

COLLEGE GUILD

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CREATIVE LANGUAGE

Unit 3 of 6

LANGUAGE & CREATIVITY

“Words ought to be a little wild for they are the assault of thoughts on the unthinking.”
~ John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) ~

Did Keynes mean creativity when he wrote “wild words”? I think so.

1. Why would making language creative get the “unthinking” to think?

We talked about metaphors as a way to make words “wilder”. Sometimes just substituting one word for another is all it takes.

A SYNONYM for a word is another word with the same meaning. An ANTONYM is a word with the exact opposite meaning. This next assignment is about finding words out of the ordinary to make your prose and poetry stand out.

2. Write a synonym and an antonym for the following words.

(Example: One antonym for small is “big”, but “mountainous” is more colorful.)

hope	silly	cherish	friendly
long	car	wonder	wander
clown	power	alone	relax

Here’s a CG student’s idea for practicing synonyms:

3. Write a story. Underline ten nouns and ten verbs in the story. Now think of synonyms for those twenty words, writing them above the underlined nouns and verbs.

One student’s reaction to this assignment was that he liked the substitutes better because they “make the picture in my mind brighter. I had to reach deeper inside of me.” Another had the opposite response. He felt the original wording was more honest, less forced.

4. Which version do you like best and why?

A particular group of words that can trip up a writer is HOMONYMS, words that sound exactly the same but are spelled differently and have different meanings. The ones in the following sentences are frequently misused. **These are important ones to learn!**

The TWO teenagers drove TO the mall and ate hamburgers, TOO.

THERE are lots of THEIR friends around when THEY'RE having a party.

YOU'RE not paying attention to YOUR teacher!

5. Think of another set of homonyms, and write a sentence containing both.

The following poem (by an unknown author) is a clever way to play with homonyms.

Whether the Weather

Whether the weather be fine,
Or whether the weather be not,
Whether the weather be cold
Or whether the weather be hot,
We'll weather the weather
Whatever the weather,
Whether we like it or not!

6. There are three different definitions of this poem's homonym. Define each of them.

Other words are spelled the same, but can have entirely different meanings, such as bear or slug. They are called HOMOGRAPHS.

I couldn't bear to watch the injured bear.

He had just taken a slug of beer when the bouncer slugged him.

7. Think of another word that has two entirely different meanings.

8. Use the word twice in a single sentence, using both meanings.

On page 5 are lists of common homonyms and homographs.

Synonyms, antonyms and homonyms all have an influence on prose, from finding the most imaginative words to using correct spelling. This next section is all about focusing on HOW other writers tell their stories. What follows are four examples of creative writing by College Guild students.

I wake in the morning. My joints are hurting due to arthritis. I sit up and reach for my cane, but it's not where I thought I put it. Where did I put it? My memory is not too good these days. Oh, there it is. I walk to the kitchen to make breakfast. Oh, how I miss those days when I ate what I wanted to eat. Now I have to watch my weight and eat carefully. I don't want to have another heart attack. After taking all of my medications, I feed my two cats and then go outside to feed the birds. I come back inside and watch TV until lunch time. Boy, it's hard to get up these stairs these days. After lunch I watch some more TV and then go for a walk. The doctor says that walking is good for me. I walk to the park and back. Wow -- that was a workout. I watch more TV and then make supper. As I eat, I think about what I am going to wear for bingo tonight. After

supper, I take a shower and get dressed up. My friends come and get me for bingo. We go and I don't win. It's been a long time since I won at bingo, two or three years, I think. When I get home, the cats run up to me and purr as if to welcome me home. I am worn out and tired, so I go to bed and I wonder if there is something new or different I can do tomorrow.

[Danny]

I sat in the chair for nearly an hour one night listening to my friend tell his lies. The barking dogs only added to the anger I was already feeling towards my friend. Finally he left. And the dogs stopped barking. I guess they were angry too. [Frank]

In the garage she awaits my arrival -- her skin a fiery red and her legs are of the thickest tread, eyes of crimson and gold with her pipes so intricately covered in chrome. Beneath her bodice of metallic tone -- her parts scream to welcome me home. Within her arms I enter with ease then crank her shaft; our reunion seems a forgotten past. [Jason]

There we were, ahead 14-13 with two minutes left to play. We had the ball and needed only to run the clock out. The City Championship was in our pockets. Bryant hands the ball off to Kendall so he can run straight into the line and keep the clock ticking. Oh no, what is Kendall doing? He's taking off around the right end. Stop, drop! We don't need a score! Oh my Gosh, the big end for the PBC Panthers has stripped the ball from Kendall and is strolling untouched into our end zone. Goodbye championship. Kendall you better find a place to hide and quick! [John]

9. Which is your favorite and which is your least favorite? Why?

10. What makes each of these four works creative and different from the other three?

Carefully analyzing another writer's work can help you decide what you can do to improve your own writing. For this next assignment, you will be writing a paragraph using the same approach or voice as the above writers. Pick a different subject and write in their style – John (narrative humor), Jason (description which cleverly misleads the reader), Frank (metaphor) and Danny (speaking as a different character).

11. Write 4 paragraphs which use Danny's, Frank's, Jason's and John's approaches.

Trying to copy another writer's style (not subject) is difficult, but it helps you figure out what works and doesn't work for you.

POETRY

People seem to either love or hate the idea of writing poetry. If you think you're in this second group, think of song lyrics. Write down the words to your favorite song and read them instead of singing them – a poem! One way to describe poetry is that it is an "imaginative interpretation" of its subject. Poetry is presented on the page in a different format from prose. Many poems don't even use full sentences or punctuation.

We'll begin with "couplets" (poems of only 2 lines.) We can use a rhyming poem (like "The Fly") or free verse ("Guilt").

The Fly

The Lord in his wisdom made the fly
And then forgot to tell us why.

- Ogden Nash, from Beastly Poetry

Guilt

A cop walks by.
I look at my feet.

- John Yarbrough, from Boiled White

The humor in the first works so well because of the simplicity; it reads like a casual observation which makes it much funnier than if it was explained or overwritten. The rhyme fits with the mood. "Guilt" is an example of saying more with few words than you could in a whole essay -- that's the challenge of writing poetry. All the action in Yarbrough's poem is a movement of the head. But combining that with the title and the cop, in only nine words this character and his life become real. Free verse fits with the mood.

Notice how rhyming poems frequently have an even METER – the lines are arranged in a rhythmic way, with the same number of beats.

A poem is said to be complete, not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing more to take away! The following poem conveys the scene clearly with many fewer words than if it were written in prose. (Note: no title, no verb to make it a sentence, no punctuation)

*broken locks
filthy stairs
stench of garbage
absent landlord*

12. Complete two rhyming couplets by adding the second line:

Here is a writer's dream come true -

To the dentist I must go –

13. Complete two free verse couplets by adding the second line:

Clouds and mountains –

The bull frog dresses in mossy green –

14. Write your own couplet in rhyme.

15. How would you say this in prose?

16. Write your own couplet in free verse.

17. Take the subject of your rhyming couplet and the subject of your free verse couplet, and write a story (with plot and characters) that includes them both.

I doubt that there's a way to define "good" poetry. For each of us, the "best" poems are the ones that move us, the ones we read and reread, the ones that bring us a new understanding of ourselves or the world.

Here are six subjects:

a spooky cellar	a boy who doesn't want to go to school
a man on a boat in a storm	a cow barn
a city at night	a young girl in a hospital

18. Write a rhyming poem about one of them

19. Write a free verse poem about a different one.

20. Pick a third and write two poems about it, one rhyming and one in free verse.

21. How did the change in format change the way your two #20 poems came out, even though they are about the same subject? Which do you like the best?

Reread all your poems. Are there words that can be left out? Did you work to come up with the most creative imagery possible?

Homonyms

by – bye – buy	so – sew – sow	oh – owe
to – too – two	no – know	one – won
hear – here	dear – deer	doe – dough
choose – chews	site – cite – sight	die – dye
pare – pair – pear	toe – tow	tax – tacks
throne – thrown	vein – vane – vain	weak – week
sighs – size	paws – pause	rain – rein – reign

(Do you know all the different meanings??)

Homographs

bass (fish/instrument)	row (line/argue)
sewer (person who sews/waste pipe)	lead (go in front/metal)
putting (golf stroke/placing)	bow (bend/weapon)
job (occupation/Biblical figure)	tear (liquid from eye/rip)
invalid (not valid/chronically sick)	wind (air/turn around)

SPELLING & GRAMMAR

SINGULAR and PLURAL

Here is another grammar rule:

With one object, there is no "s" at the end; with more than one, there is. Examples:

1 table, 8 tables	1 chicken, 142 chickens
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Objects like those above are (as you know from the previous section) nouns.

For actions (verbs) it's the opposite. If one person or object is doing something, the action has an "s" at the end; if there are 2 or more subjects, the verb doesn't. Examples:

The table falls. The tables fall. One chicken clucks. 142 chickens cluck.

Putting these together:

The College Guild student writes a poem.

Ten College Guild students write ten poems.

22. Correct the following sentences:

While Helen is reading in her hotel room, the hurricane slam into the coast of Louisiana.

It makes me furious when Presidents lies about what our taxes are used for.

23. Finish the following sentences:

The whales _____.

Our neighbor _____.

The teachers _____.

The teacher _____.

Putting an "s" at the end of a word to indicate there are more than one may be a "rule", but in the English language there are MANY exceptions, such as these:

singular

man

child

box

octopus

wolf

appendix

plural

men

children

boxes

octopuses

wolves

appendices

24. Think of another plural that doesn't end by just adding an "s" to the singular noun.

25. What would be one reason for having an unusual plural ending?

The purpose here isn't to suggest you try and memorize plurals, but to know you may find unusual ones.

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes.