

Word Jenga

Writing classes often bear witness to flowery language and over-the-top, effusive descriptions, especially in higher academia. The goal of this activity is to present some hyperboles to this phenomenon and help you to see writing in a different way. You should leave class today far more wary of using run-on sentences or confusing descriptions. If you can say what you are trying to say in fewer words, there's almost no reason not to eliminate the extra fluff. This doesn't mean you should be dimming your writing to words like "a lot" or "like," but that you should steer clear of repeating yourself or over-describing something.

Take a pen or highlighter and cross over every word in the following passages that you feel doesn't add anything to the meaning. You should be left with the most basic form of the author's original piece, and – hopefully – it should make much more sense.

Try not to feel overwhelmed – this is just an exercise!

I.

It has been found that CO₂ and H₂O formation has been reduced at high temperatures.

II.

Inhibition of HIV replication is induced by antiretroviral therapy.

III.

“In the loveliest town of all, where the houses were white and high and the elms trees were green and higher than the houses, where the front yards were wide and pleasant and the back yards were bushy and worth finding out about, where the streets sloped down to the stream and the stream flowed quietly under the bridge, where the lawns ended in orchards and the orchards ended in fields and the fields ended in pastures and the pastures climbed the hill and disappeared over the top toward the wonderful wide sky, in this loveliest of all towns Stuart stopped to get a drink of sarsaparilla.”

From E.B. White – *Stuart Little*

IV.

The move from a structuralist account in which capital is understood to structure social relations in relatively homologous ways to a view of hegemony in which power relations are subject to repetition, convergence, and rearticulation brought the question of temporality into the thinking of structure, and marked a shift from a form of Althusserian theory that takes structural totalities as theoretical objects to one in which the insights into the contingent possibility of structure inaugurate a renewed conception of hegemony as bound up with the contingent sites and strategies of the rearticulation of power.

From Judith Butler – “Further Reflections on the Conversations of Our Time”

V.

“From a little after two o’clock until almost sundown of the long still hot weary dead September afternoon they sat in what Miss Coldfield still called the office because her father had called it that—a dim hot airless room with the blinds all closed and fastened for forty-three summers because when she was a girl someone had believed that light and moving air carried heat and that dark was always cooler, and which (as the sun shone fuller and fuller on that side of the house) became latticed with yellow slashes full of dust motes which Quentin thought of as being flecks of the dead old dried paint itself blown inward from the scaling blinds as wind might have blown them.”

From William Faulkner – “Absolom, Absolom.”

VI.

“Within that conflictual economy of colonial discourse which Edward Said describes as the tension between the synchronic panoptical vision of domination – the demand for identity, stasis – and the counterpressure of the diachrony of history – change, difference – mimicry represents an ironic compromise. If I may adapt Samuel Weber’s formulation of the marginalizing vision of castration, then colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that I have called mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of the colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an imminent threat to both the ‘normalized’ knowledges and disciplinary powers. The effect of mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse is profound and disturbing. For in ‘normalizing’ the colonial state of subject, the dream of post-Enlightenment civility alienates its own language of liberty and produces another knowledge of its norms.”

From “Of mimicry and man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse,” in *The Location of Culture* by Homi K. Bhabha.