

Composition 4: Truer Words

Essential Question: How do the words of authors reveal their truth in our lives?

PROMPT: Select a quotation from your own source [try song lyrics or a site like www.quotationspage.com] to write either an *informative essay* or a *personal narrative* that illustrates the truth of the quote. In other words, explain why these words that you have chosen are true since they apply so well to several situations or to one important situation in your life. If writing in the *informative essay* mode, discuss the quote's relevance to [pick 3]: your friendships, your family, your religion, your school, your part-time job, your relationships, your favorite literary work, your favorite film or TV series, politics, sports, current events, technology, the economy, the life of a famous person, or any other [3] areas of experience. If writing a *personal narrative* that illustrates the truth of the quote, then portray [1] conflict that you have experienced that made the truth and the lesson of this quote very real and clear for you.



INTRODUCTIONS:

The Essay with Subtopics Approach → [see p.5 of Packet]

1. Begin with the tag, quote, and citation.
2. Explain in your own words what you believe the quotation suggests or means.
3. State your quote-based topic sentence listing three subtopic areas / situations that demonstrate the truth of the quotation.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once remarked, "For everything you gain in life, you lose something else" (Emerson 98). To me Emerson's words suggest that life has a way of balancing out the fortunes and misfortunes that confront us. Call it karma, luck, or the universal yin-and-yang. Sometimes you're the windshield; sometimes you're the bug—and usually, you choose which one you're going to be. Emerson's words are true when it comes to my significant other, my part-time job, and my sweet-sixteen party.

SUBTOPIC PARAGRAPH 1—brief story/explanation of how I gained a boyfriend but lost my freedom

SUBTOPIC PARAGRAPH 2—brief story/ explanation of how I gained a job as BK burger-flipper but lost my social life

SUBTOPIC PARAGRAPH 3—brief story/ explanation of how I gained a lot of fun at a kegger but lost my license and my parents' trust

The “Narrative / One Story” Approach

1. Begin [a] with the tag, quote, and citation or [b] with an epigraph-style quotation. See both examples below...
2. Repeat the key word or phrase from the quote as you immediately establish the time and/or place of your story...a time and place that is as close to the “Big Event” as possible. Your story will then depict how true the quotation is through this event.

[a]

Confucius once wrote, “**Curiosity** leads to mischief, and mischief only to catastrophe” (Confucius 2). When I was six, my mother took me on a dark evening to the commercial metropolis of Wal-Mart, and the **curiosity** of my young mind soon overwhelmed me.

[b]

*“It will all **get better** in time”*

Leona Lewis (Lewis 1)

Five days before my seventeenth birthday, I gave birth to my lifeless son; an event that many find joyful I found the most painful day I ever encountered. My heart filled with infinite joy, and then it broke, leaving me hopeless that it could ever **get better**.

CONCLUSION IDEA: conclude a *personal narrative* by reflecting on what your experience taught you about life or about yourself. For an *informative essay* you might predict some ways in which remembering the truth of this quotation will help you in the future.

Focus Skills

1. TS/ Subs/Intro/Concl [INFORMATIVE] -or-
Conflict/Theme based on quotation [NARRATIVE]
2. Frag/Run
3. Sp
4. Highlight 10 Vivid Verbs
5. Consistent Point of View
6. 3 ½ Pages Final Copy Calibri or Arial 12
***1 Citation minimum / MLA Works Cited Required**

Mega-Tips for Content Development

- Even if choosing the essay option, try developing your subtopics through mini-narratives...be a story-teller.
- If writing a narrative, start as close to the main event as possible; slow down to capture small details; indent when characters switch speaking and at jumps in time; limit the number of scenes; and mix dialogue with description.

"For everything you gain, you lose something else."

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Self-Reliance". Adventures in American Literature. Ed. Francis Hodgkins. Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980: 190.

- ❖ You better lose yourself in the music, the moment / You own it, you better never let it go / You only get one shot, do not miss your chance to blow / This opportunity comes once in a lifetime, yo. Eminem
- ❖ Everyone needs to believe in something. I believe I'll have another beer. Robert De Niro
- ❖ Anything you lose automatically doubles in value. Mignon McLaughlin, The Second Neurotic's Notebook
- ❖ It is easier to ask for forgiveness than to ask for permission. Grace Hopper
- ❖ The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. Albert Einstein
- ❖ We must be the change we wish to see in the world. Mohandas Gandhi
- ❖ True friends stab you in the front. Oscar Wilde
- ❖ True life is lived when change occurs. Leo Tolstoy
- ❖ We all go a little mad sometimes. Norman Bates, Psycho
- ❖ You may say that you had to do something, or that you were forced to, but whatever you do you do by choice. Only you have the power to choose for yourself. W. Clement Stone
- ❖ When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic but creatures of emotion. Dale Carnegie
- ❖ Before you embark on a journey of revenge, dig two graves. Confucius
- ❖ I know what it's like to want to die. How it hurts to smile. How you try to fit in but you can't. How you hurt yourself on the outside to try to kill the thing on the inside. Girl Interrupted
- ❖ It's true that we don't know what we've got until we lose it, but it's also true that we don't know what we've been missing until it arrives. Louis Hector Berlioz
- ❖ Judge a man not by the color of his skin but by the content of his character. Martin Luther King
- ❖ Do the thing you fear, and fear disappears. Steve Fillmore

NARRATIVE MODEL:

Personal Incident, Quote worked into an Introduction

Lost in a Wal-Mart Paradise

The ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius once wrote, “Curiosity leads to mischief and mischief only to catastrophe” (Confucius 1). When I was six I discovered the truth of these words—the day my mother took me for the first time to the commercial metropolis of Wal-Mart, where the curiosity of my young mind soon overwhelmed me. I had never seen so many people or such a large variety of cool stuff, all in one store. Camping gear, film developing, sunglasses, dog food, pet fish, stereos, videos, Oreos—on it goes.

All I could think of was how massive the toy department would be.

“Jordan, now you stay close to me or you’ll get lost,” my mom’s voice prophesied.

“I need tube socks, light bulbs, and a super-sized bottle of Cascade...oh, and don’t forget the nylons,” my mom rattled off the list. I, on the other hand, was preoccupied by the new surroundings, barely listening, feeling far-off primal call of the toy aisle with its faint beeps, whistles, and animated mechanical voices. As I followed my mother around, leeching to her hip, a ploy was already hatching in my tiny brain.

“This blouse is so cute,” my mom crooned.

Oh no.

It hadn’t been five minutes and we were already homing in on every six-year-old’s worst nightmare. Clothes. The eternal wait.

“I have to try this on. I won’t be long, two seconds, I promise!” As I reclined on the floor, watching seconds change to minutes, on the clock above the three-way mirrors, I lost complete interest in clothes.

I have to get out of here, I said to myself. I know I can find it...in just five minutes. I’ll be back before the next blouse. I continued convincing myself that though I was only six, I could maneuver through the labyrinthine aisle ways of this mega-store to reach my goal. GI Joe was calling, as were Slinkies and stuffed animals. I was ready to take action. Dressed in my bib overalls, I hopped up onto my light up tennis shoes and started flashing signals across a sea of tacky women’s apparel. As I neared the walkway, I could feel my excitement growing. I began taking that triumphant first step, and before my foot hit the ground an unknown assailant grabbed me from behind. I was caught! I timidly peered up, only to stare directly into the eyes of my mother. From the perturbed look on her face, I knew I was in for a lecture.

“Why can’t you ever listen? If you would have gotten away I would have never found you and someone could have taken you and your father and I would have had no clue where you were.” The veins in her temple twitched, and her face turned two shades shy of a maraschino. Finally, she took a breath. Feeling remorse, I vowed that I wouldn’t leave her side again. This promise, though simple and sincere, was amazingly hard to keep.

As soon as my mom turned her unsuspecting back, I returned to my plotting. Suddenly, opportunity knocked. A marketer's dream, my mother devoted her unwavering attention to an annoying salesman trying to huckster a blow dryer. Pro-Style 5000, with 200 watts of power and 16 temperature control modulations replete with safety shut-down switch. Was it a hairdryer or a space-age leaf-blower?

Didn't really matter. It was time to make my move. More carefully than before, I inched away. I felt more and more confident that I was going to reach pay-dirt this round. My confidence increasing to arrogant surety, and I began to trot down the aisles without notice. I moved from department to department, basking in my freedom, swinging past house-wares through toiletries and right into brassieres. An elderly lady with blue eye shadow glared at me as I brushed against her silky nothings. Darting left, I soon glanced upwards at unending tiers of everything from Tupperware to camouflaged hunting clothes. I think it's likely that my eyes took in a wider variety of life in that five minutes than I had seen in my prior six-year existence.

Then, out of nowhere, terror struck.

I don't know where I am, I whimpered inwardly, or how to get back! To the best of my limited knowledge, my mother was never going to find me and I was going to have to live there forever among blue-mascara scowls and claustrophobic racks of merchandise. I'd never get to play with my toys, my dog, my friends. My mother was nothing short of a sage. My curiosity had transformed itself into catastrophe.

As I wandered among house-wares, electronics, and the sports department, panic continued to flood my tense forty-five-pound body until, quite unexpectedly, I reached the toy aisle.

Stepping into paradise, all the worries of my situation were history. I was enthralled by the endless toy trucks, G.I Joes, and overstuffed animals. It truly was everything I expected and more. I opened up a full-size army man from his ornate packaging and reconnoitered on the frigid floor. I started my own make-believe war and waged bloody assaults on Barbies and Cabbage Patch Kids until my short attention span waned.

Where to now? I pondered. Leaving the aisle, I grabbed a huge stuffed teddy, so big that half of it trailed the floor behind me, picking up dust-bunnies along the way. I looked back only to see the mess of toy-wrappers that I had created and high-tailed it out of there.

Clutching my new plush friend, I waddled out again into the uncharted reaches of fear and freedom. Panic was settling back. Feverish, I took a left into some massive racks of discount clothing, and after five minutes, my Saving Grace appeared.

"Excuse me, sweetheart," a smiley Wal-Mart Greeter Girl intoned, "Are you lost?"

"Yes, I lost my mom and I'm really scared. Do you think you could help me find her?" Her hair swirled beautifully around her cheeks, and her eyes were soft green, like misty ocean spray. I did not know what love was back then, but Greeter Girl was the closest thing I'd come to it. The greeter agreed to help me find my mother. I grasped her comforting hand, my teddy in the other, and we began to peer through the herds of people. After ten then twenty then thirty minutes of frustration, she asked two other employees to join the hunt.

“Sure, we can help you, Jordy!” the comforting voice of a Senior Greeter said.

When almost an hour had elapsed and left us with no trace of my mom, we decided to escalate the search party. This time a security guard joined our convoy that was still going through aisle by aisle. Finally they brought out the last resort, the final straw, the end-all-be-all of finding someone in a 20,000 square foot store--The Loud Speaker.

“Would Denise Campbell please come to customer service? Denise Campbell to customer service,” the nasally voice boomed. Still, its impact was like a call from God. Within minutes, she came running with eyes bloodshot from crying. At that point I couldn’t tell whether the tears were from anger, joy, or a combination of both, but I did know that she was relieved to see me.

They say that everything in life comes at a price—that’s literally true at Wal-Mart. In some regards, my experience was worth it—even for my mother. The charitable Greeters let me keep the bear, which I still have today. When I returned home, it found my bed, with my mom’s words still resounding in my head, *Stay close to me or you’ll get lost*. Why didn’t I just listen?

I learned that day that my mother will always be there for me, but I also learned the fear of losing her forever. Perhaps she learned something at a price too that day—that you shouldn’t turn your back on your kids.

Before you know it, they’re gone.

Works Cited

Confucius. “The Quotations Page”, 16 October, 2006.<<http://www.quotationspage.com/subjects/curiosity/>>.

NARRATIVE MODEL:

Fictional Incident, Quote Presented as an Epigraph

The Happiest Man

“A man is always prey to his truths..”
Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus

The sun filtered through the cathedral of elms shading 205 S. Cherry Lane. Gerald shut off his alarm, which resonated with the power of a church organ. He did not believe in lingering, not even on weekends. The snooze alarm, he often instructed his wife Helen, was a crutch invented for the weak of will. It was religiously important to him that he should wake early, go for a run, and eat a breakfast in a timely manner. The careers of great athletes were in his hands. While he brushed his teeth, he had a fleeting thought of skipping his workout, but it was only fleeting.

He relished the thrust of warm water in the shower. He felt almost reborn. A newly-installed Bose system piped music into the shower bay as he luxuriated to a lilting lyric from a pop station that his wife often listened to. *Love me like you do, oh, love me like you do...oh, what are you waiting for?* He wondered what the singer meant by love. But this was no way to think. He loved his wife and his daughter. A man must love his family.

Gerald regarded himself in the mirror. He measured himself considerably attractive. He looked better than he did in college, through the fog of the bathroom mirror at least. In his early 50's too.

The smell of sausage ascended the high foyer as he navigated his way down the steps while executing a slick Windsor knot. Helen had already filled his plate. He liked this part of the routine. His daughter sat on the couch watching reruns of E! News while he read the sports page.

"I hope you don't mind," Helen smiled, "I planned a trip for Sarah and me this weekend. She shouldn't have to continue wearing clothes like this to school--and without a proper haircut." Gerald pondered this. He saw nothing wrong with her hair or her clothes. He decided not to put up a fight. Sarah and Helen were always traveling and shopping. His work provided them the opportunity to do so. This made him happy.

"Sounds good," he smiled back.

He thought maybe now would be a good time to interact with Sarah.

"Are you excited for the trip?"

"My hair's fine. She just wants to get away from you," she proclaimed.

Gerald looked up from a riveting story about the James contract he'd settled last night. LeBron had given him a full-body hug and a high-five afterward in the hotel lobby. What a man.

"Sarah, why would you say that?"

Sarah rolled her eyes and slipped outside to the Volvo to go to school. This hurt Gerald. He loved his wife. They were happy.

"Of course she didn't mean that, hon."

"I know, Helen."

He moved his face towards hers, but her cell phone rang and she disappeared out the door to take the call. Gerald wondered who she talked to all day when he was not around. She did not work, had few friends for that matter, and from her mother in Seattle she was estranged, in large part her own doing. He forgot about this whole line of inquiry after noting that the Cavaliers were a half-game out of first and felt quite content. Sarah must just be an unhappy child. She thinks an awful lot, he thought—kids these days; they grow up way too fast.

If Gerald's life were a cake, then his work was the icing. There was plenty of it. He met with his athletes and discussed their current contracts and which provisions would be ripe for renegotiation. He loved most working with basketball players. They were usually the happiest. And they all got along quite well with Gerald. He was, after all, good looking--and a very happy man. Happiness, he contended, was infectious once you had it. You just had to believe in it, just like those Tony Robbins books promised, and it could take you places.

He had a good time at lunch with some fellow co-workers that day. Over some jalapeno flatbreads and brews at Gaston's, they organized a golf retreat for the weekend. Gerald felt sometimes as if he could beat Tiger Woods, especially the post-super-model-Tiger whose career had landed in the dumpster with all that ugliness. The news playing on the vintage TV above the bar showed some breaking story about refugees fleeing Syria. Gerald looked away.

He was very content about his work. He felt as if he got a lot done. Other guys, like Ramirez and Newburg, just didn't seem to produce. And he was happier still to be receiving, on

a weekly basis, tickets to NBA games. He would have liked to attend a few with Helen, but he knew she wouldn't be interested. *Helen*, he whispered beneath a bite of jalapeno. He felt a twinge in his stomach and coughed into a napkin, but the discomfort gradually subsided and was entirely gone before he inked his final paperwork for the day.

It would have made more logistical sense for Gerald to take the freeway home, but he sometimes enjoyed driving the back-road. He never really understood why he preferred the back route. He never questioned it. Perhaps it eased the transition from work to home. Maybe it broke the routine and invited an element of spontaneity and unpredictability to the ennui of an otherwise predictable regimen. Like a bug to a light source, he never thought seriously about most of the things to which he was attracted. He tuned the Sirius radio to the Knicks game, enjoying the fact that the road was usually quiet at this time. So it was quite a surprise when a teenage boy decided to run across the yellow line in front of him in the hazy twilight. He couldn't swerve because of the median strip, so before he could react, he watched the body thud wetly off the windshield in slow motion before catapulting over the hood and onto the road behind him. Facing stiffly forward, Gerald did a 360-degree scan of the scene through his mirrors.

No one was around.

He pulled to the curb and got out.

He looked at the boy. It was difficult to tell through the blood and torn flesh, but he knew him. It seemed to be Sarah's boyfriend. He was a gentle kid. Tristan, he believed his name was—one of those names that kids seldom had when he was growing up. Gerald had no idea how to check for a pulse. But it was clear that the boy was dead. He was certain of that. He thought for a minute. He had never been in a life-death situation and was disoriented and confused, but his mind could not help weighing the peculiar outcomes and consequences. He knew that if he called the police he might go to jail—or at least make an unfortunate headline. From what he figured, this unpleasantness might even cause harm to the firm.

He heaved the body into the back of the Suburban. This was all quite an inconvenience. Blood was dripping everywhere, even over his golf clubs. It was going to be a chore to get the stains out before the retreat. With such thoughts replaying in his head, he fixed his eyes to the yellow line and drove home.

Helen had prepared New York strips and potatoes. She really should have had her own televised cooking show. Gerald could get her a real agent. The next Paula Dean, minus the racist stuff. He was relieved to be with his family. Sarah sat glued to her phone. He thought this was just a teenager thing. His wife smiled at him as he talked about his day and his lunch. He thought she was quite pretty but should probably either do something about those wrinkles or start exercising more. He never understood why so many people just let their bodies go.

He decided to spend his evening watching basketball. He liked to see the clients he represented in action. He knew virtually nothing about basketball; the fouls he deemed particularly confusing. He much preferred football. Gerald had quarterbacked his high school team. That experience, he posited, that long-term focus on a singular mission, had molded him into the man he was.

When Helen left the house later that evening during Sports-Center, Sarah sat by him on the Timberlake sofa.

"She's having an affair."

"Now honey, that's no way to talk."

He smiled and she stormed away. She was just angry, of course. Teenagers like to make up stories, Helen concluded the last time Sarah had told a lie such as this. Gerald thought for a moment about the red marks on his wife's neck. He couldn't remember whether they were from him. It didn't matter. He loved his wife.

"Sarah, I have something to show you."

He knew that he could not keep Trevor's condition from her forever. He escorted her to the garage and showed her that her boyfriend had died. He explained pragmatically that he had accidentally hit him. Sarah was not happy that Gerald hadn't called the police. He wondered why. It did not seem like the logical thing to do, he explained. She attempted to run inside to the phone, and he knew he had to stop her. He had ordered her to stop, to think, for Christ's sake, but she kept on going against all reason. He reached past a bottle of bleach for a hammer from the workbench and threw it in her direction, just to startle her into reality. It rotated in slow motion like a pinwheel when she started to turn, Gerald realizing before it left his fingers that he could not turn back time, hearing it glance off her forehead just north of the left eye before skewering the drywall above the dryer vent. He felt badly. He was surprised at the suddenness with which she fell.

He dragged the bodies into the house, with Sarah and her boyfriend slumped on opposite ends of the couch so that they could all three watch basketball together. She had never really wanted to do anything with him, so this was some consolation. He directed Sarah's face toward the screen, daubing the blood across her brow.

When it got to be eleven, Gerald turned off the set and said goodnight. How nice to be young again, he thought. He was disturbed that the kids had frowns on their faces, frozen in place like that in the vacant moonlight penciling through the blinds. He moved the corners of their mouths upward slightly and positioned Trenton's stiffening arm around her flaccid neck.

There.

Now they were happy.

Gerald proceeded with the evening routine that he found solace in. He lay in bed and checked off the weekly to-do list that Helen always left on the nightstand by the bed.

The Honeydew List, he called it—honey do this, honey, do that. The wordplay made him grin.

It was only Thursday, and he was happy knowing that he had finished the list earlier that evening by fixing the dripping faucet in the master bath. It's always the most expensive faucet that blows the cartridge first, he noted. Then, as he did every night, he said a prayer. He'd had a lovely day. And the thought of waking up tomorrow to do it all again!—he could hardly wait—and he closed his eyes, still smiling.

Work Cited

Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus: and Other Essays*. 1st ed. New York: Vintage Books, 12 Oct. 2015.

ESSAY MODEL:
Quote Worked into an Introduction
Get Real, Reality

As Bill Watterson once said in the *Complete Calvin and Hobbes*, “Reality continues to ruin my life” (Quotes). Every time we began to do something we love or want to do, time speeds up or other things prevent us from doing what we wanted. I want to be able to spend all night doing what I want to make up for the 7 hours spent enclosed in a classroom or curled up in a bus seat, but my body needs sleep. Reality sets in, so I sprawl out under a treasured fuzzy blanket and sleep for what seems like lifetimes. My reality twists and my dreams become outlandish, zany products of my imagination. When I wake, the truth still is odd and crazy. Reality prevents us from doing what we want forever, shatters our perceptions of the real world, and thwarts true genius.

I never can do what I want, without interruptions. The story ends. My sister wants someone (me) to listen to her talk about our “rude” brother who called her rabbit plump. Honestly, her rabbit is very... chunky, we’ll say. Well upholstered if you catch my drift. But, nonetheless, I waste fifteen minutes of my life listening to the horribleness of life. Then, I go to bed until my mom decides it’s time for me to get up for school, and that in itself ruins more of my life. It happens all the time. I’m reading an amazing book and my body decides it wants to sleep. I want to play my sax without stopping for air, my lungs rebel and start hacking, they beg for oxygen. My body has very real limitations, and there is absolutely nothing I can do about it. How am I supposed to live my life to the fullest without doing anything I like to do? I want to be up all night, listening to the hum of the cicadas, glimpsing the celestial bodies. My arms disagree. “It’s too cold. I have goose-bumps,” they say. Then, my eyes join in, whining in a bleary hum as I stumble over to my bed. “I’m closing down now. Hours are from 6:30 a.m. - 10:00 p.m. Please come back later. I’m busy right now. Go away!” You want to scream “Shut up!” but of course your mouth has taken a personal day, and won’t be back until tomorrow. I would love to skip school and drive to London, buy a couple books. But I’ll get punished if I skip, I don’t have enough to money to afford the price of gas, and you can’t even drive to London from the United States. Reality is destroying my life in so many ways. I long to fly. I feel like that would be cool, swooping around a couple hundred feet above the ground, dive-bombing pedestrians. It won’t ever happen though, because I’m too big-boned and too scared of heights to do what birds do best. I would need the mother of all feathers to lift me up. Besides, if everyone could fly, there wouldn’t even be pedestrians. There goes that idea. *Thanks Reality.*

Reality even affects our perceptions of objects. For years I thought all the stairs in the high school building had equal numbers of steps on both sides of the landing. Boy, was I wrong. In the real world there is an extra step or two on the one side. Who was cognizant of that? Apparently, everyone but me. Needless to say, I now count all the steps to make sure I’m not being conned into some other lie. Am I that disconnected, that I don’t even notice important thing like the number of steps? What other chicanery am I missing? Maybe the ceiling tiles change too, I mean, I wouldn’t be able to tell. Reality...I really hate you. My perceptions of the truth change overnight it seems. Not to complain or anything, but when did they start making dogs larger? I swear, last week they were twenty pounds of fluff and absolutely adorable. Nowadays, when our two barrel towards me at about 30 mph, I flee for my life and end up bowled over on the ground anyways. Our husky practically clears my shoulder every time he

springs into the wild blue yonder. When did they decide that being colossal was okay and grow up to be 80+ pounds? I don't remember signing any permission slips. I didn't even fill out any paperwork. Maybe I need to focus on my surroundings more. I can't miss much more than what I already am, now can I? Don't even try to prove me wrong, Reality.

In real life, I would like to be a genius, great at everything. I could solve world hunger, build a better mousetrap, and find a cure for cancer. Maybe if it's not a Monday, I can squeeze create world peace in my schedule between snack-break and lunch. Once reality sets in, though, I can barely keep houseplants alive much less control the world's food supply. My mousetrap would probably end up being categorized as inhumane, and cancer still wouldn't have a cure. If scientists with lengthy, impressive resumes can't do it yet, I don't have a chance. Next, the possibility of world peace- I'm going to classify it as a massive headache of a paradox. It would be impossible without killing off the human race, which just creates more death and destruction, which isn't peaceful. Killing isn't nice, you know. Between that and the mousetrap, I would be jailed to the end of time--which, by the way, is impossible, since Reality hates us and kills us off once we get about 80 or so. So, that's that. In truth, I'm just an average student, with a slightly abnormal obsession over books, a mediocre saxophone player, and okay driver. Nothing outstanding, nothing over the top, just unique. My singing is terrible, my ankles crack occasionally, and my hair ties itself into knots. I'm nothing special once reality comes in and messes up my fabulous life. I guess, I could possibly learn to tolerate you, Reality. It would be awfully boring, without problems and struggles. Preferably, not mine though... recollect that later, if you will, Reality- other human struggles. Maybe celebrities or hoards of rich families can deal with you up close and personal. But then again, maybe a loss of reality wouldn't be a good thing. Already, people interpret it to mean what they want it to mean. How many people already struggle because they don't fit in with it? What would happen if people inhabited conflicting worlds? Maybe a guy fancies you dead in his world, but obviously in your idea of reality, you exist as a spry and healthy being. I wonder what would happen in that case. How would they coalesce?

I guess it's a good thing that reality can't be manipulated. It's still messing up my life though, but maybe that's a good thing. No one controls it. We can only control the way we think of it. No matter what I do, the limitations of being alive come back to prevent me from doing what I want. Watterson's words ring true with everyone. Reality screws up our lives in so many ways. keeping life interesting even as it sucks the joy out of our very existence.

Work Cited

"Quotes About Calvin And Hobbes (42 Quotes)." *Quotes About Calvin And Hobbes (42 Quotes)*. N.p., n.d. Web. 13 Oct. 2016.

Use Vivid, Active Voice Verbs with Logical Verb Tense

Which is more stylish?

Oily blue smoke came out of the lawnmower.

The lawnmower farted oily blue smoke.

Most readers can sense the superiority of *fart* over *came*, just as they understand in some way that it is more lively to say that “The dog shuffled across the street on three legs” than it is to say that “The dog moved across the street on three legs.”

IDENTIFYING VERBS

To incorporate lively verbs into your writing, you must be able to identify a verb. Simply ask, “Can I do it?” If you can do it, then the word *might* be a verb.

How many of these words might possibly be verbs?

RUN
PREFER
RADICAL
TALL
FAST
RISE
YELLOW
DUDE
DELICIOUS
SMASH

REPLACING WEAK VERBS WITH LIVELY ONES

Using a thesaurus can help improve the liveliness of your verbs, but beware. Use your thesaurus to help you find a word that you have already seen or used but just cannot think of at the moment. Do not use thesaurus-sounding words that are totally foreign to you and that you are very likely to misuse. If you have written “The problem *got* worse” and think that *exacerbate* is an improvement because it is a big, unusual word [*I exacerbated the problem.*], then you may not always hit the mark. It is more of a sure thing to say that “*The problem twisted itself into something really ugly.*” Face it, you know what *twisted* means, and it sounds more poetic than *exacerbate* anyway, right?

VERB TENSE

While it is vital that your verbs are lively, it is also important that you keep them in the same tense when possible and logical to do so. Writing “*Martin Luther King was a great leader and works toward racial equality*” suffers from an unnecessary and illogical tense shift, especially since King is now dead. Logic demands that we shift tense sometimes, however, as in “*Martin Luther King was a great leader, lives on in the hearts of many Americans, and will always be considered among our nation’s greatest unifying forces*. This sentence demands the use of all three major verb tenses, past, present, and future. When possible, aim for verb tense consistency, realizing that tenses are meant to shift when you need them to.

One convention to note, however. Literary essays are usually written in present tense.

Improve the verb vividness and tense in the paragraph below. Aim for past tense throughout, unless there is a logical reason to shift into present or future tense.

The waves *were* loud against the rocks as I *sit* peacefully on the dark shore. The flocks of gulls that *move down* through the air toward the foaming water intrigue me. The water *is cool* against my cheek as a tiny shrimp boat *goes across* the horizon. A memory of my childhood at the beach *gets into* my mind, a memory of when my father *went into* deep waters with us for blue marlins. We *were* like kids back then, but as time *went by* we *became* farther apart.

ACTIVE VOICE VERBS

When given the opportunity, always have the subjects of your sentences doing something—they should be active, not passive. Active verbs create sentences that require fewer words and sound so much smoother than passive verbs:

PASSIVE VOICE VERB: Oily blue smoke was farted by the lawnmower. It was cursed at by the bald man.

ACTIVE VOICE VERB: The lawnmower farted oily blue smoke. The bald man cursed at it.

How would we rephrase this sentence in active voice?

The class was exasperated by the teacher’s odd-ball jokes.