

HANDOUTS FOR

**Constance Hale's
Lesson Plans for Teachers**

Resources to be used with

Sin and Syntax: How to Craft Wicked Good Prose

(Three Rivers Press, 2013)

A note to you.

These are the handouts from my e-book, *Constance Hale's Lesson Plans for Teachers*. They will make little sense if you do not have the e-book, which is available at Amazon and on various other channels for digital books. The e-book contains two full suites of lesson plans that complement the 2013 edition of *Sin and Syntax: How to Craft Wicked Good Prose*. Whether or not you actually use the book in the classroom, the idea is to share presentations, exercises, and writing prompts that I have developed for workshops all over the country. Some of these exercises and prompts appear in the book as “catechisms.” Others I have road-tested with students of varying ages and levels of accomplishment.

The lessons, especially in Suite One, are organized to correspond to chapters of the book, but introductory material at the beginning of each lesson gives you some room to play. Depending on how your classes are organized, you can stretch the lessons out for an entire year or compress them into a semester. You may want to focus on Suite One (“Working With Words” and “Working With Sentences”) if you are working especially on grammar. If you are teaching more advanced writers, you might want to skip right to Suite Two (“Making Music”). In some cases, I have given different iterations of exercises for different age levels.

The handouts are collected here so that you can easily print them and give them to students. Not all chapters have handouts. Included here are handouts for Part One, Chapter One as well as Part One, Chapter 7, even though the e-book does not contain a handout. I am trying to make it maximally easy for you to use my materials in the classroom.

One caveat and a few pleas: This is a labor of love. I chose to self-publish my lesson plans to keep the cost low for teachers. They have been lightly edited. So please be charitable when you see typos or infelicities.

Please send me your corrections, your own ideas, and your feedback on this material. My goal is simply to be as helpful as I can to everyone genuinely trying to teach others to write in a more sophisticated fashion. And to have a little fun in doing so.

Feel free to print these pages for your students, but please ask other teachers to buy the e-book and download their own copies. This material is copyrighted, and the slight fee is intended to cover some of my hard costs.

Do encourage students to visit sinandsyntax.com and follow me on Twitter and Facebook. Please encourage colleagues as well, especially the area for teachers called “Talking School.” I’m trying to build a community of those who care about language.

Enjoy, and keep in touch!

Connie Hale

Email: connie@sinandsyntax.com

Twitter: [@sinandsyntax](https://twitter.com/sinandsyntax)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Constance.Hale.Scribe

Suite One: Working With Words

Week One

A Whole New Way With Words/Handout

In-class exercises

5. **For more advanced students:** This letter, from the first edition of *Sin and Syntax*, offers some subversive fun to more advanced students in identifying nouns. In it, Cyan Inc., the company that produced the adventure game to end all adventure games, *Myst*, showed a better sense of words—and humor—than most PR types, avoiding the knee-jerk tendency to drown crucial words in a tide of filler. The letter landed on the desk of an editor at *Wired* magazine back in the early days of the Web. The press release focused all attention on a few key nouns (i.e., the names of the products being hawked) and poked fun at meaningless PR. (If all press releases were as funny, editors might actually read them.)

Dear Mr. Frauenfelder,

Blah, blah blah blah blah Cyan blah Blah blah *Myst* blah Blah. BLAH! Blah blah blah
blah blah blah blah blah, blah blah blah blah. Blah blah blah blah blah: blah blah.
Blah blah Cyan blah blah blah blah blahblah blah blah blah *Myst* blah blah. Blahblah
The Manhole Masterpiece Edition blah blah *Cosmic Osmo and the Worlds Beyond the
Mackerel*.

The Manhole Masterpiece Edition blah blah blah blah blah blahblah blah blah
blah blah blahblah blah. Blahblah blah blah blah. Blah blah blah blahblah; blah blah
blah blah blah. Blah blah blah *The Manhole Masterpiece Edition*, blah blah blah blah blah
blahblah blahblah.

Cosmic Osmo and the Worlds Beyond the Mackerel blah blah blah blah blah blah
blah blahblah blah blah blah, blah blah. Blah blah! Blah blah blah & blah blah blah
blah, blah blah blah blah blah blah blah. Blah, *Cosmic Osmo and the Worlds Beyond the
Mackerel* blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blahblah. Blah blah.

Blah blah Cyan blah blah blah blah blah blah blahblah blah—blah blah. Blah
blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blahblah.

Regards,
Rand Miller & Robin Miller
Founders

P.S. Blah blah blah blah Blah blah: blah blah blah!

Homework

Loosen up. Have a little fun with slang and jargon. Take something you've written recently (it would be great if it were a piece of formal writing or an academic paper!) and revise it using as much slang as you can. Or write an email to your teacher or boss using formal language, then write the same email to a friend or colleague in informal language. Or think of two people who work together and rely on professional argot or jargon, then write a dialogue in their lingo. As an example of a writer having fun with jargon, here is a no-doubt-apocryphal conversation between the economist and techno-utopian advocate George Gilder and an engineer, captured (or improvised) by the journalist Po Bronson in a 1996 profile in *Wired*:

Every time Gilder meets an engineer, they go through this sort of cascade of language syntax, negotiating like two modems, trying to find the most efficient level of conversation they can hold. It ends up sounding like the dueling-banjo scene from *Deliverance*:

George: "Hi, nice to meet you. Hey, that's a sweet access router over there. Wow, both Ethernet and asynchronous ports?"

Steve: "Yeah, check this baby out—the Ethernet port has AUI, BNC, and RJ-45 connectors."

George: "So for packet filtering you went with TCP, UDP, and ICMP."

Steve: "Of course. To support dial-up SLIP and PPP."

George: "Set user User_Name ifilter Filter_Name."

Steve: "Set filter s1.out 8 permit 192.9.200.2/32 0.0.0.0/0 tcp src eq 20."

George: "00101101100010111001001110110000101010100011111001."

Steve: "."

George: "Really? Wait, you lost me there."

Week Two:

Noodling Around With Nouns/Handout

In-class exercises

1. *From Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number, by Jacobo Timerman*

Identify every noun in the following passage:

The cell is narrow. When I stand at its center, facing the steel door, I can't extend my arms. But it is long, and when I lie down, I can stretch out my entire body. A stroke of luck, for in the cell I previously occupied—for how long?—I was forced to huddle up when seated and keep my knees bent while lying down.

The cell is quite high. When I jump, I'm unable to touch the ceiling. The white walls have been recently painted. Undoubtedly they once had names on them, messages, words of encouragement, dates. They are now bereft of any vestige or testimony.

The floor of the cell is permanently wet. Somewhere there's a leak. The mattress is also wet. I have a blanket, and to prevent that from getting wet I keep it on my shoulders constantly. If I lie down with the blanket on top of me, the part of my body touching the mattress gets soaked. I discover it's best to roll up the mattress so that one part of it doesn't touch the ground. In time, the top part dries. This means, though, that I can't lie down, but must sleep seated. My life goes on during this period—for how long?—either standing or seated.

The cell has a steel door with an opening that allows part of a face, a minimal part, to be visible.

The guard has orders to keep the opening shut. Light enters from the outside through a small crack, which acts also as an air vent. This is the only ventilation and light. A faint glow, night and day, eliminating time. Producing a semi-penumbra within an atmosphere of contaminated air, semi-air. . . .

One of the guards has my watch. During an interrogation another guard offered me a cigarette and lit it with my wife's lighter. I later learned that they were under army orders not to steal anything from my house throughout the kidnapping but succumbed to temptation. Gold Rolex watches and Dupont cigarette lighters were almost an obsession with the Argentine security forces during that year of 1977.

Tonight, a guard, not following the rules, leaves the peephole ajar. I wait a while to see what will happen but it remains open. Standing on tiptoe, I peer out. There's a narrow corridor, and across from my cell I can see at least two other doors. Indeed, I have a full view of two doors. What a sensation of freedom! An entire universe added to my Time, that elongated time which hovers over me oppressively in the cell. Time, that dangerous enemy of man, when its existence, duration, and eternity are virtually palpable.

3. Naming things:

Identify all the nouns in the following passages. Which ones are common, which ones proper? Which ones specific, which generic?

From *Whoredom in Kimmage: Irish Women Coming of Age*, by Rosemary Mahoney

The man wore a wool cap and a heavy overcoat with the collar up, as though against a winter wind. The great wings of his collar hid the lower half of his face—all I could see of him was a black brow, a long, graying sideburn and an enormous hairy ear. . . . [He] addressed me without introduction or preface and without taking his eyes off the red dot of the fishing boat. I thought he was speaking Irish and stepped closer, the better to hear him, but it was English he was speaking, his second language. Aran Islanders—indeed most native Irish speakers—speak English in a mournful, faintly suspicious way, as though it pains them to be speaking such an unwieldy tongue, but this man’s tone was exceptionally gloomy; it made him sound like the spy he resembled.

From “Death All Day in Kansas,” by Richard Rhodes (*Esquire*)

Dan’s parents have waited up for us with Johnny Carson and Ed McMahon. Mrs. Cram appears to let us in—a slim, pleasant, dark-haired woman in a quilted robe, feminine without fluffiness, with delicate and graceful hands. She does not, as a farm woman might, leave the conversation to the men; as she asks her questions her eyes examine her son, assaying his health, his appetite, his state of mind. Married only ten months, Dan has not yet finally left home, and between his mother and his grandmother, in the next twenty-four hours, he will receive more attention than makes him comfortable, as befits a former Portis high-school basketball player.

From *The Last Cowboy*, by Jane Kramer

There was a fine-lined, weathered look about Henry at forty. Too much bourbon and beer had put a gut on him, but his gray eyes were clear and quick most days, and often humorous, and his sandy hair had got thick and wiry as it grayed—a little ruffled and overgrown, because he hated haircuts, though never long enough to cause comment in a cowboy bar. He had a fine, solemn swagger. Saturday nights at the country-and-Western dance in Pampa, he thumped around the floor, serious and sweating, and the women liked to watch him—there was something boyish and charming about his grave self-consciousness. When he was young, he used to laugh and shake hands with everybody after a good polka. Now, more often than not, he blinked and looked around, suddenly embarrassed, and his laugh was loud and nervous, and made the women who had been watching him uncomfortable.

Still, Betsy was looking tired lately. All the cowboys’ wives said so. She looked as if her life had hurt her and worn her out. Years ago, when Henry began to court her, she was the prettiest girl in her class at the district high school—a slender girl with wide blue eyes and a dimpled smile and wavy yellow hair that flipped in the wind when she went riding and was the envy of her friends. Now there was tension—a kind of tightness—about her. Her face had hardened under the bright, careful pouf that her hairdresser said was just the thing for softening the features of tall, thin women. She was getting sallow the way people who spend their youth outdoors turn sallow when they are shut up in closed cars and offices.

5. Geeky grammar

Clean up these phrases by finding better, more specific nouns:

a written warranty or any documents associated therewith

the location of manufacture

we have no present or future plans to do so

Welcome to the New York area!

Eliminate the redundancies in the following sentences, each one taken from a real book manuscript:

The Philadelphia chromosome derails normal bone marrow functioning and initiates an uncontrolled reproduction and proliferation of all types of white blood cells and platelets (which help blood clot).

The way to begin is to eliminate any mindset or attitude that might be a source of conservatism or resistance to change.

Gates said that the Money team, with its limited resources, had increased the public's fascination and attraction with personal finance software.

Identify the junk nouns in these sentences, and think of a way to improve them:

This is all part of our global improvement product enhancement program. (A statement by a spokesman for Hasbro after the toy company closed a Scrabble plant in Fairfax, Vermont)

I am writing to you about our need for a communication facilitation skills development intervention. (From a school principal's letter to parents)

Careful operational organization of this policy is needed in order to avoid the pitfall of goal displacement. (From a government agency memo)

Agreement on the overall objective of decision usefulness was a prerequisite to the establishment of a conceptual framework. (From a company memo)

Homework

Southern nouns. Underline every noun in this passage, from *The Ballad of the Sad Café* by Carson McCullers, and take special note of the idea/feeling/abstraction nouns McCullers uses (*dreams, gaiety, ruin*). How does the author drop these nouns into the passage to set up her themes?

The town itself is dreary; not much is there except the cotton mill, the two-room houses where the workers live, a few peach trees, a church with two colored windows, and a miserable main street only a hundred yards long. On Saturdays the tenants from the near-by farms come in for a day of talk and trade. Otherwise the town is lonesome, sad, and like a place that is far off and estranged from all other places in the world. The nearest train stop is Society City, and the Greyhound and

White Bus Lines use the Forks Falls Road which is three miles away. The winters here are short and raw, the summers white with glare and fiery hot.

If you walk along the main street on an August afternoon there is nothing whatsoever to do. The largest building, in the very center of the town, is boarded up completely and leans so far to the right that it seems bound to collapse at any minute. The house is very old. There is about it a curious, cracked look that is very puzzling until you suddenly realize that at one time, and long ago, the right side of the front porch had been painted, and part of the wall—but the painting was left unfinished and one portion of the house is darker and dingier than the other. The building looks completely deserted. Nevertheless, on the second floor there is one window which is not boarded; sometimes in the late afternoon when the heat is at its worst a hand will slowly open the shutter and a face will look down on the town. It is a face like the terrible dim faces known in dreams—sexless and white, with two gray crossed eyes which are turned inward so sharply that they seem to be exchanging with each other one long and secret gaze of grief. The face lingers at the window for an hour or so, then the shutters are closed once more, and as likely as not there will not be another soul to be seen along the main street. These August afternoons—when your shift is finished there is absolutely nothing to do; you might as well walk down to the Forks Fall Road and listen to the chain gang.

However, here in this very town there was once a café. And this old boarded-up house was unlike any other place for many miles around. There were tables with cloths and paper napkins, colored streamers from the electric fans, great gatherings on Saturday nights. The owner of the place was Miss Amelia Evans. But the person most responsible for the success and gaiety of the place was a hunchback called Cousin Lymon. One other person had a part in the story of this café—he was the former husband of Miss Amelia, a terrible character who returned to the town after a long term in the penitentiary, caused ruin, and then went on his way again. The café has long since been closed, but it is still remembered.

Twitter nouns

Which of the following seven Twitter profiles (which are all well written) rely mostly on nouns and adjectives (and some prepositional phrases acting as adjectives) to identify the writers behind them?

@PaigeBowers

Professional writer, proud mama, grad student, foodie, struggling knitter, square-foot gardener, Louisiana girl.

@cubedweller

Brand igniter, angel investor, public speaker, former Virgin.

@missdestructo

Destroyer of Social Media Boredom. Blue Haired Blogger.

@the_leaky_pen

poet, writer, college student, vagabond

@4ndyman

Copy editor by day. Writer by night. Musician on the weekends. Literary critic every other Wednesday. Raconteur when the mood strikes. AKA Logophilus.

@pnotleks23

Ordinary, upbeat Mom, limo biz owner and tennis player/fanatic from Atlanta.

Week Three: Pronouns and Point of View/Handout

Lesson and discussion

The subjective case of a pronoun must be used when the pronoun is the subject of a sentence. The objective case must be used when a pronoun is a direct object, indirect object, or object of a preposition. On his website, Hooks and Harmony, Peter Lee offers up some funny song lyrics to help you become more familiar with the idea of proper cases (hooksandharmony.com/20-songs-bad-grammar). Here are some examples:

But that'd change if she ever found out about you and I. (Bryan Adams, "Run to You.") As Peter Lee points out, if you take out the *you and*, the sentence doesn't make sense. (You wouldn't end it with *if she ever found out about I*). The correct lyric would end with *you and me*.

I'd like for you and I to go romancing. (Queen, "Good Old Fashioned Lover Boy") Warning: if you are going to go romancing with a wordsmith, you would want to use *you and me* instead of Queen's unroyal grammar.

I feel the magic between you and I. (Eric Carmen, "Hungry Eyes.") Maybe Eric has eyes, or I's, on the mind, but this lyric still needs to be *you and me*.

So open up your morning light / And say a little prayer for I. (Paula Cole, "I Don't Want to Wait.") Maybe Paula was searching for the internal rhyme between *light* and *I*, but she forgot her grammar. "What about 'Have a cup of morning tea / And say a little prayer for me?,'" Lee suggests. "Makes about as much sense and is grammatically correct."

In-class exercises

2. Pronouns may seem puny next to their heftier noun and adjective kin, and some writers might initially view them as too homely to put much faith in. But sometimes their very simplicity is their strength. Jacobo Timerman plays on the power of these little words in the opening of *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*. These pronoun-driven paragraphs follow the noun-heavy ones we looked at in the passage from Week Two. Can you identify the pronouns?

Tonight, a guard, not following the rules, leaves the peephole ajar. I wait a while to see what will happen but it remains open. Standing on tiptoe, I peer out. There's a narrow corridor, and across from my cell I can see at least two other doors. Indeed, I have a full view of two doors. What a sensation of freedom! . . .

My entire forehead is pressed against the steel and the cold makes my head ache. But it's been a long time—how long?—without a celebration of space. I press my ear against the door, yet hear no sound. I resume looking.

He is doing the same. I suddenly realize that the peephole in the door facing mine is also open and that there's an eye behind it. I'm startled: They've laid a trap for me. Looking through the peephole is forbidden and they've seen me doing it. I step back and wait. I wait for some Time, more Time, and again more Time. And then return to the peephole.

He is doing the same.

How does Timmerman's use of pronouns affect the style and substance of the passage?

3. Remembering the difference between subjective and objective case, identify and correct the pronouns in these sentences:

Apple is searching for a new CEO, but whoever that person is, they will be haunted by the mistakes of their predecessors. (From *Wired*)

The applicant does not have to tell us they are pregnant. (From a London employer's policy sheet)

Tonight on MTV, Bill Clinton faces the generation that holds the future in their hands. (From an MTV teaser)

I'd like to thank everybody who ever punched or kissed me in my life. And everybody who I ever punched or kissed. (John Patrick Shanley, in his speech accepting an Oscar for the screenplay of *Moonstruck*)

Did the server introduce themselves by name? (From a Howard Johnson's restaurant survey card)

Chrysler is the only American car company that builds their convertibles from start to finish. (From an ad for the Detroit automaker)

One day everyone will have their own show. (From TV Guide)

Philosophically, I am very different from normal politicians. We have big ideas. (Newt Gingrich in 2011, shortly after his top campaign staff abandoned him during the Republican presidential campaign, continued to speak of himself in that last sentence. What's that pronoun called?)
Since I'm in charge, obviously we screwed it up. (Then-president Barack Obama in a December 2013 press conference, acknowledging the huge problems with the rollout of the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare. Not only is he inconsistent, but he also uses the royal we!)

Bonus point.

If not us, who? (Former president Ronald Reagan, in his inaugural address)
(Hint: supply the missing subjects and verbs.)

Week Four: Verbs—the Heartbeat of the Sentence/ Handout

In-class exercises

1. In the following song titles, taken from a variety of genres, are the verbs static or dynamic?

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Blind Gary Davis: | “Lord I Feel Just Like Goin’ On” “Lo I Be With You Always” |
| Elizabeth Cotton: | “Mama, Nobody’s Here But the Baby” “Take Me Back to Baltimore” “When the Train Comes Along” “Shoot That Buffalo” |
| The Even Dozen Jug Band: | “Take Your Finger Off It” |
| Five Americans: | “I See the Light” |
| George Strait: | “All My Exes Live in Texas” |
| Howlin’ Wolf: | “Moanin’ at Midnight” “Howlin’ For My Baby” |
| Lee Hazlewood: | “These Boots Are Made for Walkin’” “My Baby Cried All Night Long” “When a Fool Loves a Fool” |
| Led Zeppelin: | “The Song Remains the Same” |
| Memphis Jug Band: | “Sometimes I Think I Love You” |
| Memphis Minnie: | “If You See My Rooster (Please Run Him Home)” “Kissing in the Dark” |
| Robert Johnson: | “I Believe I’ll Dust My Broom” |
| The Rolling Stones: | “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction” |
| The Seeds: | “Can’t Seem to Make You Mine” |
| Smiley Lewis: | “I Hear You Knockin’” |
| 13th Floor Elevators: | “You’re Gonna Miss Me” |

5. Verb review

(The next three issues are not covered here in the e-book, but they are discussed extensively in *Sin and Syntax* and *Vex, Hex, Smash, Smooch*. I include these exercises if you are using the books in class and have covered “*lay* v. *lie*,” “false starts,” and the “cease and desist” problem.)

Is the use of *lay* or *lie* in the following sentences correct? (Note: Students of mine wrote these sentences, unless I’ve indicated otherwise.)

All I can do is **lay** here.

A toy gorilla that sings “Great Balls of Fire” **lies** dead among the mayhem.

Mr. Lee’s famed perfectionism was occasionally on display. Sandy Dawson . . . was drafted as a cow wrangler, and Mr. Lee wanted her cows to pose just so. “Cows are cows,” Ms. Dawson explained. “In the morning they were very happy. Then after lunch it was hot, and cows like to **lay** down after lunch. We had to physically push them to stand there. They wanted them by this post

or that post. And Morgan, he's a big steer; after a while he was rolling his eyes, like: 'I'm not doing this anymore. I don't want to be a movie star, I'm done.'" (From 2009 *New York Times* article "Turn On, Tune In, Turn Back the Clock," on Ang Lee's *Taking Woodstock*)

For months, in a musty, rented room he shared with actor Peter Lorne, [Billy] Wilder would **lay** on his bed and listen to baseball games on the radio. (*News*, April 8, 2002)

A yoga teacher: "See if you can **lay** your chest on the floor."

Another yoga teacher: "Now **lay** on your backs for savasana."

Rewrite these sentences to eliminate the false starts:

There is nothing sweeter than reading a good book by a fire on a cold, wet winter night.

There are no eggs in this store.

There is no end in sight.

It's a shame no one prepared a eulogy.

Cease and desist! Replace two ho-hum verbs with one power verb:

You can describe and understand the air-conditioning system as a whole once you identify its elements and their dynamic interactions.

She has a journalist's curiosity; she's always digging and delving into subjects and giving people the third degree.

Week Five: Adjectives and Adverbs—the Frill Is Gone /Handout

Lesson and discussion

Diane Ackerman's passage about a monkey named Jenny, from her essay on golden lion tamarins:

Golden tufts of fur stick out between her fingers and toes, which have **small round** pads at the base of **each** claw. Her **long, slender** fingers were made for reaching into **narrow** places, where insects may lurk. I have seen **lithe, graceful** hands like these in paintings of **Thai** dancers. Stroking the **dark** pads on her feet, I'm surprised to discover them **soft** and **yielding**. . . . On Jenny's **small** nose, **two thin** nostrils angle away from each other. A **slight, upside-down** curve is the **natural** shape of her mouth, as if she were caught in a **perpetual** pout. **Gold** whiskers sprout from her chin, and a widow's peak of **canary** yellow leads to a **full golden** mane encircling her head. Her **tiny, guitar-pick-shaped** tongue, flicking in and out, has a **deep** groove down the center. **Golden** lion tamarins give off a **pungent** odor. Burying my nose in Jenny's chest, I inhale deeply the aroma of **hot** gingerbread mixed with **drenched** wheat.

In-class exercises

3. Articles, common adjectives, proper adjectives, multiword adjectives, nouns as adjectives, and verbs as adjectives—that's a lot to keep track of! Try to identify all the adjectives in the character description of Johnny (extra credit for articles and possessive pronouns).

Met Johnny while at the gate in Honolulu: twenty, mixed-race (black, American Indian, and some sort of white), beanpole-like. He's naive and street-smart at the same time, a fetching combination of wide-eyed curiosity and hard-luck stories. Raised in Berkeley, he went to Malcolm X Elementary, worked at Johnson's Barbershop on Sacramento, went to Hawaii to cut hair with his uncle, had his brand-new equipment stolen. He's headed home to get his old equipment and see his three-day-old brother. He wants to go back to Honolulu, where he and his uncle cut hair "off of Likelike." (He pronounced the highway, named after a princess, the Hawaiian way.) I sensed something truly sweet about him, answered his funny questions about history ("Is it true they had warriors but the white man had guns?"), gave him a brief history of Queen Lili'uokalani, told him to visit 'Iolani Palace when he goes back. Took a gamble and offered him a ride home. Bruce was dubious but then as taken in as I had been. We left him at his mother's house, where a pink Karmann Ghia and a VW bus painted with flowers were standing guard. He put Bruce's number into one of his two iPhones, the work phone, and told Bruce he'd give him a haircut anytime—cheaper than Supercuts, and better.

5. Grammar exercises with adjectives and adverbs

Pick one strong noun or adjective, rather than two weak ones:

We all carry around in our heads many and various images of who we want to be. (From a book by a Harvard professor)

Working as a scuba-diving instructor—scraping barnacles off boats—would be a mundane, repetitive existence. (From that same book)

The way to begin is to eliminate any mindset or attitude that might be a source of conservatism or resistance to change. (From that same book)

In the following sentences, select the proper adjective or adverb:

The grammar teacher praised my (good/well) marks.

She said if I continue to do so (good/well), I may soon take over her class.

I still don't think I'm (good-/well-) versed in the parts of speech.

She's an OK grammar teacher, but a (bad/badly) cook.

I never seem to be able to get a (good/well) steak.

I prefer my meat (good/well) done, not bloody.

When the steak is perfect, I croon, but (bad/badly).

In the following sentences, select the proper adjective:

Sorbet has (less/fewer) fat than ice cream.

If you have (less/fewer) than twelve items, use the express checkout line.

There's a Zen saying that begins, "Eat (less/fewer) and chew well; have (less/fewer) clothes and launder often. . . ."

Tell me your life story in twenty-five words or (less/fewer).

Replace weak verbs—propped up by adverbs—with stronger verbs:

My waitress's face lights up brightly at their arrival.

My waitress hooks a loose strand of baby-fine dark blond hair behind her ear, jots down my order briefly, and snatches the menu from the table.

The kitchen door swings open, and the waitress briskly ambles toward me, her stride long and deliberate. She carefully deposits my plate before me, then somewhat mechanically inquires if I need anything else. I notice her mind is already halfway on her next task. Nonetheless, she's polite, and I'm happy to report I do not need anything. She disappears, swiftly maneuvering through the room with a sixth sense, negotiating tables, chair legs, customers, other waiters, and pocketbooks protruding into the aisles.

As he looks closely at each item, he discovers one he likes.

Week Six: Prepositions—Innocent Little Suckers (Not) /Handout

In-class exercises

1. Underline every prepositional phrase—the preposition, its object (a noun), and any adjectives modifying that noun in this passage from “Farewell, My Lovely!” by E. B. White. In addition, circle every preposition, which may also include particles and cases of *to* in an infinitive.

I see by the new Sears Roebuck catalogue that it is still possible to buy an axle for a 1909 Model T Ford, but I am not deceived. The great days have faded, and the end is in sight. Only one page in the current catalogue is devoted to parts and accessories for the Model T; yet everyone remembers springtimes when the Ford gadget section was larger than men’s clothing, almost as large as household furnishings. The last Model T was built in 1927, and the car is fading from what scholars call the American scene—which is an understatement, because to a few million people who grew up with it, the old Ford practically *was* the American scene. It was the miracle that God had wrought. And it was patently the sort of thing that could only happen once. Mechanically uncanny, it was like nothing that had ever come to the world before. Flourishing industries rose and fell with it. As a vehicle, it was hard-working, commonplace, heroic; and it often seemed to transmit those qualities to the person who rode in it. My own generation identifies it with Youth, with its gaudy, irretrievable excitements; before it fades into the mist, I would like to pay it the tribute of the sigh that is not a sob, and set down random entries in a shape somewhat less cumbersome than a Sears Roebuck catalogue.

2. Read these “just the facts” paragraphs in which all the prepositions have been removed:

The discoveries planets the solar system, stimulating renewed speculation other possible worlds throbbing life, are now drawing closer cosmic terms the world their discoverers.

The latest detection, made this month American astronomers, is a planet twice the mass Jupiter that is orbiting the star Gliese 876, one the Sun’s nearest neighbors. . . .

The discovery Gliese 876 adds another element surprise and surmise the continuing quest other planetary systems.

The large object is orbiting a red dwarf star one-third the mass the Sun.

Now read the same information as it was written for the *New York Times* by John Noble Wilford. Can you identify the prepositions and their objects?

The discoveries of planets beyond the solar system, stimulating renewed speculation of other possible worlds throbbing with life, are now drawing closer in cosmic terms to the world of their discoverers.

The latest detection, made this month by American astronomers, is of a planet about twice the mass of Jupiter that is orbiting the star Gliese 876, one of the Sun’s nearest neighbors. . . .

The discovery at Gliese 876 adds another element of surprise and surmise to the continuing quest for other planetary systems. The large object is orbiting a red dwarf star less than one-third the mass of the Sun.

3. See the following opening lines of great novels, which use a prepositional phrase or four. Can you spot the prepositions? Can you tell what the phrases are modifying?

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife. (Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 1813) [FOUR PHRASES]

Once an angry man dragged his father along the ground through his own orchard. (Gertrude Stein, *The Making of Americans*, 1925) [TWO PHRASES]

It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen. (George Orwell, *1984*, 1949) [ONE PHRASE]

Vaughan died yesterday in his last car-crash. (J. G. Ballard, *Crash*, 1973) [ONE PHRASE]

4. Review material from previous weeks.

Nouns. To test your command of common and proper nouns, verify or correct the capitalization in these sentences, which come from student writing:

As I ride my bike round and round Davenport, Cicadas and Crickets compete in a midnight melody.

Deer hide in harmony with the cold, tall Pine trees and Oaks.

An Oriental Rug attempts to cover the blemished wooden floors. A toy Gorilla that sings "Great Balls of Fire" lies dead among the mayhem.

Pronouns. Double-check the pronouns in these sentences (also from student writing). Are they correct? If not, why not?

Melissa told me to buy seeds from a catalog, since she can barely collect enough for herself this year.

The bus drivers have an affinity for Calhoun's, probably because he gives them free meals for bringing their passengers through.

The afternoon light cast its magic on the rosebush to my parents' right, causing their burgundy petals to glow.

Sam was nice enough to give my sister and I a present.

Verbs. Are the verbs in these sentences OK?

All I can do is lay here.

A toy gorilla that sings “Great Balls of Fire” lies dead among the mayhem.

Mr. Lee’s famed perfectionism was occasionally on display. Sandy Dawson . . . was drafted as a cow wrangler, and Mr. Lee wanted her cows to pose just so. “Cows are cows,” Ms. Dawson explained. “In the morning they were very happy. Then after lunch it was hot, and cows like to lay down after lunch. We had to physically push them to stand there. They wanted them by this post or that post. And Morgan, he’s a big steer; after a while he was rolling his eyes, like: ‘I’m not doing this anymore. I don’t want to be a movie star, I’m done.’” (From *New York Times* article “Turn On, Tune In, Turn Back the Clock,” on Ang Lee’s film *Taking Woodstock*)

Adjectives. Eliminate redundancies in the adjectives below:

The French professor’s large neck stiffens, and her large fingers peer over the dark lecturn.

The pistachio-green walls create a calm, soothing atmosphere.

The crowd is composed mostly of middle-aged folks, with a smattering of silver heads, some graduate students, and a couple of young college kids.

**Week Seven:
Conjunctions and Interjections—Because, Well, Because/Handout**

Conjunction junction. Identify the conjunctions in the following passage from Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*:

You got very hungry when you did not eat enough in Paris because all the bakery shops had such good things in the windows and people ate outside at tables on the sidewalk so that you saw and smelled the food. When you had given up journalism and were writing nothing that anyone in America would buy, explaining at home that you were lunching out with someone, the best place to go was the Luxembourg gardens where you saw and smelled nothing to eat all the way from the Place de l'Observatoire to the rue de Vaugirard. There you could always go into the Luxembourg museum and all the paintings were sharpened and clearer and more beautiful if you were belly-empty, hollow-hungry. I learned to understand Cézanne much better and to see truly how he made landscapes when I was hungry. I used to wonder if he were hungry too when he painted; but I thought possibly it was only that he had forgotten to eat. It was one of those unsound but illuminating thoughts you have when you have been sleepless or hungry.

Week Eight: Parsing Sentences—No Pain, No Gain /Handout

In-class exercises

1. Parse the following paragraph by E. B. White, from an essay called “A Report in Spring.” In other words, identify each word according to which part of speech it is. Use these abbreviations:

N = noun

P = pronoun

V = verb

Aj = adjective

Av = adverb

Pp = preposition

C = conjunction

I = interjection

(In some cases, words might be identified in multiple ways, any one of which is acceptable. For example, *another* on line two could be identified either as a pronoun or as an adjective.)

On Tuesday, in broad daylight, the coon arrived, heavy with young, to take possession of the hole in the tree, but she found another coon in possession, and there was a grim fight high in the branches. The new tenant won, or so it appeared to me, and our old coon came down the tree in defeat and hustled off into the woods, to examine her wounds and make other plans for her confinement. I was sorry for her, as I am for any who are evicted from their haunts by the younger and stronger—always a sad occasion for man or beast.

Week Nine: Sentences, Oh, Sentences—Telling a Story in a Few Words/Handout

In-class exercises

5. S-V pairings:

Which verb in the following sentences agrees with the sentence's subject? (From *The Deluxe Transitive Vampire*, by Karen Elizabeth Gordon)

An entourage of hangers-on was/were sprawling in the lounge.

Those pajamas is/are bound to give the sandman pause.

The way you're wearing those pajamas is/are bound to give the sandman pause.

Her smile, with its intimations of unspeakable pleasure, has/have been of little use of late.

Is/are the sandman and the vampire buddies?

Campari and soda is/are the little maestro's usual libation.

My coiffeur and confidant say/says he can't take any more of my tangled hair and tales.

Customs don't/doesn't mind if our satchels are loaded with grief.

How well do you understand sentence dynamics? Here are some questions to test your mastery of subjects and predicates:

Which of these Madison Avenue slogans has no subject?

A diamond is forever.

We try harder.

Melts in your mouth, not in your hand.

You deserve a break today.

I go cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs!

Which of these Madison Avenue slogans has no predicate?

I'd walk a mile for a Camel.

Breakfast of Champions.

Who's behind those Foster Grants?

Just do it.

Do you . . . Yahoo!?

Which of these famous sentences by linguists tells a little story, by logically linking a subject and a predicate?

Colorless green ideas sleep furiously. (Noam Chomsky, in *Syntactic Structures*)

A language is a dialect with an army and a navy. (Max Weinreich, in a lecture in Yiddish)

Last night I slept bad dreams a hangover snoring no pajamas sheets were wrinkled.

(Steven Pinker, in *The Language Instinct*)

Week Ten:

'Tis the Gift—the Five Simple Sentence Patterns/Handout

In-class exercises

2. Remember the five basic sentence patterns? Here they are:

1. S + V (where the verb is intransitive)
2. S + V (where the verb is transitive) + DO
3. S + V (where the verb is ditransitive) + IO + DO
4. S + V (where the verb is static) + C
5. S + V (where the verb is factitive) + DO + OC

Identify the sentence patterns in each of Charlotte Brontë's sentences. It helps to pretend the commas and semicolons are periods. Also, ignore the prepositional and appositive phrases. (They are stricken below.) These two sentences are especially tricky—*The leaves grow sere* and *The skies hang full and dark*—because we think of *grow* and *hang* as dynamic verbs. But in the first sentence, *sere* is a complement, or predicate adjective. That means that *grow* in this sentence is static, not dynamic. The same pattern holds in *The skies hang full and dark*.

The sun passes the equinox
the days shorten
the leaves grow sere
but—he is coming

Frosts appear at night
November has sent his fogs in advance
the wind takes its autumn moan
but—he is coming

The skies hang full and dark
a rack sails from the west
the clouds case themselves ~~into strange forms—arches and broad radiations~~
there rise resplendent mornings—~~glorious, royal, purple as monarch in his state~~
the heavens are one flame
so wild are they
they rival battle at its thickest
so bloody [are they]
they shame victory in her pride
I know some signs of the sky
I have noted them ever since childhood
God watch that sail!
Oh, guard it!

Week Eleven: Using Phrases to Turn Phrases/Handout

In-class exercises

1. Read this paragraph from *The Weight of Him*, by the writer Ethel Rohan. The phrases in it are underlined. Can you name each kind? (Hint: You should find only prepositional, participial, and infinitive phrases. Some of them are nested within other phrases, so I've used a double underline there.)

Billy's attention fell on the snow globe in the window's center display. The ornament contained a blond girl in a red dress, a black dog by her spindle legs, and a cottage with a navy door and straw roof. Two yellow birds completed the scene, perched on the skeleton of an ice-blue tree. Billy wanted to shake the globe and bring it to life. Behind him, a tour bus whooshed past, its red and white reflection streaking the shop glass. He tried to remember back to a time when he was small and thin, and able to feel the undertow from passing traffic. His hand pressed the side of his head, as though trying to keep the egg of himself together.

Week Twelve: Applause, Applause—the Incredible Clause/Handout

In-class exercises

1. Practice identifying subordinating clauses with these Mark Twain quotes. Underline the dependent clauses and circle the subordinating conjunction:

If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything. (Notebook entry, January or February 1894, *Mark Twain's Notebook*)

When in doubt, tell the truth. (Pudd'nhead Wilson's New Calendar, Chapter II, *Following the Equator*)

Honesty is the best policy—when there is money in it. (Speech to Eastman College, 1901)

Jim was most ruined for a servant, because he got stuck up on account of having seen the devil and been rode by witches. (*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*)

You can't depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus. (*A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*)

The only reason why God created man is because he was disappointed with the monkey. (*Autobiographical Dictation*)

(Actually, if that last one were written, "God created man because he was disappointed with the monkey," it would be a clearer example of a subordinate clause.)

2. Identify the independent and dependent clauses in the sentences that contain them in this passage in "Old Faithful: Testing the Limits of Love," by David Sedaris (the *New Yorker*, November 29, 2004):

When Hugh and I bicker over who is in the most pain, I think back to my first boyfriend, whom I met while I was in my late twenties. Something about our combination was rotten, and as a result we competed over everything, no matter how petty. When someone laughed at one of his jokes, I would need to make that person laugh harder. If I found something at a yard sale, he would have to find something better—and so on. . . . We were together for six years, and when we finally broke up I felt like a failure, a divorced person. I now had what the self-help books called relationship baggage, which I would carry around for the rest of my life. The trick was to meet someone with similar baggage, and form a matching set, but how would one go about finding such a person?

Week Thirteen: It's All Relative—More Clauses/Handout

Lesson and Discussion

Cheat sheet

A relative clause is a dependent clause that allows us to give additional information about something without starting another sentence. Relative clauses must contain a subject and predicate (otherwise, they wouldn't be clauses). They are introduced by either:

- a **relative pronoun** (*who, whom, whose, which, that, whoever, whomever, whosever, whichever*) or
- a **relative adverb** (*when, where, why*)

The sentence *The man who called me last night was my uncle* contains the relative clause *who called me last night*. The clause contains a subject and predicate (*who* and *called me last night*). The relative clause begins with the relative pronoun *who* and modifies the noun *man*, which is the subject of the independent clause *the man was my uncle*.

When relative clauses modify nouns, they are also called *adjective* or *adjectival* clauses and they answer the questions *What kind? How many? or Which one?* When relative clauses modify verbs, adjectives, or adverbs, they are called *adverbial* clauses and they answer the questions *When? Where? How? and How much?*

Within a sentence, a relative clause might also act as a noun, serving as a subject, a direct object, an indirect object, a complement, or the object of a preposition.

When using relative clauses, consider whether the relative clause is essential or nonessential. This will determine which relative pronoun you use. Also consider whether the relative clause refers to a person or an object. If it is essential, you will probably use *who* or *that* (and you *will not* need to set off the clause with commas). If it is nonessential, you will probably use *who* or *which* (and you probably *will* need to set off the clause with commas).

For examples and charts, please see English Grammar Online, at ego4u.com/en/cram-up/grammar/relative-clauses

Here is an excerpt from that site to help you see how we make relative clauses:

How to form relative clauses

Imagine, a girl is talking to Tom. You want to know who she is and ask a friend whether he knows her. You could say:

A girl is talking to Tom. Do you know the girl?

That sounds rather complicated, doesn't it? It would be easier with a relative clause: you put both pieces of information into one sentence. Start with the most important thing—you want to know who the girl is:

Do you know the girl . . .

As your friend cannot know which girl you are talking about, you need to put in the additional information—the girl is talking to Tom. Use *the girl* only in the first part of the sentence, in the

second part replace it with the relative pronoun (for people, use the relative pronoun *who*). So the final sentence is:

Do you know the girl **who** is talking to Tom?

Relative clauses and punctuation. Punctuating relative clauses can be tricky. Whether a clause is essential or nonessential will tell you when you need or don't need commas.

Essential relative clauses. Essential relative clauses give detailed information that in some way defines a word or a person or a general term. A relative clause is essential when you *need* the information it provides. Essential relative clauses are *not* enclosed by commas.

Repeating the example above, from English Grammar Online, imagine Tom is in a room with five girls. One girl is talking to Tom, and you ask somebody whether he knows that girl:

Do you know the girl who is talking to Tom?

The phrase *who is talking to Tom* is essential, so no commas are used.

This stuff can be confusing. To test your understanding, look at the following sentence. Is the relative clause essential?

The children who skateboard in the street are noisy in the early evening.

Children is nonspecific. To know which ones we are talking about, we must have the information in the relative clause. Thus, the relative clause is essential and requires no commas.

Nonessential relative clauses. Nonessential relative clauses give additional information about a word or person or term, but this information can be deleted from the sentence without disturbing the meaning. The information is *not needed* to understand the gist. Nonessential relative clauses are put in commas.

Let's go back to Tom from English Grammar Online. Tom is in a room with only one girl. The two are talking to each other, and you ask somebody whether he knows this girl. Here, the relative clause is nonessential, because in this situation it is obvious which girl you mean.

Do you know the girl, who is talking to Tom?

Note: In nonessential relative clauses, *that* cannot replace *who/which*:

Do you speak Spanish, which is a language increasingly helpful to know?

In relative clauses, we decide whether to use *who* or *whom* based on the role the pronoun plays in the clause:

David, who invited me to *Hamlet*, is a superb actor.

David, whom we saw yesterday in *Hamlet*, is a superb actor.

To test your understanding of even more confusing stuff, let's look at another sentence. Is the clause in it essential or nonessential?

Matthew and Loretta, who skateboard in the street, are noisy in the early evening.

We've replaced *children* with the more specific *Matthew and Loretta*. So the relative clause becomes nonessential and *does* require commas to separate it from the rest of the sentence.

How about this clause:

Dan said good night to Joe, the only one of his roommates who could play video games until his eyes blurred.

That clause tells us which one of Dan's roommates could play video games all night, so it's essential and does not need a comma preceding it.

Recap

- Essential clause referring to person or people: Use *who* or *that* (no commas).
- Essential clause referring to thing or things: Use *that* (no commas).
- Nonessential clause renaming the subject and referring to person or people: Use *who* with a comma or commas.
- Nonessential clause renaming the subject and referring to thing or things: Use *which* with a comma or commas.

In-class exercises

1. Review the cheat sheet (above).
2. Identify the relative clauses in the following sentences:

I want whichever flavor you want.

No attempt was made to hide the extension cords, which swung above the seats like nooses.

Do you speak Spanish, which is a language increasingly helpful to know?

David, whom we saw yesterday in *Hamlet*, is a superb actor.

I always listen when you tell me that you love me.

“And your speeches are long,” said Matthew Freud, the public-relations man, who is married to Elisabeth Murdoch, Rupert’s daughter. (Adapted from a *New Yorker* “Talk of the Town” piece, October 12, 2009)

I’d like to thank everybody who ever punched or kissed me in my life. And everybody whom I ever punched or kissed. (John Patrick Shanley, slightly corrected, in his speech accepting an Oscar for the screenplay of *Moonstruck*)

At the tea stall Mr. and Mrs. Das bickered about who should take Tina to the toilet. (From *Interpreter of Maladies*, by Jhumpa Lahiri)

3. Here are “tricky” relative clauses—tricky because they involve “nested clauses.” Select the correct relative pronoun (*who* or *whom*) in each case:

Leopold is the one who/whom lost his bloomers.

Invite whoever/whomever is gullible enough to come.

Who/whom else would I expect to run into on a dark staircase at this hour?

The issue will confront whoever/whomever is named sometime in the next few months as the undersecretary of transportation.

I never know if telemarketers are who/whom they claim to be.

And now for some really tricky ones. Are the relative pronouns here (*who* or *whom*) right or wrong?

“All too often, the character simply kills off the real person. It’s easy to understand why. You can wake up tomorrow as Earl Simmons, a kid from a bad neighborhood **whom** no one ever gave a fuck about for the first 26 years of his life. Or you can be DMX, a character who sells millions of records, and **whom** every kid in America loves, and behave like LMX does in his rhymes.” (Lyor Cohen, president of Island Def Jam, quoted in a *New Yorker* article on hip-hop)

I’d like to thank everybody **who** ever punched or kissed me in my life. And everybody **who** I ever punched or kissed. (John Patrick Shanley, in his speech accepting an Oscar for the screenplay of *Moonstruck*)

At the tea stall Mr. and Mrs. Das bickered about **who** should take Tina to the toilet. (From *Interpreter of Maladies*, by Jhumpa Lahiri)

Week Fourteen: Controlling Clauses, Sliding In and Out of Sentences/Handout

In-class exercises

2. In this description of Papa Correa, analyze the clauses and sentences. Label each one as either simple, compound, complex, or compound-complex. (Also keep an eye out for phrases.)

By the time we knew Papa, his body was hinged at the waist and starting to wither. He always wore baggy plantation khakis and a white cotton shirt. I never saw him in a pair of shoes. Instead, he wore leather thongs that crossed over his toes, which bunched together like overgrown tree roots. His legs had weakened: he used a walker to move around the house and the yard. The walker kept his upper body strong. He was barrel-chested, with thick, hairy arms and stubby fingers. One of his fingers was a stump, as a result of an accident with a saw. Stump or no, he had a gentle touch.

Despite his difficulty walking, Papa was a terrific gardener. Beds of flowers and ferns surrounded the house, but Papa spent even more time caring for countless potted plants, on several raised wooden platforms in the backyard. There, in old coffee tins, he sprouted trees and raised vegetables. He was forever sending us home with avocados and bananas.

Homework

Slogging through slogans. The following are famous political catchphrases from history. Identify them as phrases, fragments, simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences, or a blend of more than one of those:

We are all republicans—we are all federalists. (Thomas Jefferson's first inaugural address)

Tippecanoe and Tyler too (Popular slogan for Whig Party candidates William Henry Harrison and John Tyler in the 1840 U.S. presidential election)

Four score and seven years ago (Abraham Lincoln, delivering the Gettysburg Address)

Yesterday, December 7, 1941, a date which will live in infamy (Franklin D. Roosevelt, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor)

I shall return. (U.S. General Douglas MacArthur, after leaving the Philippines)

The buck stops here. (Harry Truman)

Ich bin ein Berliner. (John F. Kennedy, in West Berlin)

There you go again. (Ronald Reagan to Jimmy Carter, in a 1980 presidential debate)

Where's the beef? (Former vice president Walter Mondale, attacking Colorado senator Gary Hart in a 1984 Democratic primary debate)

Read my lips: no new taxes. (George H. W. Bush at the 1988 Republican Convention)

That giant sucking sound (Ross Perot in 1992, on American jobs going to Mexico if the North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA] was ratified)

It's the economy, stupid. (Used during Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign and widely attributed to Clinton adviser James Carville)

I'm the decider. (George W. Bush, when asked about the fate of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in April 2006)

Yes we can (Slogan of Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign)

Make America Great Again (Words embroidered on red baseball caps during Donald Trump's 2016 campaign—a shortened version of Ronald Reagan's 1980 slogan, "Let's make America great again")

Parallel parts. It's not just words and phrases that can be parallel. Which elements are parallel in the following examples? Identify the kind of phrase or clause echoed:

I found a way to be a good mother and still be a great mom. (From a SunnyD ad)

The loss we felt was not the loss of ham but the loss of pig. (From "Death of a Pig," by E. B. White)

What special affinities appeared to him to exist between the moon and women? Her nocturnal predominance: her satellitic dependence: her luminary reflection: her constancy under all her phases, rising and setting by her appointed times, waxing and waning: the forced invariability of her aspect: her indeterminate response to inaffirmative interrogation: her potency over effluent and refluent waters: her power to enamour, to mortify, to invest with beauty, to render insane, to incite to and aid delinquency: the tranquil inscrutability of her visage: the terribility of her isolated dominant resplendent propinquity: her omens of tempest and of calm: the stimulation of her light, her motion and her presence: the admonition of her craters, her arid seas, her silence: her splendour, when visible: her attraction, when invisible. (From *Ulysses*, by James Joyce)

Week Fifteen: Those @#!%* Commas (and Other Squirrely Parts of Punctuation)/Handout

Lesson and discussion

There is a category of words and phrases that many call “transitional expressions.” Some of them might be categorized as adverbs, conjunctions, conjunctive adverbs, or prepositional phrases. Others are harder to name. Many require particular punctuation. The following chart, from the UNC-Chapel Hill Writing Center (writingcenter.unc.edu) provides a good overview.

| Logical Relationship | Transitional Expression |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Similarity | also, in the same way, just as . . . so too, likewise, similarly |
| Exception/Contrast | but, however, in spite of, on the one hand . . . on the other hand, nevertheless, nonetheless, notwithstanding, in contrast, on the contrary, still, yet |
| Sequence/Order | first, second, third, next, then, finally |
| Time | after, afterward, at last, before, currently, during, earlier, immediately, later, meanwhile, now, recently, simultaneously, subsequently, then |
| Example | for example, for instance, namely, specifically, to illustrate |
| Emphasis | even, indeed, in fact, of course, truly |
| Place/Position | above, adjacent, below, beyond, here, in front, in back, nearby, there |
| Cause and Effect | accordingly, consequently, hence, so, therefore, thus |
| Additional Support or Evidence | additionally, again, also, and, as well, besides, equally important, further, furthermore, in addition, moreover, then |
| Conclusion/Summary | finally, in a word, in brief, in conclusion, in the end, in the final analysis, on the whole, thus, to conclude, to summarize, in sum, in summary |

In-class exercises

2. Add the appropriate punctuation in these sentences, or correct the existing punctuation. (Students of mine wrote them.) While you’re at it, identify the phrases and clauses.

Years ago he fell asleep with a cigarette in his mouth and his mattress caught on fire.

The stove is dead center, right in line with the front door, whenever you enter, nine times out of ten you see Calhoun himself frying catfish fifteen paces away.

Some stare at the hosts searching for acknowledgment.

The early-morning dew coats the grass and your eyes are captivated by the sight of the sun sparkling against the flowers.

You must be quiet though to catch a glimpse of nature at play.

I cross in three strides to the window which takes up most of one wall.

We lie down finding that the bed is quite comfortable.

3. Here are some paragraphs from a story I wrote about taking restful vacations, published in *Yoga Journal*. Supply the appropriate punctuation in the blanks:

“The yogic view is that when the mind quiets down, we connect with *prajna*, or wisdom____the already illumined part of the mind,” says Stephen Cope, director of the Kripalu Institute for Extraordinary Living and author of *The Wisdom of Yoga: A Seeker’s Guide to Extraordinary Living*.

“My life here in western Massachusetts is intense and highly routinized,” the fifty-six-year-old psychotherapist explains. “I direct this institute, I do research projects, I teach____I often work seven days a week. I *love* it, but it’s very busy and fast-paced. I find that I have to get *out* of here.”

“Out of here” is often Key West, Florida, where the climate is warm and the achievement mentality is AWOL____“the cab driver has a PhD from Brown and is perfectly comfortable just being.” Cope never takes his computer or his cell phone, which he calls an exercise in putting work into perspective: he is reminded that he really does not need to be connected to his office every day.

Cope gives himself permission to do absolutely whatever he wants. “I cycle, I swim, I lie on the beach, I read novels,” he says. “I don’t force myself to do any particular *asana* practice____sometimes I want to do Bikram, sometimes I want to stretch on my own, sometimes I want to sit on a rock and meditate.”

. . .“We try to take holidays where there’s a lot of being and not a lot of doing,” says Dina Silver, an executive coach____her husband, Steve Persky, is the CEO of an investment firm____“We are A+ students at lists, schedules, responsibilities, and deliverables, but we’re C- students at kicking back and relaxing. We do try____we practice yoga, we hike on Sundays, we talk all the time about how to have a more balanced life.” Silver and Persky have found their personal recipe for restoration. “We needed something in the middle between being beach vegetables____which bores the hell out of me____and being urban sophisticates____which we are in our daily lives),” Silver says. “We finally hit upon self-guided bicycle tours in Europe.”

Week Sixteen: Let's Get Quizzical—a Whopping Review/Handout

In-class exercises

1. As a way of testing your grasp of the parts of speech, parse a paragraph from the opening of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, by Lewis Carroll. Use these abbreviations:

N = noun

P = pronoun

V = verb

Aj = adjective

Av = adverb

Pp = preposition

C = conjunction

I = interjection

Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank and of having nothing to do. Once or twice she had peeped into the book that her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it. The hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid, but she was considering whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies. Suddenly, a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her. There was nothing so very remarkable in that.

2. Keep returning to redundancy! Ask students to recast sentences to turn redundant pairs into killer nouns, adjectives, and verbs:

Working as a scuba-diving instructor—scraping barnacles off boats—would be a mundane, repetitive existence.

A new game, *La Conquête du Monde*, later transformed into *Risk*, was seen as unique and promising, so Parker Brothers CEO Robert Barton acquired the North American rights.

Consider how keeping a daily checklist might keep you engaged and excited about your work.

Managers can build highly productive organizations that recognize and harness the personal energies and enthusiasms of individual workers.

Bonus point. Count the redundancies in this sentence from a real-life manuscript—nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and even a prepositional phrase!

A series of events in their lives and work eventually led them to question and reconsider the many and varied images they carried around in their heads about who they wanted to be.

Homework

Parsing for peas and potatoes. Here's another passage from E. B. White's "A Report in Spring." Identify every word in the passage. Use these abbreviations:

N = noun

P = pronoun

V = verb

Aj = adjective

Av = adverb

Pp = preposition

C = conjunction

I = interjection

The stalks of rhubarb show red, the asparagus has broken through. Peas and potatoes are in, but it is not much use putting seeds in the ground the way things are. The bittern spent a day at the pond, creeping slowly around the shores like a little round-shouldered peddler. . . . By day the goldfinches dip in yellow light, by night the frogs sing the song that never goes out of favor. We opened the lower sash of the window in the barn loft, and the swallows are already building, but mud for their nests is not so easy to come by as in most springtimes.

Week Sixteen: Let's Get Quizzical—a Whopping Review/Final Exam

Part one (each question counts as 1 point; 50 points total)

(The following sentences have been culled from published sources and from student work. Most of them contain errors. Some do not. In passages with more than one sentence, look only at the one underlined.)

Test your command of syntax. Identify the problem (i.e., naming it—"dangling modifier," "subject-verb disagreement," etc.) and then fix it. You may want to recast awkward sentences for clarity.

iTunes is currently running on this computer. If you proceed without quitting iTunes, it is highly recommended that you restart your computer after installation. Continue with install? Yes/No (iTunes dialog box)

The soaring cathedral ceilings are painted a soft, eggshell-white color.

One of the roles of the courts is to protect people who don't have a voice. . . . The vulnerable, the minority, the outcast, the person with the unpopular idea, the journalist who is shaking things up. That's inherently the role of the court. And if somebody doesn't appreciate that role, then I don't think they are going to make a very good justice. (Barack Obama, quoted in the *New Yorker*)

The Museum of Fine Arts has a new exhibit of Egyptian art, you can see canvases by John Singer Sargent, and there is a Boston Jewish Film Festival.

Then I went back to the empty room in the sad little hotel and laid on the bed and tried to weep. (From "The Gift," in *Travelers' Tales: Paris*)

No one is really listening to each other's points, just pushing their own.

The mailroom is tracking for whom these manuals are being distributed to, so be sure to give them the respective names. (From an email memo within PricewaterhouseCoopers)

No one in Harvard Yard tonight is thinking about summer.

"See if you can lie your chest on the floor," said my yoga teacher.

"Now lay on your backs for savasana," he said later.

There is something powerful and provocative about Phil and I playing these parts, given our history as friends. (John Ortiz, reflecting on his role as Othello and Philip Seymour Hoffman's role as Iago in a fall 2009 production of *Othello* at the Public Theater)

The Senate may or may not pass it's version of health-care legislation.

The government bailed out the big banks, but they didn't help small businesses in need of loans.

"Maybe that's a good idea," Charles said. "Who do you report us to?" (From *A Wrinkle in Time*, by Madeleine L'Engle)

In the Great Depression, "less Americans married, less divorced, and it's even been suggested that there was less sex. Babies became relatively rare. 'I thought they'd gone out, like horse-cars,'" a character in a 1934 novel quips." (From "It Happened One Decade," by Caleb Crain, in the *New Yorker*)

The dog hungrily gobbled up his food.

No attempt has been made to hide the extension cords which swing above each seat like nooses.

Walking down Cambridge Street, the wind whipped through my wool mittens and froze my fingers.

Alex was at the top of a long list of people whom I wanted something truly awful to happen to. (From *How to Lose Friends and Alienate People*, by Toby Young)

Fix or "stet" the punctuation in these sentences:

Do you have any vanilla beans? I'd like to make vanilla bean ice cream.

Is Senator Joe Lieberman's stance on health care more Republican than Democratic?

President George W. Bush said he did not believe in nation building. Then came Iraq.

The administration's special representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke, intended to try to change Pakistan's perception of its own interests indirectly. One person on his staff, Vali Nasr, called it "remote-control nation building." (Paraphrased George Packer profile of Holbrooke)

"Your speeches are long," said Matthew Freud, the public-relations man, who is married to Elisabeth Murdoch, Rupert's daughter. (Adapted from a *New Yorker* "Talk of the Town" piece, October 12, 2009)

The sly clever cat crept up on the unsuspecting dove.

The age-old wisdom of our grandparents certainly holds true today.

Welcome to the first Miss Pink contest where pretty ladies of fair complexions are invited to compete after thirty minutes in the hot sun.

How much did you lose in the stock market collapse?

The killing of the bull is part of Ukwehswama an annual ceremony that celebrates a new harvest.

Name which of the five simple sentence patterns each of the following sentences represents:

1. S + V (intransitive verb)
2. S + V + DO (transitive verb)
3. S + V + IO + DO (ditransitive verb)
4. S + V + C (static verb)
5. S + V + DO + OC (factitive verb)

She gave all her coworkers invitations.

The chess team elected a captain with a checkered past.

A seagull, obviously looking for a handout, hovered over the ferry's stern.

The banana peel stuck to the bottom of the principal's shoe.

The chef sautéed the short ribs in olive oil.

Bravely, she walked on.

He felt ridiculous in his Elmo costume.

Daniel's antics taught the sisters a valuable lesson.

Identify each of the following phrases by kind (prepositional, infinitive, etc.):

His cover having been blown, the spy leapt from the rooftop.

Texting her boyfriend while driving, the woman crashed into the apple orchard.

Sid Vicious, the seventies punk legend, murdered Nauseating Nancy.

He lived to make cannoli.

Working feverishly to complete the project, the engineers could finally rest.

Frazzled by Rowan's comment, Mitzy searched her friend's face for a clue.

This strong wind makes the raking and bagging difficult.

To raise the voice is nature, to suppress the volume culture.

Cocoa, the spiteful mutt, stole my dinner last night.

After diving practice, Clarissa admitted her swan dive needed work.

This sentence, the opening of Norman Mailer’s *An American Dream*, contains more than one error. Catch and correct each error, for 2 points total:

Like any tale which could take ten books, it is best to quit it by a parenthesis—less than ten volumes might be untrue.

Part two (25 points)

Parse these sentences from *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, by Lewis Carroll. Identify each word by part of speech (N, P, V, Aj, Av, Pp, C, I):

Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank and of having nothing to do. Once or twice she had peeped into the book that her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it.

The hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid, but she was considering whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies. Suddenly, a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her.

There was nothing so very remarkable in that.

Part three (25 points)

In the following sentences—modified from the opening of the first chapter (“Down the Rabbit Hole”) of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*—identify the phrases and clauses. That is, say what kind of phrase (appositive, gerund, etc.) or clause (independent, subordinate, relative) it is:

Alice did not think that it was so very much out of the way to hear the Rabbit say to itself, “Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be late!”

Phrase #1:

(When she thought it over afterwards, it occurred to her that she ought to have wondered at this, but at the time it all seemed quite natural.)

Clause #1:

Clause #2:

Clause #3:

But when the Rabbit took a watch out of its waistcoat-pocket and looked at it and then hurried on, Alice started to her feet.

Clause #4:

Clause #5:

It flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket or a watch to take out of it.

Phrase #2:

Phrase #3:

Burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it and was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge.

Phrase #4:

Phrase #5:

Phrase #6:

In another moment, down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again.

Phrase #7:

Suite Two: Making Music

Week Three:
The Vitality of a Rich Vocabulary/Handout

The opening of journalist Susan Orlean's *New Yorker* story "Plant Crimes":

An orchid's appearance is ravishing. One species looks like a German Shepherd with its tongue hanging out. One looks like an octopus. One looks like a human nose. One looks like a pair of fancy shoes. One looks dead. There are species that look like butterflies, bats, ladies' handbags, swarms of bees, clamshells, camels' hooves, squirrels, nuns wearing wimples, and drunken old men. The smallest orchids are nearly microscopic, and the biggest ones have masses of flowers as large as footballs. The petals of some orchids are as soft as powder; others are as rigid and rubbery as inner tubes. They can be freckled or mottled or veiny or solid, their colors ranging from nearly neon to spotless white. Some look like the results of an accident involving paint.

Week Four: Make-or-Break Verbs/Handout

Here is the opening of Jo Ann Beard's short story "Cousins":

Here is a scene. Two sisters are fishing together in a flat-bottomed boat on an olive green lake. They sit slumped like men, facing in opposite directions, drinking coffee out of a metal-sided thermos, smoking intently. Without their lipstick they look strangely weary, and passive, like pale replicas of their real selves. They both have a touch of morning sickness but neither is admitting it. Instead, they watch their bobbers and argue about worms versus minnows.

. . . It is five A.M. A duck stands up, shakes out its feathers, and peers above the still grass at the edge of the water. The skin of the lake twitches suddenly and a fish springs loose into the air, drops back down with a flat splash. Ripples move across the surface like radio waves. The sun hoists itself up and gets busy, laying a sparkling rug across the water, burning the beads of dew off the reeds, baking the tops of our mothers' heads. One puts on sunglasses and the other a plaid fishing cap with a wide brim.

In the cold dark underwater, a long fish with a tattered tail discovers something interesting. He circles once and then has his breakfast before becoming theirs. As he breaks from the water to the air he twists hard, sending out a cold spray, sparks of green light. My aunt reels him in, triumphant, and grins at her sister, big teeth in a friendly mouth.

Week Eight: Rhythm—the Secret Path Into the Soul/Handout

In-class exercises

4. Read these two very different passages from Ernest Hemingway. How does the same writer use very different rhythms to create very different effects?

From “Hills Like White Elephants,” by Ernest Hemingway:

“It’s pretty hot,” the man said.

“Let’s drink beer.”

“Dos cervezas,” the man said into the curtain.

“Big ones?” a woman asked from the doorway.

“Yes. Two big ones.”

The woman brought two glasses of beer and two felt pads. She put the felt pads and the beer glass on the table and looked at the man and the girl. The girl was looking off at the line of hills. They were white in the sun and the country was brown and dry.

“They look like white elephants,” she said.

“I’ve never seen one,” the man drank his beer.

“No, you wouldn’t have.”

“I might have,” the man said. “Just because you say I wouldn’t have doesn’t prove anything.”

The girl looked at the bead curtain. “They’ve painted something on it,” she said. “What does it say?”

“Anis del Toro. It’s a drink.”

“Could we try it?”

The man called “Listen” through the curtain. The woman came out from the bar.

“Four reales.”

“We want two Anis del Toro.”

“With water?”

“Do you want it with water?”

“I don’t know,” the girl said. “Is it good with water?”

“It’s all right.”

“You want them with water?” asked the woman.

“Yes, with water.”

“It tastes like liquorice,” the girl said and put the glass down.

“That’s the way with everything.”

From *Green Hills of Africa*, by Ernest Hemingway:

Riding a bicycle down it in the rain on the way home from Strassburg and the slipperiness of the rails of the tram cars and the feeling of riding on greasy, slippery asphalt and cobble stones in traffic in the rain, and how we had nearly lived on the Boulevard du Temple that time, and I remembered the look of that apartment, how it was arranged, and the wall paper, and instead we had taken the upstairs of the pavilion in Notre Dame des Champs in the courtyard with the sawmill (*and the sudden whine of the saw, the smell of sawdust and the chestnut tree over the roof with a mad woman downstairs*), and the year worrying about money (*all of the stories back in*

the post that came in through a slit in the saw-mill door, with notes of rejection that would never call them stories, but always anecdotes, sketches, contes, etc. They did not want them, and we lived on poireaux and drank cahors and water), and how fine the fountains were at the Place de L'Observatoire . . .

5. **For more advanced writers:** Keeping parataxis in mind, compare the rhythm in these two passages. What effect does the rhythm create, and why does McCarthy employ the sentence rhythm he does? How does the rhythm relate to his themes?

From *The Road*, by Cormac McCarthy:

On the far side of the river valley the road passed through a stark black burn. Charred and limbless trunks of trees stretching away on every side. Ash moving over the road and the sagging hands of blind wire strung from the blackened lightpoles whining thinly in the wind. A burned house in a clearing and beyond that a reach of meadowlands star and gray and a raw red mudbank where a roadworks lay abandoned. Farther along were billboards advertising motels. Everything as it once had been save faded and weathered.

They left the cart in a gully covered with the tarp and made their way up the slope through the dark poles of the standing trees to where he'd seen a running ledge of rock and they sat under the rock overhang and watched the gray sheets of rain blow across the valley. It was very cold. They sat huddled together wrapped each in a blanket over their coats and after a while the rain stopped and there was just the dripping in the woods. . . .

He slept close to his father that night and held him but when he woke in the morning his father was cold and stiff. He sat there a long time weeping and then he got up and walked out through the woods to the road. When he came back he knelt beside his father and held his cold hand and said his name over and over again.

Conjunction redux. Identify the conjunctions in the following passages. You've seen them before. But now, for a gold star, or for more advanced writers, identify whether the writer is using parataxis (coordination) or hypotaxis (subordination):

From *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, by John Milton:

If men within themselves would be governed by reason and not generally give up their understanding to a double tyranny of custom from without and blind affections within, they would discern better what it is to favor and uphold the tyrant of a nation.

From *A Moveable Feast*, by Ernest Hemingway:

You got very hungry when you did not eat enough in Paris because all the bakery shops had such good things in the windows and people ate outside at tables on the sidewalk so that you saw and smelled the food. When you had given up journalism and were writing nothing that anyone in America would buy, explaining at home that you were lunching out with someone, the best place to go was the Luxembourg gardens where you saw and smelled nothing to eat all the way from

the Place de l'Observatoire to the rue de Vaugirard. There you could always go into the Luxembourg museum and all the paintings were sharpened and clearer and more beautiful if you were belly-empty, hollow-hungry. I learned to understand Cezanne much better and to see truly how he made landscapes when I was hungry. I used to wonder if he were hungry too when he painted; but I thought possibly it was only that he had forgotten to eat. It was one of those unsound but illuminating thoughts you have when you have been sleepless or hungry.

From "Goodbye to All That," in *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, by Joan Didion:

I remember walking across 62nd Street one twilight that first spring, or the second spring, they were all alike for a while. I was late to meet someone but I stopped at Lexington Avenue and bought a peach and stood on the corner eating it and knew that I had come out of the West and reached the mirage. I could taste the peach and feel the soft air blowing from a subway grating on my legs and I could smell lilac and garbage and expensive perfume and I knew that it would cost something sooner or later. . . .

Week Ten: Making Metaphors/Handout

In-class exercises

Examples of metaphor.

2. From “Metaphors,” by Sylvia Plath (allpoetry.com/Metaphors americanpoems.com/poets/sylviaplath/7854):

What state does Plath describe in her series of metaphors? (Hint: What female state lasts nine months?) How do the metaphors in each line correspond to each one of the nine months? (In consideration of copyright, I’m reprinting the first two lines only here; the nine-line poem is widely available in books and online.)

I’m a riddle in nine syllables,
An elephant, a ponderous house...

3. From “Baptizing the Gun,” by Uwem Akpan (*the New Yorker*, January 4, 2010):

In this short story set in Lagos, Nigeria, the protagonist has hidden his Rolex from a man who offered to help him with a broken-down Volkswagen Beetle. The man insinuates his way into the car, and the protagonist thinks he’s about to be the victim of a carjacking. When the man asks him why he hid his watch, he says he didn’t. Then he uses metaphor to convey how he’s feeling. Describe the way your insides felt in one especially scary moment in life.

My stomach feels like a grater, and my insides hurt as if they’d been shredded. Silently, I start saying the Rosary to calm myself down. First decade. Second decade. Third decade . . . The watch in my left back pocket is a malignant tumor, an unripe boil. It feels cold and quiet against my butt, yet all know it’s ticking away, a countdown to my death and my corpse on the road. I shouldn’t have lied. St Christopher, Patron of Travellers, what do I tell this man?”

4. **For more advanced writers:** Henry James was a master of metaphor, as he made manifest in *Portrait of a Lady*, a novel about a beautiful, spirited American orphan—Isabel Archer—who is brought to Europe by her aunt to, as James famously put it, “affront her destiny.” James rewrote the novel in 1908 (it was originally published in 1881), refining many of the metaphors, which he used to define everything from personality (“a perfect little pearl of a peeress”) to architecture (a library that was “a chamber of disgrace for old pieces of furniture whose infirmities were not always apparent [so that the disgrace seemed unmerited and rendered them victims of injustice]”).

Remember, a good metaphor describes *something* by comparing it to *an unlike thing*. James gives minor characters names that are themselves metaphors:

- The Vermonter-turned-London banker, who touches a lot of money, is named **Daniel Tracy Touchett**.
- The plucky American is **Henrietta Stackpole**.
- The eternal, hardheaded, spurned suitor is **Caspar Goodwood**.
- Isabel Archer’s mercurial sister-in-law is the **Countess Gemini**.
- Isabel Archer’s innocent, budding stepdaughter is **Pansy Osmond**.

- Pansy’s sweet-smelling, gentle suitor is **Ned Rosier**.

James’s character descriptions also depend on metaphor:

- “Nothing tender, nothing sympathetic, had ever had a chance to fasten upon [Mrs. Touchett’s face]—**no wind-sown blossom, no familiar softening moss.**”
- Pansy Osmond “would make a **perfect little pearl** of a peeress.”
- Daniel Touchett “had been neither at Harvard nor at Oxford,” but he had acquired a “**fine ivory surface**, polished by the English air.”
- Isabel Archer, by the end of the book, reflects that “she had been an **applied handled hung-up tool**, as senseless and convenient as mere shaped wood and iron.”

In his revision, James concentrated on a system of monetary or fiscal metaphors. Why? The book develops as a theme the corrosive influence of money, so the metaphors serve to subtly underscore the way in which her inheritance dooms Isabel Archer. Words like *bills*, *interest*, *debt*, *rich*, and *terms* are exploited for their double meanings, as is the noun *capital*, converted into an adjective:

- “Please explain about that young lady—your sister—then. I don’t understand about her. Is she a Lady? (Henrietta Stackpole)
- “She’s a **capital** good girl.” (Lord Warburton)
- “I should like to put some money in her purse.” (Ralph Touchett, asking his dying father to give his cousin Isabel Archer a substantial inheritance)
- “Ah, I’m glad you’ve thought of that,” said the old man. “But I’ve thought of it too. I’ve left her a legacy—five thousand pounds.” (Mr. Touchett, the banker)
- “That’s **capital**; it’s very kind of you. But I should like to do a little more. (Ralph Touchett)
- “Why indeed should we perpetually be thinking whether things are good for us, as if we were patients lying in a hospital? Why should I be so afraid to not doing right? As if it mattered to the world whether I do right or wrong!” (Isabel Archer, after she has received her inheritance)
- “You’re a **capital** person to advise.” (Ralph Touchett)

Homework

Examples of extended metaphor.

Take a walk on the wild side. Here’s Jonathan Raban on the cold of Montana, with its “shocking and insulting quality, like a boot in the face.” On a night when it’s negative twenty-seven degrees, Raban decides to walk the nine-tenths of a mile from a restaurant back to the Edgewater Red Lion Inn. Using that as a model, find a metaphor for your own climate and extend it.

I had never felt my bones *as* bones before—the dry clacking of the joints of the skeleton. My kneecaps, thin and brittle as sand-dollars, came to my attention first, followed by my wrists, knuckles, shoulder-blades and ankles. I rattled as I walked, my trouser-legs flapping round bare white shinbones.

For the first few blocks, I was Captain Scott, bravely leading the way across the icecap. Then I became poor Titus Oates, with his enormous frostbitten foot. ‘Well,’ said Oates, leaving Scott’s tent at 80°08’S, “I am just going outside, and I may be some time.”

. . . The walking skeleton at last gained the hotel car park, enormous, rimed with frost—the final glacier. Keep going, chaps; almost there. I wanted a flag to plant. A side-door (Entrance D, as I remember) moved slowly forward to meet me . . . *Locked!* It required an agony of

tomfoolery with a magnetically coded passcard to get the damned thing open. In the hot hallway, I had to lean against the wall for a minute, breathing in sobs, before I made the bar, where a jazz trio was in the middle of a number, and the talk didn't come to an abrupt stop when I made my triumphant entrance.

"I just *walked* here from the *Depot*," I said to the attendant waitress. "On foot." Still no response. "Christ, it is *cold!*"

From *Lost in My Own Backyard* by Tim Cahill:

In a description of a small pull-off in Yellowstone Park known as Artist's Paintpots, the ever-irreverent travel writer Tim Cahill, in *Lost in My Own Backyard*, compares this natural wonder to, well, natural functions:

If the geysers inspire awe—and they do—the paintpots generally make people laugh. They are the comedians in the pantheon of thermal features. Nathaniel Langford thought the mud in the pots looked like "thick paint." He wrote that in the pots a "bubble would explode with a puff, emitting . . . a villainous smell." He didn't say that while some of the bubbles burst like boiling water, rather soundlessly, others break in a flatulent manner, creating a sound that invariably makes people laugh. You might be the world's most sophisticated individual—it won't matter. You'll still laugh when the mud pot farts.

Cahill extends his metaphor of humanlike emissions, describing water sloshing, exploding, belching, boiling flatulently, and sounding like a giant's toilet, constantly flushing: "I was alone with the mud post for over an hour," he concludes, "thinking about artists and hotspots as well as flatulence and the end of civilization as we know it."

Week Thirteen: The Self as Mirror of Something Larger/Handout

Homework

Connecting to the Collective Unconscious

From Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number, by Jacobo Timerman:

The cell is narrow. When I stand at its center, facing the steel door, I can't extend my arms. But it is long, and when I lie down, I can stretch out my entire body. A stroke of luck, for in the cell I previously occupied—for how long?—I was forced to huddle up when seated and keep my knees bent while lying down.

The cell is quite high. When I jump, I'm unable to touch the ceiling. The white walls have been recently painted. Undoubtedly they once had names on them, messages, words of encouragement, dates. They are now bereft of any vestige or testimony.

The floor of the cell is permanently wet. Somewhere there's a leak. The mattress is also wet. I have a blanket, and to prevent that from getting wet I keep it on my shoulders constantly. If I lie down with the blanket on top of me, the part of my body touching the mattress gets soaked. I discover it's best to roll up the mattress so that one part of it doesn't touch the ground. In time, the top part dries. This means, though, that I can't lie down, but must sleep seated. My life goes on during this period—for how long?—either standing or seated.

The cell has a steel door with an opening that allows part of a face, a minimal part, to be visible. The guard has orders to keep the opening shut. Light enters from the outside through a small crack, which acts also as an air vent. This is the only ventilation and light. A faint glow, night and day, eliminating time. Producing a semi-penumbra within an atmosphere of contaminated air, semi-air. . . .

One of the guards has my watch. During an interrogation another guard offered me a cigarette and lit it with my wife's lighter. I later learned that they were under army orders not to steal anything from my house throughout the kidnapping but succumbed to temptation. Gold Rolex watches and Dupont cigarette lighters were almost an obsession with the Argentine security forces during that year of 1977.

Tonight, a guard, not following the rules, leaves the peephole ajar. I wait a while to see what will happen but it remains open. Standing on tiptoe, I peer out. There's a narrow corridor, and across from my cell I can see at least two other doors. Indeed, I have a full view of two doors. What a sensation of freedom! An entire universe added to my Time, that elongated time which hovers over me oppressively in the cell. Time, that dangerous enemy of man, when its existence, duration, and eternity are virtually palpable.

Week Fourteen: Developing a Narrative Voice/Handout

In-class exercises

4. Read the following selections, and discuss them in terms of tone, style, and voice.

From “Facing the Music After a Bruising Makes for Alluring Theater,” by Mark Leibovich (New York Times, November 9, 2006):

WASHINGTON, Nov. 8—It was one of those once-a-decade days in Washington where news, rumor and recrimination crackled in every direction. But the wounded duck at the center of it all, President Bush, offered by far the day’s most mesmerizing spectacle.

He looked worn at his must-see midday news conference, in need of a haircut, good-night’s sleep, better makeup job, hug, vacation in Crawford or some combination thereof. The grooves across his forehead were dark and articulated, his voice slightly hoarse. He wore a maroon tie, the color of blood.

Yet for someone whose presidency had just been repudiated, whose party had been sent reeling and whose defense secretary had just been sent packing, Mr. Bush also appeared strangely giddy, like someone who is acting a little odd after suffering a blow to the head, or a “thumpin’,” to use the official presidential description.

From *Angela’s Ashes*, by Frank McCourt (Scribner, 1996):

There may be a lack of tea or bread in the house, but Mom and Dad always manage to get the fags, the Wild Woodbines. They have to have the Woodbines in the morning and anytime they drink tea. They tell us every day we should never smoke, it’s bad for your lungs, it’s bad for your chest, it stunts your growth, and they sit by the fire puffing away. Mam says, If ’tis a thing I ever see a fag in your gob, I’ll break your face. They tell us the cigarettes rot your teeth and you can see they’re not lying. The teeth turn brown and black in their heads and fall out one by one. Dad says he has holes in his teeth big enough for a sparrow to raise a family.

From “Plant Crimes,” by Susan Orlean (the *New Yorker*, November 30, 1998):

An orchid’s appearance is ravishing. One species looks like a German Shepherd with its tongue hanging out. One looks like an octopus. One looks like a human nose. One looks like a pair of fancy shoes. One looks dead. There are species that look like butterflies, bats, ladies’ handbags, swarms of bees, clamshells, camels’ hooves, squirrels, nuns wearing wimples, and drunken old men. The smallest orchids are nearly microscopic, and the biggest ones have masses of flowers as large as footballs. The petals of some orchids are as soft as powder; others are as rigid and rubbery as inner tubes. They can be freckled or mottled or veiny or solid, their colors ranging from nearly neon to spotless white. Some look like the results of an accident involving paint.