

:cut out + mixed up:

an exercise in descriptive writing

1: cut out

While **Dexter** hunts, decapitates and collects blood-samples of his targets to satiate his grotesque sense of civic duty, a nasty serial killer may chop a victim to pieces and keep a toe-nail as a sick trophy. While a scientist deconstructs the ideas of age old sages to construct new theories, a word wizard - you - ravages the myriad volumes of endless words, phrases, and sentences and stashes the prized pieces somewhere deep within their infinite cognitive hard-drive.

It is a duty. A trophy. An instinctual calling of writers to blend, mix, and transform the words of those "other" writers who inspire, disgust, and disturb our sensibilities with language.

- a. Mine the volumes before you for wild words, funky phrases, and sticky, seductive sentences. But instead of prizing them away, cut them out and glue them on the proverbial blank slate. Fill in the remaining white space with images.
- b. Let instinct reign and rationality wither for a beat. Walk around and look at the colour and spice (words, figures of speech) of your fellow word wizards.
- c. Make a list of words, phrases, and sentences that jump out at you.

2: mixed up

TASK: write a **DESCRIPTIVE LEAD**, based on a powerful image, using fresh/vivid/figurative language and a variety of sentence lengths/types and punctuation strategies.

- a. Examine the list of "borrowed words/phrases". Let the images that pop into your mind help you search for a powerful visual/picture.
- b. Cut out an image (magazine/newspaper/website) that has multiple possibilities for descriptive writing (i.e. lots of detail, action, people or general 'weirdness').
- c. Use the worksheet to brainstorm as many adjectives, adverbs, verbs, nouns, phrases and ideas as possible. Do not restrict your ideas to just one interpretation of the image.
- d. Insert/slot the "borrowed words/phrases" into the appropriate categories.
- e. Ruminates on the mass of words for a *bit* and then write for 30mins -60mins.
- f. Do a **quick edit**. Focus on experimenting with the following:
 - "borrowed" language - use a minimum of five words/expressions/sentences from your own and peer cut-outs.
 - fresh/original (non-cliche) language
 - vivid + concrete language
 - figurative language (especially metaphor, personification, alliteration, juxtaposition)
 - various sentence lengths/types + punctuation strategies
- g. Create a title. Word process the lead. **Send a double-spaced, courier, 12-font copy** to **baldnme@yahoo.ca**.

3: revise:edit:self-evaluate

- a. Work with fellow word wizards to revise and edit each other's writing. There will be three. It will be a triangle.
- b. Read each piece once. Read it critically. Edit (i.e. grammar), revise (i.e. style) and suggest.
- c. Each editor MUST provide a constructive suggestion on each of the following:
 - a modification/alteration on rhetorical devices
 - a suggestion to enhance fresh/original language
 - a suggestion to enhance vividness and concreteness
 - a modification/alteration on sentence lengths/types
 - a modification to enhance punctuation
- d. Write your name at the end of the piece.
- e. Collect the edits and revisions and complete your final draft. Add the image to the submission.
- f. Fill in the EVALUATION (find a copy at EWC blog) based on how well you think you accomplished each expectation. Answer each question - with detail - and give yourself a mark.
- g. Hand-in the FINAL DRAFT, each edited copy (with names) and a copy of the evaluation.

:brainstorm:

adjectives	adverbs	verbs
nouns	phrases	images in my head

:EVALUATION:

name

focus	comments	mark
how well can you generate ideas to write something original?		1 2 3 4 5
how well can you experiment with the weapons of mass literature to write an organized, clear, original and engaging piece of writing?		2 4 6 8 10
how well can you revise, edit and offer constructive ideas/suggestions to other writers?		1 2 3 4 5
how well can you revise, edit and modify your own writing to make it clear and engaging?		2 4 6 8 10
how well did you improve your writing during this process, as well as since you started writing?		1 2 3 4 5

comments