most balanced antithetical form. Moving from a rather uncontrolled, loose presentation of contrasting matters to a sharply-pointed presentation lifts a paragraph to a new level of stylistic intensity.

Henry Adams has written a striking example of the antithetical paragraph. The topic sentence declares the contrast and presents it in a sharp antithesis: "Winter and summer" followed by a balanced predicate, "were two hostile lives, and bred two separate natures." The second sentence continues the antithesis: "Winter was always the effort to live; summer was tropical license." The third sentence departs from the carefully constructed antithesis to present a long introductory series (an

example of stylistic variation) followed, however, by the antithesis once again: “summer and country were always sensual living, while winter was always compulsory learning.” The final sentence is a clear antithesis: “Summer was the multiplicity of nature; winter was school.”

With every sentence containing an antithesis, Adams’s paragraph becomes part of a grander-than-average style, revealing a concern not only with the idea in the paragraph, but also with the idea’s verbal presentation. Consider, for instance, that the paragraph might have been written in this fashion: “Seasons have their own individual qualities; one season is sometimes actually hostile to another. I discovered this when I was a boy. In winter, for instance, the spirit of work, school, and study filled my life, and I hated it. To me, winter seemed to be the overt enemy of summer—summer with its tropical license, sensual living, and multiplicity of nature, all of which I loved. I began to have definite emotional feelings about these different seasons. . . .” Such a paragraph would have contained the *idea* of contrast, but it would not have had the antithetical form that Adams’s paragraph actually took.

Copy Henry Adam’s antithesis paragraph; then compose one of your own in which you contrast two elements, people, or events and in which you present clear, discernible antitheses.

3 The Question Paragraph

But of what use, pray, is man? Would anybody, besides his dog, miss him if he were gone? Would the sun cease to shed its light because there were no human beings here to sing the praises of sunlight? Would there be sorrow among the little hiding creatures of the underwood, or loneliness in the hearts of the proud and noble beasts? Would the other simians feel that their king was gone? Would God, Jehovah, Zeus, Allah, miss the sound of hymns and psalms, the odor of frankincense and flattery?

Donald Culross Peattie, *An Almanac for Moderns*

A paragraph that, in its basic form, might consist primarily of statements may, in its stylistic form, be presented as a set of questions. Such a striking paragraph always stands in sharp contrast with its neighbors and invites special attention from a reader.

All-question paragraphs are perhaps the most prevalent kind of monochromatic paragraphs—paragraphs that consist of sentences all alike in some noticeable way: all short simple sentences, all questions, all long conditional sentences, or all elliptical sentences. Monochromatic paragraphs, all of one “color” as it were,

always stand out in a composition and are valuable for achieving instant variety and instant attention.

In the exemplary paragraph of questions above, Donald Culross Peattie has phrased his topic sentence as a question and then has “answered” this initial question with a series of rhetorical questions, each a challenge to man’s sense of self-importance and to his anthropomorphic ideas about the universe. To appreciate the effectiveness of the all-question paragraph, you need simply rewrite Peattie’s paragraph as one of assertions: “Man is of little use. Nobody would miss him, if he were gone, except his dog. . . .” What were barbed ironies in the all-question paragraph become ordinary comments.

A paragraph of questions engages a reader in your composition by making him more a part of your argument, by forcing him to look about for answers of his own, and by necessitating his answering your questions with his own “yes,” or “no,” with his own facts and judgments.

Copy the Peattie paragraph; then compose a similar paragraph of questions. Perhaps it will be helpful first to write a basic paragraph of assertions and then to convert it to a paragraph of questions.

4 The Circular Paragraph

There in the mist, enormous, majestic, silent, and terrible, stood the Great Wall of China. Solitarily, with the indifference of nature herself, it crept up the mountain side and slipped down to the depth of the valley. Menacingly, the grim watch towers, stark and foursquare, at due intervals stood at their posts. Ruthlessly, for it was built at the cost of a million lives and each one of those great grey stones has been stained with the bloody tears of the captive and the outcast, it forged its dark way through a sea of rugged mountains. Fearlessly, it went on its endless journey, league upon league to the furthestmost regions of Asia, in utter solitude, mysterious like the great empire it guarded. There in the mist, enormous, majestic, silent, and terrible, stood the Great Wall of China.

W. Somerset Maugham, *On a Chinese Screen*

Stylistic paragraphs usually assume a quality of pattern and design. One of the most obvious—but effective—ways to achieve stylistic design is to begin and end a paragraph with the same sentence. You may do this when presenting information that can tolerate the same summary sentence both before and after intervening details and illustrations. The result is a verbal circle, and it is an especially valuable way to present descriptions—for the beginning and ending sentences become something of a picture frame, enclosing a still life or portrait composed of descriptive sentences.

Somerset Maugham has used the circular paragraph in his description of the Great Wall of China. The concluding sentence is identical with the opening sentence; the circle is closed. Between these sentences are four descriptive sentences, all patterned alike: "Solitarily . . ." "Menacingly . . .," "Ruthlessly . . ." and "Fearlessly . . ." they begin. Each sentence is itself a "snapshot," the whole paragraph becoming a "picture album," bound and contained.

Copy Somerset Maugham's circular paragraph; then compose a circular paragraph describing a scene, an object, or a person. Make sure that your paragraph makes sense and make sure that it is the right length for its circular nature to be effective—long enough so that the opening and closing sentences do not seem to be needless repetition and short enough so that the reader has not forgotten the opening sentence by the time he comes to the paragraph's conclusion.

5 The Patterned Paragraph (Increasing Sentence Length)

But not the same. There lies the hope of life. The old ways are exploited and remain, but new things come, new senses try the unfamiliar air. There are small scuttlings and splashings in the dark, and out of it come the first croaking, illiterate voices of things to be, just as man once croaked and dreamed darkly in that tiny vesicular forebrain.

Loren Eiseley, *The Snout*

One of the most interesting ways to establish design in a paragraph is to control the length of sentences—or, more accurately, to control the number of phrases that give each sentence rhythm and to control the strong, definite pauses created by periods at the end of sentences. All sorts of designs can be established in this way and a fine one with which to start is that achieved by using sentences of increasing length. As sentence length increases the paragraph itself becomes more substantial, more weighty, and a definite progression can be seen.

Though patterned paragraphs may be used simply in stylistic contrast with unpatterned paragraphs, they are most effectively used when they are in some way analogous with the paragraph's topic and development. Consider Loren Eiseley's paragraph. Moving from a short opening sentence of only four words to a long sentence of thirty-six words, Eiseley's paragraph pattern is appropriate for the subject of evolution. From a sentence of a single phrase to a sentence of multiple phrases, Eiseley supports the subject he is discussing with style—the evolving from simple to complex in nature, from simple, singular states of being to multiple, sophisticated states of being.

Copy Loren Eiseley's patterned paragraph; then compose a similar one in which the sentences become increasingly long. Discuss the evolution, progress, growth, or development of an object, idea, or person in your paragraph.

6 The Patterned Paragraph (Decreasing Length)

I do not hesitate to say, that those who call themselves Abolitionists should at once effectually withdraw their support, both in person and property, from the government of Massachusetts, and not wait till they constitute a majority of one, before they suffer the right to prevail through them. I think that it is enough if they have God on their side, without waiting for that other one. Moreover, any man more right than his neighbors constitutes a majority of one already.

Henry David Thoreau, *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*

On April 3rd, with America still three days away from war, I speculated on the possibility of another canoe trip, for August — a journey on which I proposed to carry “a modified form of miner’s tent.” Apparently I was spending more time reading sporting goods catalogues and dreaming of the woods than studying news accounts of hostilities in Europe. I was also considering the chances of a summer job. Next fall I was to enter college.

E. B. White, *First World War*

You may also control the length of sentences in a paragraph by moving from long sentences to short ones, thus creating a pattern that looks something like an inverted pyramid. With sentences of decreasing length your paragraph surrenders substance and weight and moves toward singularity, restriction, isolation, and even deprivation. In such a paragraph there is the subtle sense of loss.

Thoreau's paragraph, for instance, urges a withdrawal of Abolitionist support from the Massachusetts state government. His paragraph is patterned with sentences of decreasing length: moving from the plurality of “themselves” in the first sentence to the singular idea in the last sentence that a single man can constitute “a majority of one.” The first sentence contains forty-eight words, the second contains nineteen words, and the third sentence contains fourteen words.

E. B. White's paragraph deals with the ominous threat of war hanging over a young man's life. Even as White speculates on the regular order of his life, the peacetime expectations of vacation, job, and college, the shadow of war falls darker and darker over the world. One can sense this shadow as the very sentences in the paragraph grow shorter and shorter; the full expectations of the first sentence are reduced to the abbreviated expectation of the last. The first sentence contains

thirty-six words, the second sentence contains twenty-three words, the third sentence contains ten words, and the fourth sentence contains seven.

Copy both the Thoreau paragraph and the White paragraph; then compose a paragraph of your own discussing an idea or situation that you think would be enhanced by this particular paragraph pattern. Preferably, write on a topic dealing with individuality, isolation, independence, loss, or separation.

7 The Patterned Paragraph (Short Sentence to Long Sentence to Short Sentence)

A man's wife, true enough, may envy her husband certain of his more soothing prerogatives and sentimentalities. She may envy him his masculine liberty of movement and occupation, his impenetrable complacency, his peasant-like delight in petty vices, his capacity for hiding the harsh face of reality behind the cloak of romanticism, his general innocence and childishness. But she never envies him his shoddy and preposterous soul.

H. L. Mencken, *The Feminine Mind*

Another pattern you can achieve in a paragraph is the short sentence-long sentence-short sentence pattern, a swelling forth in the middle of the paragraph with a compact beginning and conclusion. The value of such a paragraph is primarily to achieve contrast with unpatterned, surrounding paragraphs. On some occasions, however, it may be judiciously used to give “shape” to the topic you wish to present: If you were discussing a nation’s beginning, development, and decline, or the stock market’s fluctuation from low to high to low, or a young man’s movement from alienation to involvement and back to alienation again, you might well use the short-long-short pattern as a kind of subtle illustration.

In his paragraph Mencken has taken some care with pattern and design. He opens with a short sentence and the sentence contains a balance, “prerogatives and sentimentalities.” He closes with a short sentence that also contains a balance, “shoddy and preposterous.” Between these sentences he writes his long sentence containing a long series. He takes care that the first item in that series—“his masculine liberty of movement and occupation”—contains a balance, “movement and occupation,” and that the last item in the series—“his general innocence and childishness”—contains another balance, “innocence and childishness.” This particular paragraph takes on a strong two-part nature then: balance here, balance there and the whole paragraph a balance of two short sentences on either side of the long central sentence. All in all, the design of the paragraph seems appropriate to a discussion of the battle of the sexes.

Copy the Mencken paragraph; then compose a paragraph that similarly moves from a short sentence to a long middle sentence and then to a short concluding sentence.

8 The Patterned Paragraph (Long Sentence to Short Sentence to Long Sentence)

So many Christs there seem to be: one in rebellion against his cross, to which he was nailed; one bitter with the agony of knowing he must die, his heart-beatings all futile; one who felt sentimental; one who gave in to his misery; one who was sensationalist; one who dreamed and fretted with thought. Perhaps the peasant carvers of crucifixes are right, and all these are found on the same cross. And perhaps there were others too: one who waited for the end, his soul still with a sense of right and hope; one ashamed to see the crowd make beasts of themselves, ashamed that he should provide for their sport; one who looked at them and thought: "And I am of you. I might be among you, yelling at myself in that way. But I am not, I am here. And so—"

D. H. Lawrence, *Christs in the Tirol*

The patterned paragraph may also move from long sentence to short sentence to long. Again, the value of such a paragraph with its rather exact structure is to provide contrast with other paragraphs in which sentence lengths are of no consideration.

Lawrence has made effective use of this particular design, faced as he was with the problem of presenting his long list of diverse Christ-figures without surfeiting the reader. By breaking his list into two long series sentences and separating them with a short sentence, he has used this patterned paragraph in analogy with a two-act drama having an intermission between the acts. The play would have been too long without some interruption; the short sentence becomes the necessary relief.

Copy Lawrence's paragraph; then compose a paragraph using the same long-short-long design.

9 The Patterned Paragraph (Statements and Questions)

Ibsen once made one of his characters say that he did not read much because he found reading "irrelevant," and the adjective was brilliantly chosen because it held implications even beyond those of which Ibsen was consciously aware. What is it that made the classics irrelevant to him and to us? Is it not just exactly those to him impossible premises which make tragedy what it is, those assumptions that the soul of man is great, that the universe (together with whatever gods may be) concerns

itself with him and that he is, in a word, noble? Ibsen turned to village politics for exactly the same reason that his contemporaries and his successors have, each in his own way, sought out some aspect of the common man and his common life—because, that is to say, here was at least something small enough for him to be able to believe.

Joseph Wood Krutch, *The Modern Temper*

What has been learned? What have we learned from one of the most instructive weeks in human history? If we have learned well, it is possible that the human race stands a fair chance of securing to itself the blessings of reason and fulfillment on earth to a greater degree than has been possible so far. If we have learned poorly, then it may be only a short time before the onset of new eruptions from which there can be neither recovery nor appeal.

Norman Cousins, *What Have We Learned?*

Patterned paragraphs can be achieved not only by manipulating sentence length but also by using various sentence forms. Questions and statements, being clearly distinguishable forms, are those most frequently used to create designs. Joseph Wood Krutch, in his paragraph above, has created a pattern with a statement, a question, a question, and a statement. Nor is the pattern an accident; the third sentence could easily have been a statement rather than a rhetorical question. And what is the rationale of the pattern? The rationale of interest if nothing else; certainly, when dealing with abstract ideas such as* belief, relevancy, tragedy, or nobility, an author may well feel the need to support the abstract observations with a definite architectural paragraph and to hold reader attention by providing delightful and well-considered style during a generally abstract discussion.

Another version of the question/statement pattern is the one by Norman Cousins. Cousins presents two questions and then two conditional statements. The paragraph is carefully patterned since both conditional statements open with the same words. It becomes antithetical when “well” and “poorly” are contrasted.

This strongly patterned paragraph was used by Cousins to begin an editorial in the *Saturday Review*. Patterned paragraphs of one kind or another are frequently used in opening positions, since they are exceptional and attract reader attention.

Copy the two paragraphs above; then compose two paragraphs that make use of questions and statements to create a pattern. In one paragraph use the exact pattern that Joseph Wood Krutch uses. Then compose a paragraph similar to that of Norman Cousins—with two questions followed by two statements. If you wish, write a third paragraph in which you make up a pattern of your own.

10 The Experimental Paragraph

Paris Exhibition: the Spanish Pavilion, the Italian Pavilion. The other pavilions. The Palaces of Glass and of Peace. The Eiffel Tower. The last named occasionally sings. Moved by an emission of Roman Candles from its flanks, it will break of an evening into a dulcet and commanding melody. When this happens the pavilions fold their hands to listen, and are steeped for a little in shadow, so that the aniline fountains may play more brightly in the Seine. The melody swells, inciting the fireworks as they the melody, and both of them swell the crowd. O synchronisation! O splendour unequalled! Splendour never to be surpassed? Probably never to be surpassed. The German and Russian Pavilions, the Chinese and Japanese Pavilions, the British and Italian Pavilions, any and all of the pavilions, will see to that. The Eiffel Tower sings louder, a scientific swan. Rosy chemicals stimulate her spine, she can scarcely bear the voltage, the joy, the pain. . . . The emotion goes to her tiny head, it turns crimson and vomits fiery serpents. All Paris sees them. They astonish the Pantheon and Montmartre. Even the Institute de France notices, heavy browed, dreaming of cardinals, laurels, and reclaim in the past. O inspired giraffe! Whatever will the old thing turn into next? Listen and see. The crisis is coming. The melody rises by slight and sure gradations, a la Cesar Franck, spiralling easily upward upon the celestial roundabout. Bell pop popple crack, is the crisis, bell pop popple crack, the senses reel, music and light, music and might, the Eiffel Tower becomes a plesiosauros, flings out her arms in flame, and brings them back smartly to her vibrating sides, as one who should say "la!" Bell pop crack pop popple bell. The carillon dies away, the rockets fall, the senses disentangle. There is silence, there are various types of silences, and during one of them the Angel of the Laboratory speaks. "Au revoir, mes enfants," she says. "I hope you have enjoyed yourselves. We shall meet again shortly, and in different conditions." The children applaud these well-chosen words. The German Pavilion, the Russian Pavilion, confront one another again, and a small star shines out on the top of the Column of Peace.

E. M. Forster, *Two Cheers for Democracy*

On some extremely rare occasion, you may wish to create a paragraph that adheres to no given formula and for which there is no existing model: You may simply want to experiment with words and sentences to create a paragraph of your own invention. However, when you do write an experimental paragraph, you will have to be judicious in your use of it: It might be too exceptional to fit into the prose compositions that you normally write. Yet, it is good to be prepared to do something different: You may someday have need to shock a reader into great awareness, and you may decide that the only way to do it is to give him a piece of writing that he normally would not encounter.

To give a formula for an experimental paragraph would be to negate its originality and uniqueness; but by studying experimental paragraphs of master

writers you may get some ideas on how experimentation comes about. In E. M. Forster's paragraph you will find an effective accumulation of such devices as elliptical sentences, series sentences, figurative sentences, and rhetorical questions combined with alliteration, onomatopoeia, and the like—creating a readable, understandable paragraph that is, nevertheless, a unique experience in itself.

Forster's main device in creating his unusual paragraph is the metaphor, especially personification. He presents his personification of the Eiffel Tower in a variety of highly structured sentences, sentences with key-word repetitions, metrical sentences, and rhythmical sentences. Look especially at such sentences as follow: "O synchronisation! O splendour unequalled! Splendour never to be surpassed? Probably never to be surpassed. . . . Listen and see. The crisis is coming. . . . Bell pop crack pop popple bell. The carillon dies away, the rockets fall, the senses disentangle." Actually, Forster has drawn upon the full range of stylistic sentences to create his paragraph. Using a full spectrum of colors, he has created a vivid and dynamic description of a place, a vivid and dynamic account of an evening's event.

Copy the Forster paragraph; then compose an experimental paragraph of your own. Use as many types of stylistic sentences as you can to create a colorful picture of a place or an exciting account of some experience. Write as vigorously as you can. To get started, follow Forster's lead: Simply state the object you intend to describe or name the experience you are going to report—"The University: the green oval, the marble library. To the left: the temples of science. To the right: the temples of art. Science. Art, Staring across the green abyss. . . Use your imagination—and let yourself go, verbally.

AFTERNOTE

Now that you have completed the task set forth for you—writing various model sentences and paragraphs—you should continue with some sort of writing program on your own. Even though later as a wiser and more seasoned writer, you may wish to copy and compose your way through this text again, you will also want to locate and make use of other model sentences and paragraphs—models that you yourself discover in the literature you read.

You are urged to keep a journal in which you copy any sentence or paragraph that especially appeals to you, any that seems to demonstrate some particular locution or syntax, and any that seems an especially polished example of good writing. Then you are urged to use your journal as you have used this text—copying the models and composing versions of your own.

Hopefully, as you practice the art of imitation, you will acquire not only new skill in your writing, but you will also acquire a vocabulary to use in your discussion of composition and style, and you will become more alert to some of the things that constitute good prose. As you emulate model sentences and paragraphs by the best of writers, you will penetrate more and more into the inner workings of rhetoric and style, and you will acquire a greater capacity for stylistic analysis and understanding. With this understanding, inevitably, a more knowledgeable and confident performance on your part will result.

A good writer's work is never done. A sincere and serious writer is always attempting to improve his skills and techniques. By developing a continuing program of judicious reading and judicious imitation, you can keep yourself in good writing form and make significant writing progress.

