

English 1101 / D414 (C414)

Thursdays, 2:30–3:40 | 3:50–5 | Lab: 5:05–5:55 | Room N1023B

Instructor: Monroe Street

Office: Namm 529 (English Department office is Namm 512)

Contact: mstreet@citytech.cuny.edu*

Office hours: Fridays, 2:30-3:30 and by appointment

***IMPORTANT (RE: EMAIL):** Whenever possible, please meet with me in person (either after class or during office hours) if you have questions about the course—it’s often the fastest and easiest way to get help. Also, be sure to send from (and check) your CT e-mail—that’ll ensure your message doesn’t end up with my “spam” and that you get the course-related e-mails I send.

Course Description

This course will familiarize you with academic writing as a useful process for crafting and revising your ideas and for responding to those of other writers. You will practice critical thinking, reading, and writing skills that you can apply in other courses and which will help you communicate better in general. Because one of the best ways to improve as a writer is to read the work of other good writers, there is a good deal of assigned reading for this course. I generally will not “lecture” on this reading, but will instead prompt you for your own honest, thoughtful responses to it. As such, this course relies a great deal on **your own** active participation, and the success of each class will depend on the effort **you** put in. For the benefit of all, be sure to read the assigned texts carefully, take good notes on them (in and out of class), and arrive each day prepared to talk and write about the assignment.

Required Texts (bring them to class each day, along with all of your own written work)

Gerald Graff, *They Say/I Say*. 2nd ed. (without readings) | ISBN: 978-0393924091

Joseph Trimmer (ed.), *The River Reader*, 11th ed. | ISBN: 978-1133310310

Handouts / Texts posted to Blackboard (download, print, and bring to class!)

Student learning outcomes & objectives

- Become familiar with various strategies for invention, drafting, revision, and editing;
- Develop ideas and evaluate them through reading, discussion, and research;
- Support ideas and claims with well-developed examples and other evidence;
- Refer to other writers, making use of summary, paraphrase, and quotation;
- Organize ideas and evidence effectively in a sequence of paragraphs.

Assignments

		<u>Grading scale</u>
Essay 1 First-Person Narrative	20	90-100 = A
Essay 2 Compare & Contrast	20	80-89 = B
Essay 3 The Well-Informed Argument	20	70-79 = C
Glossary/Journal (see below)	10	60-69 = D
Essay 3 Presentation	10	< 59 = F
In-class Participation (see below)	10	
Midterm in-class essay test	P/F*	
<u>Final exam</u>	<u>10*</u>	
Total	100 %	

* *Very important: students must pass the midterm and final exams in order to pass the course*

- Due dates for essays are on the schedule (below) and I give assignment sheets in advance—but ask for help if you need it.
- Aside from speaking up in class, **Participation** includes: 1) arriving prepared (i.e., bringing print copies of all assigned readings and essay materials to class); 2) taking notes (on readings and

during class) as well as writing diligently during in-class work periods; 3) volunteering to lead “**Media Analysis**” (see below); 4) actively helping other students during work periods.

- **Glossary.** In addition to writing 3 essays this semester, you will also be creating and submitting a separate notebook of vocabulary words and phrases that intrigue (or confuse) you in our assigned readings. Each week you will hypothesize and look up the meaning of 5 words and write sentences using them. You will also be meeting regularly with your “writing lab” team (during designated “Writing Lab” periods) to investigate the meanings and uses of these words.
- **Media Analysis.** Approximately once a week I will ask 1-2 students to volunteer to present an image published somewhere online that is striking or otherwise worthy of our class’ analysis and discussion. By 5 PM on the day prior to presenting, volunteers will e-mail me a link to the image as well as some notes on why they’ve selected this particular image and 2 discussion questions for the class to respond to. **Discussion questions** should ask the class to consider both the image’s *content* (the thing, person(s), or idea it represents) AND its *form* (the way in which the content has been composed by the person who published it—e.g., the angle or perspective of a photograph or the position and scale/size of the people in it). Feel free to ask for help with this. Thoughtfully leading a session of Media Analysis will boost your **Participation** score.

Additional Assignment Requirements & Instructions

- Please make use of office hours as a chance to show me drafts of essays before the final due date—I highly value the drafting and revising process and consider it when grading.
- **Never** submit work late, by email, or any other way w/o prior approval.
- Excessive typographical and other errors can result in a failing grade—if in doubt, ask for help.
- I do not offer extra-credit, but I LOVE it when students write multiple drafts and ask for help.
- I will sometimes send emails via the email account noted for you in Blackboard—this means that you **must** be accessible via CCT email, as it can be part of the assignment.
- **No in-class graded work, including quizzes & tests, can be made up.**
- I strongly suggest you get contact information from 3 classmates if you need information about class—before you ask me about it. This is a great class to make friends in, so please do!

Late Work

All assignments are due on time at the **beginning** of class. Being absent does not exempt you from turning in work. **I do not accept late assignments, except for the rare occasions noted below.** I understand that life can interfere with the ability to complete an assignment. If you have a documented emergency—or know of an upcoming urgent situation and speak to me **before** the due date—I will most likely accept late work if given proper advance notice.

Essay Submission (if you do otherwise I won’t accept your work and you will receive an F)

- **READ THIS CAREFULLY:** For each essay, you will submit your final draft along with other drafts and classwork in **one folder**. Drafts are your writing at various stages before your finished paper. Producing multiple drafts of a paper helps you develop it and allows your work to benefit from instructor and peer feedback. You must **staple** your papers before submitting them in class. **IMPORTANT:** Retain a copy of all your drafts for yourself, as you are responsible for keeping account of your work.

Essay Formatting (if you do otherwise, I don’t accept your work if you have questions, ask!)

READ THIS CAREFULLY. Please use: double-spacing (left-justified), 1-inch margins all around, 12-point Times font, & page numbers. No extra spacing between paragraphs. No cover sheets! Instead, at the top of page 1, type single-spaced your name, the class, and the assignment:

Jill or Jack Student

English XXX, Fall 201X

Essay X (for revisions, type Essay X Revision)

Title is Centered, 12-pt Times Roman Font, No Bold, No Underline, No Italics, No Quotes

Rewrites (optional)

I **encourage** rewrites and they are due in class two weeks after I return graded papers (with the exception of the final essay and essay exams). Essays that are late or not submitted cannot be rewritten and result in a 0, not an F. If you rewrite and your grade improves, I use the new grade.

Work Load

Our class is 3 credits, and you can expect to spend at least 9 hours per week on readings, essays, and other coursework. Of course, some students may need more time and others less.

Plagiarism

“Students and those who work with information, ideas, texts, images, music, inventions, and intellectual property owe audience and sources accuracy and honesty in using, crediting, and citing sources. This includes reusing your own work. The College has a responsibility for providing instruction in information literacy and academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and at New York City College of Technology; it is punishable by penalties, including failure, suspension, and expulsion.” The complete text of the College policy on Academic Integrity may be found in the catalog. You **must** cite all language that isn’t your own, produced for this course. When in doubt, ask!

Recycling Papers

Recycling papers is not allowed. Recycling papers is taking a paper, or other writing/speech, written or used previously and resubmitting it. If you have worked on a paper, speech, or other topic that you think would be a good fit for an assignment, you need to see me. We will discuss whether or not **parts** of your previous work might be appropriate for use in the assignment.

Classroom Rules & Procedures

- Students are expected to be regular and prompt in attendance, to complete assigned readings and written work on time, and to participate regularly in class interactions and activities.
- **Turn off** electronic devices before class, otherwise you will be asked to leave and marked absent.
- Students must remain in class for the whole period; use the restroom before or after class (or during designated class breaks). Leaving class for extended periods will count as an absence.
- Each student must be respectful toward everyone in class. If a student engages in inappropriate behavior, the student will be asked to leave and marked absent.
- Many of our discussions and reading assignments focus on controversial topics, which some students may find challenging and/or uncomfortable. If you have concerns about either course material or about comments made during discussion, please see me immediately.

Course Policies

- **Absences.** There is **no** distinction between excused and unexcused absences. **Absences in excess of 3 may result in failure or WU.** From the CT Catalog: “If a student’s class absences exceed the limit established for a given course or component, the instructor will alert the student that a grade of ‘WU’ may be assigned.” This statement of the policy hereby constitutes giving notice.
- **Absence does not excuse you from handing work in on time**, so arrange to submit early if you know you’ll be absent.
- Students who come to class without in-class work materials (e.g., hard copies of drafts, Blackboard readings) will be counted absent, as in-class work cannot be made up. This is particularly relevant on drafting, workshop, and conference days.
- **Lateness.** While being late sometimes cannot be helped, it can be rude and disruptive. I generally take attendance when class begins or shortly after; thus, it is your responsibility to ensure (after class) that an absent mark is changed if you arrive late. **Three “lates” of more than 5 minutes equals 1 absence.** If you are twenty minutes or more late to class or if you leave class for an extended period of time you will be marked absent—see Absence policy above.

Course Schedule

*** Assignments to be completed before class * Schedule will change, with notice**

Note: On some weeks, there will be a Blackboard reading response due Monday.

Text Abbreviations: RR = *The River Reader*; TS = *They Say, I Say*; BB = Blackboard

Wk/ Date	Learning Objectives	Readings/Assignments Due
Essay 1 First-Person Narrative		Theme 1 Family Drama
1 Thu 8/27	Course Introduction. Syllabus Review. Different “styles” of speaking and writing. Writing Lab: TBA	--In-class writing response on your influences as a speaker and writer: what’s inspired your “style”?
2 Thu 9/3	Introduce Essay 1. --Elements of the rhetorical situation: purpose, audience, formal strategies, genre. --Close-reading and responding to passages	By Monday 8/31, complete the following: 1. Buy books. Re-read Syllabus and bring in questions. 2. In <i>The River Reader</i> (RR), read Intro/”Active Reading” (RR 1-10; BB), then... 3. <u>Download, print, read & annotate:</u> Junot Diaz, “The Money” (BB). ---Underline interesting/important passages. ---Circle at least 5 words you’ve never used in your own writing ---In left margin, make 3+ notes describing the impact the writing has on you as you read. ---In the right, write down 3+ questions that 3 passages make you wonder about.
Thu 9/3 cont’	--Elements of narrative: finding a theme, purpose, and conflict --Showing & Telling Writing Lab: Lab groups assigned. Semester-long annotated glossary assignment introduced.	By Thursday’s class, also do the following : 4. In <i>The River Reader</i> (RR), read “Narration and Description” (RR, 35-40) 5. Also in the RR, read and annotate Amy Tan, “Mother Tongue” (RR, 468-475) 6. Download & print: Essay 1 assignment, Glossary assignment (BB) --Complete 5 word-entries in your Glossary
3 Thu 9/10	NO CLASS—MONDAY SCHEDULE Last day to drop course for refund. -- BB Work Due Monday. --narrative strategies: illustrative events, selective details, comparison	For Monday 9/7, BB Prompt response due. Read & annotate: --David Sedaris, “Remembering My Childhood on the Continent of Africa” (RR 172-9) --Graff, Ch 3, “The Art of Quoting” (TS 39-48) Also complete 5 word-entries in your Glossary
4 Thu 9/17	--Narrative strategies: point of view, multiple perspectives, contrast --Brainstorming and outlining Essay 1 --Narrative strategies: introductions, conclusions, and transitions. Writing Lab: Glossary work in groups or Peer	3 copies of Essay 1 draft due (Peer Review). By Mon 9/14: --Gloria Naylor, “A Word’s Meaning Can Often Depend on Who Says It” (RR 283-7) --“Paragraphs” (BB; print it first!) By class Thursday, also do: --Dan Savage, “At A Loss” (BB; print!) --Print & read: “Sentences” (BB; print!)

	Review workshop.	
		Theme 2 Writing and Speaking to Make Change: Persuasive Strategies in MLK and Malcolm X
5 Thu 9/24	<p>Film Screening: Orlando Bagwell’s <i>Malcolm X: Make It Plain</i></p> <p>Writing Lab: Persuasive strategies: listening and responding to spoken word (in film) –and/or– glossary work in groups</p>	<p>Essay 1 final draft due. In one folder, put:</p> <p>---Essay 1 final draft (top)</p> <p>---Essay 1 draft & Peer Reviewer’s comments</p> <p>---In-class reading responses (bottom)</p>
Essay 2 Compare & Contrast		
6 Thu 10/1	<p>--Introduce Essay 2</p> <p>--Thesis, Message, Purpose</p> <p>--Persuasive strategies in MLK: Appeals (ethos, pathos, logos)</p> <p>--Malcolm X’s Purpose and Strategies: Appeals (ethos, pathos, logos)</p> <p>--Summarizing Malcolm X’s speech from 2 different perspectives (for/against)</p> <p>Writing Lab: Glossary work in groups.</p>	<p>For Monday 9/28:</p> <p>--MLK, “I Have A Dream” (RR 403-408)</p> <p>--Also in the <i>River Reader</i>, read “Persuasion & Argument” (RR 389-92, 398-400) and “Purpose” (RR 16, 18)</p> <p>--Complete 5 word-entries in your Glossary</p> <p>By Thursday, also due:</p> <p>--Print, read, annotate: Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet” (BB)</p> <p>--Print: Essay 2 assignment</p> <p>--Graff, Ch 2 “The Art of Summarizing” (TS 28-38)</p>
7 Thu 10/8	<p>--Comparing metaphor and analogy in MLK and Malcolm X</p> <p>--Summarizing MLK</p> <p>--Drafting workshop</p> <p>--Inventorying (listing) message, purpose, and rhetorical strategies in MLK and Malcolm X</p> <p>--Outlining and organizing Compare & Contrast Essays</p> <p>Writing Lab: Glossary work in groups –or– Summary workshop</p>	<p>By Monday:</p> <p>--Print, read, annotate Shannon Metz, “MLK and Malcolm X: The Power and Legacy of Prophetic Discourse” (BB, 1-3, 8-11, 20-24, 29-32)</p> <p>--Complete 5 word-entries in your Glossary</p> <p>In addition, by Thursday:</p> <p>--Read “Compare & Contrast” (RR 149-53)</p> <p>--Read Graff, Intro “Entering the Conversation” (TS 1-15)</p> <p>--Remember to <u>bring both speeches to class</u></p>
MIDTERM WEEK		
8 Thu 10/15	<p>--Strategies for preparing for and taking in-class essay exams (e.g., our Midterm & Final Exam)</p> <p>--Inverse outlining the reading: thesis, 3 supporting claims</p> <p>--Outlining your response</p> <p>In-class essay test.</p> <p>Writing Lab: Essay 2 Peer Review (in pairs).</p>	<p>Midterm (in-class test). Essay 2 draft due at Peer Review. Glossary due.</p> <p>--Read Sample Final Exam and accompanying article: Elizabeth Dunn & Michael Norton, “Hello, Stranger” (BB; print!)</p> <p>Glossary check. Turn in Glossary with in-class essay test.</p>
Essay 3 The Well-Informed Argument		Theme 3 Identity Crises: Representing Sex, Gender, Race

<p>9 Thu 10/22</p>	<p>Midterm Grades & Essay 2 draft feedback given.</p> <p>--Introduce Essay 3.</p> <p>--Beginning Research to Support A Thesis: brainstorming a topic/debate you feel strongly invested/interested in; using personal experience</p> <p>--The Internet: different Internets (public/private databases), finding articles, kinds of sources, kinds of articles</p> <p>Film Screening: Jennie Livingston's <i>Paris Is Burning</i> (1991)</p> <p>Writing Lab: Review in-class essay test.</p>	<p>Essay 2 final draft due (see below).</p> <p>By Monday:</p> <p>--PEW Research Center, "King's Dream Remains an Elusive Goal" (BB)</p> <p>--Jay Silverman, "How to Conduct Research" (BB, 116-121 in <i>Rules of Thumb</i>)</p> <p>--"Collecting Evidence" (RR 392-3)</p> <p>By Thursday, also:</p> <p>--Final Essay 2 materials, submit in 1 folder:</p> <p>---Essay 2 final draft (on top)</p> <p>---Essay 2 first draft & peer feedback (bottom)</p> <p>--Also bring in Essay 1 and 1-2 assigned readings you strongly (dis-)agree with & want to respond to in your Essay 3</p> <p>--Optional Film Background Reading: Ashley Clark, "Burning Down The House" (BB)</p>
<p>10 Thu 10/29</p>	<p>--Thesis statements, evidence</p> <p>--Sex vs. Gender ; Gender as "style"?</p> <p>--Analyzing and responding to Canby's thesis about "style" in <i>Paris Is Burning</i></p> <p>--Canby's evidence: testimony, etc. --how to strengthen, if this were another kind of essay (not just a film review)?</p> <p>Writing Lab: Glossary work in groups --or-- Thesis/Research workshop</p> <p>LIBRARY VISIT</p>	<p>By Monday:</p> <p>--Vincent Canby "Aching to Be a Prima Donna, When You're a Man" (BB, print!)</p> <p>--Using both Google and library databases, do 4-5 Keyword searches for articles you might either critique or use as support for your Essay 3 thesis.</p> <p>Fill out Research Log.</p> <p>In addition, for Thursday:</p> <p>--Graff, Ch 4: "Yes / No / OK, But...: Three Ways to Respond" (TS 51-63)</p> <p>--Purdue OWL "Thesis Checklist" (BB)</p> <p>Download, print, & do Research Log (BB)</p>
<p>11 Thu 11/5</p>	<p>--Supporting a Thesis: Claims & Evidence</p> <p>---Identifying Hooks' thesis on <i>Paris Is Burning</i></p> <p>---Representing race, class, gender</p> <p>---Hooks' claims & evidence (other articles!)</p> <p>---Hooks' critique of Canby's thesis/claims</p> <p>--The opposing side: setting up and engaging a counterargument</p> <p>---Engber's thesis: "Monogamish"—a sexual identity?</p> <p>---Engber's engagement with a counterargument</p> <p>--Outlining Essay 3, summarizing and positioning your "naysayer"</p> <p>Writing Lab: Glossary work in groups --or-- Thesis/argumentation workshop</p>	<p>By Monday:</p> <p>--Bell Hooks, "Is Paris Burning?" (BB, pp. 149-158, print!)</p> <p>--Graff, Ch 5: "Distinguishing What You Say From What They Say" (TS 64-73)</p> <p>In addition, for Thursday:</p> <p>--Daniel Engber, "Are Humans Monogamous or Polygamous?" (BB)</p> <p>--Graff, Ch 6: "Planting a Naysayer in Your Text" (TS 74-87)</p> <p>--Bring in Canby "Aching to Be a Prima Donna..."; also bring in an article on your topic that you disagree with (either that we've read or one you've found)</p> <p>--Remember: 5 glossary entries per week!</p>

Theme 4 Recent Debates in Technology & Science		
<p>12 Thu 11/12</p>	<p>Spring Registration Opens. --Argumentative strategies: using & explaining key terms and concepts, making terminological distinctions --Jacoby’s thesis, use of key terms (feminism, morality, sex object), distinctions (sex vs. virtual “sex”) --Argumentative strategies: (re-)definition, introducing, explaining, and illustrating theory/ideas with examples --Walzer’s definitional thesis on fantasy/pleasure --Quoting, explaining, critiquing Jacoby --Explication of key theory terms w/examples: fantasy, reality principle, pleasure principle Writing Lab: Glossary work in groups.</p>	<p>For Monday: --Susan Jacoby, “Weiner’s Women” (BB) --“Division & Classification” (RR 199-203)</p> <p>In addition, for Thursday: --Sand Walzer, “A Freudian Analysis of Sexting” (BB) --“Definition” (RR 277-281)</p>
DRAFTING/CONFERENCES WEEK		<p>DUE BY SUNDAY 11/8 @ 5 PM: Send me an e-mail briefly describing the following: --The topic and debate you’re writing on --Your thesis --The article(s) you are using as evidence to support your thesis --The article(s) you are using as a “naysayer” (i.e., to argue against)</p>
<p>13 Thu 11/19</p>	<p>--Essay 3 conferences, in pairs (E3-topic partners assigned) --Editing workshop (assigned pairs): in-text citation formatting; additional drafting in class</p> <p>--Essay 3 conferences (in assigned pairs) --Editing workshop (assigned pairs): Works Cited formatting; additional drafting in class --Integrating an additional article or perspective into your argument Writing Lab: Glossary work in groups</p>	<p>--Annotated outline of Essay 3 due in class: --your thesis statement --description of the counterargument(s) / ”naysayer” you’re arguing against --a bulleted list of paragraph topic sentences that express your main claims supporting of your thesis --a detailed summary of at least 1 article you’re using as support for your thesis, including quotes, explanation</p> <p>For Monday: --“MLA Style Guide” (BB, 1-8; esp 4-5 on In-Text Citation) --Find another article/perspective to address in Essay 3 (ideally one to discuss at your conference)</p> <p>Due by Thursday’s class: --“MLA Style Guide” (BB, 11-19; esp 12-13, 17, 19 on Works Cited Page formatting)</p>
<p>14 Thu 11/26</p>	<p>NO CLASS Thursday (CUNY Holiday) Monday BB Work =Wortham’s article and the “believing game”: Quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing (one more time)</p>	<p>For Monday 11/23: BB prompt response. --Read Jenna Wortham, “I Had A Nice Time With You Tonight. On The App” (BB) ----Re-read Graff, Ch 3 “The Art of Quotation” (TS)</p>

2. The thesis/purpose statement provides the reader with a brief guide to the rest of the essay—with a good thesis you can tell what the rest of the essay will be like.
3. Most of your body paragraphs will have topic sentences either at or toward the beginning. Topic sentences (t.s.) support the thesis and indicate the paragraph is about one idea only. Quotes or examples relate to the topic sentence. If not, change development or move/eliminate info.
4. Transition between paragraphs shows the ideas in a logical order and provides cues for the reader.
5. Quotes/examples come after the topic sentence (t.s.). Quotes/examples aren't plopped in—introduce them, explain their meaning and how they relate to the topic sentence/idea you are discussing. Never quote without explaining your purpose and meaning.
6. Conclusions do not restate the thesis; they expand on or give a holistic analysis of the thesis and suggest the direction that future thinking and writing on your topic might go in.
7. Imagine the reader has knowledge about the general idea but not the specific topic. The tone is formal—avoid contractions.

**Points to be aware of when writing your work and reading others' work
(while reading your own drafts and others' work, make notes that respond to these points):**

1. Why is (or why *isn't*) the introduction clear and engaging for the reader? What is the “hook”?
2. Find the thesis/purpose statement and underline it. Does it adequately address the topics and purpose of the whole essay? How? Does the thesis respond to a question and express the writer's position?
3. Underline the topic sentences. In what way do they relate to the thesis statement? How do they express the content/ideas of the paragraphs? How can they connect to the content better?
4. Is there adequate development of the sentences within the paragraphs? Do they flow and follow each other logically? If not, what is needed to improve their transition or development?
5. Are there adequate/logical transitions between paragraphs or are more transitional phrases needed?
6. How is research included in the paragraph? Are quotes/evidence not only introduced but adequately explained afterwards? Make sure you provide not just evidence but ample explanation of it. How can the connections between claim, evidence, and discussion of the evidence be improved?
7. How does the conclusion encourage the reader to continue thinking about the topic? Does it merely restate the thesis? (Hopefully not.) Or does it add new thinking to the discussion and expand on the essay's broader significance? If not, what can the author do to improve?

How to Write With Style

By Kurt Vonnegut

Newspaper reporters and technical writers are trained to reveal almost nothing about themselves in their writings. This makes them freaks in the world of writers, since almost all of the other ink-

stained wretches in that world reveal a lot about themselves to readers. We call these revelations, accidental and intentional, elements of style.

These revelations tell us as readers what sort of person it is with whom we are spending time. Does the writer sound ignorant or informed, stupid or bright, crooked or honest, humorless or playful --- ? And on and on.

Why should you examine your writing style with the idea of improving it? Do so as a mark of respect for your readers, whatever you're writing. If you scribble your thoughts any which way, your readers will surely feel that you care nothing about them. They will mark you down as an egomaniac or a chowderhead --- or, worse, they will stop reading you.

The most damning revelation you can make about yourself is that you do not know what is interesting and what is not. Don't you yourself like or dislike writers mainly for what they choose to show you or make you think about? Did you ever admire an emptyheaded writer for his or her mastery of the language? No.

So your own winning style must begin with ideas in your head. (Read ahead for more!)

1. Find a subject you care about

Find a subject you care about and which you in your heart feel others should care about. It is this genuine caring, and not your games with language, which will be the most compelling and seductive element in your style.

I am not urging you to write a novel, by the way --- although I would not be sorry if you wrote one, provided you genuinely cared about something. A petition to the mayor about a pothole in front of your house or a love letter to the girl next door will do.

2. Do not ramble, though

I won't ramble on about that.

3. Keep it simple

As for your use of language: Remember that two great masters of language, William Shakespeare and James Joyce, wrote sentences which were almost childlike when their subjects were most profound. "To be or not to be?" asks Shakespeare's Hamlet. The longest word is three letters long. Joyce, when he was frisky, could put together a sentence as intricate and as glittering as a necklace for Cleopatra, but my favorite sentence in his short story "Eveline" is this one: "She was tired." At that point in the story, no other words could break the heart of a reader as those three words do.

Simplicity of language is not only reputable, but perhaps even sacred. The *Bible* opens with a sentence well within the writing skills of a lively fourteen-year-old: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

4. Have guts to cut

It may be that you, too, are capable of making necklaces for Cleopatra, so to speak. But your eloquence should be the servant of the ideas in your head. Your rule might be this: If a sentence, no matter how excellent, does not illuminate your subject in some new and useful way, scratch it out.

5. Sound like yourself

The writing style which is most natural for you is bound to echo the speech you heard when a child. English was Conrad's third language, and much that seems piquant in his use of English

was no doubt colored by his first language, which was Polish. And lucky indeed is the writer who has grown up in Ireland, for the English spoken there is so amusing and musical. I myself grew up in Indianapolis, where common speech sounds like a band saw cutting galvanized tin, and employs a vocabulary as unornamental as a monkey wrench.

In some of the more remote hollows of Appalachia, children still grow up hearing songs and locutions of Elizabethan times. Yes, and many Americans grow up hearing a language other than English, or an English dialect a majority of Americans cannot understand.

All these varieties of speech are beautiful, just as the varieties of butterflies are beautiful. No matter what your first language, you should treasure it all your life. If it happens to not be standard English, and if it shows itself when you write standard English, the result is usually delightful, like a very pretty girl with one eye that is green and one that is blue.

I myself find that I trust my own writing most, and others seem to trust it most, too, when I sound most like a person from Indianapolis, which is what I am. What alternatives do I have? The one most vehemently recommended by teachers has no doubt been pressed on you, as well: to write like cultivated Englishmen of a century or more ago.

6. Say what you mean

I used to be exasperated by such teachers, but am no more. I understand now that all those antique essays and stories with which I was to compare my own work were not magnificent for their datedness or foreignness, but for saying precisely what their authors meant them to say. My teachers wished me to write accurately, always selecting the most effective words, and relating the words to one another unambiguously, rigidly, like parts of a machine. The teachers did not want to turn me into an Englishman after all. They hoped that I would become understandable --- and therefore understood. And there went my dream of doing with words what Pablo Picasso did with paint or what any number of jazz idols did with music. If I broke all the rules of punctuation, had words mean whatever I wanted them to mean, and strung them together higgledy-piggledy, I would simply not be understood. So you, too, had better avoid Picasso-style or jazz-style writing, if you have something worth saying and wish to be understood.

Readers want our pages to look very much like pages they have seen before. Why? This is because they themselves have a tough job to do, and they need all the help they can get from us.

7. Pity the readers

They have to identify thousands of little marks on paper, and make sense of them immediately. They have to *read*, an art so difficult that most people don't really master it even after having studied it all through grade school and high school --- twelve long years.

So this discussion must finally acknowledge that our stylistic options as writers are neither numerous nor glamorous, since our readers are bound to be such imperfect artists. Our audience requires us to be sympathetic and patient readers, ever willing to simplify and clarify --- whereas we would rather soar high above the crowd, singing like nightingales.

That is the bad news. The good news is that we Americans are governed under a unique Constitution, which allows us to write whatever we please without fear of punishment. So the most meaningful aspect of our styles, which is what we choose to write about, is utterly unlimited.