

TENSION & YEARNING

Write dialogue/monologue that will make the reader hate/dislike/be annoyed by that character.

I see him lying on the street, slumped against a dull lightpole, from far away: he holds a piece of cardboard in his hands. I do not even need to read its shoddily marked text - he is needy, begging, miserable, pitiful. But others do not pay him any attention: they walk in large circumferences around his body, the tip-tap of leather high heels speeding up, circumnavigation past the undesirable. It is a sad state of affairs. I know what I must do. I pat myself around for my wallet. It is not in the right pocket of my trousers, nor in the left one. Ah, in the inner upper pocket of my overcoat. I walk directly towards him, unlike the others, the others who ignore and shun. I do not ignore. I notice. As I approach him, I think he smiles - no, he beams with radiance and hope, even through the soot and grime on his face. As he should - for I must be the first person today, or even the week, to give him my time, my attention. I give him a thinly stretched smile in reply. I take two crisp dollars from my wallet and drop them on his lap. He does not respond: he continues looking at my knees. Passerbys look at me: let them look, let them know that I am not afraid to associate with these sorts of people, let them know that this is the way to treat the lessers of society: with kindness, support, generosity, and a smile. I add another dollar to the pile, adjust my scarf, and continue down the street. There are more for me to help.

Write a scene where a character has a conflict with themselves/an abstract entity. This can be in the form of rumination or talking to a mirror/diary. You can use tropes like devils/angels on shoulders, just try to keep in mind the idea of shared information, both parties are wise to each other's desires.

I was you in a previous life, I said. You was I in a later life, I said. Yes, I said. Yes, you said. You are in me, and I am in you, you said. I said the same. We looked at each other until our eyes rolled inside out. When our eyes were looking into our eyesockets, I tasted your bitter tongue, coming up from my stomach into the cavity of my mouth. My two hands traced circles around the other two. Yes, you say, go on. Yes, I say, I will. Your feet slam into the bedpost. I feel the pain in my stomach. I suddenly exhale. The air leaves your lungs. My lungs feel parched, dry. You lie there. My arm goes numb. Your right leg twitches. My eyes roll back out.

It takes me some time to remember, lying there, that you are not there anymore.

WORD CHOICE & IMAGE

Take 5 minutes to write a scene similar to Aveyard's that provokes feeling and emotion. Combine sentence structure and specific words to communicate what is happening in the scene.

Too much air is flowing into my lungs - jamming my throat, the consistency of dense bread. It reshapes the membrane of my organs: it pressures blood through my veins. The last thing I see before I go is the dented trunk of the car - dirtied, bloodied.

CHARACTER

Write a small passage introducing us to a character only using descriptions of how your narrator is being affected by them. Only through your narrator's point of view.

He is a curious boy: a sharp set of eyes. I saw his eyes clearly, up-front, because a few seconds after I had laid my eyes on him he looked right back, and shortly after I looked away. But I still felt those eyes piercing into the side of my head, even though I knew he wasn't looking at me anymore. After some time, I looked again in his direction, only to find that he was already looking at me. He had been staring at me all along, he must have been. The instructor asked a question; he responded, with great pause and pride. That was like him. He walked over to the whiteboard and wrote down something in propositional logic. It was probably correct. But I knew that he was looking at me the whole time, even though I had my head down.

Write about a grieving creative (writer, artist, painter, musician, photographer, model, actor, etc.) and explore the ways in which they would creatively/toxically cope with their pain?

He was a brilliant animator of the body: he filled his face with varied emotive expressions, his arms with humanistic gestures, his legs with lifelike walking and running movements. When he was in front of the camera, it was almost like he was a real person. If someone watched his movies, they'd think he was a real person, not an actor. But he grew old and entertainment grew younger, and his camera was stolen from him. Without the camera in front of him, recording his movements, transcribing his bodily motions into image and sound, he wasn't a real person anymore: just an actor, an unanimated body looking to fill any space of reality, any possible space at all.

Decades passed: his knees weakened, his mind dulled, his hair grayed, his voice hoarsened. All those years he was never ever a real person: only the shell of an actor in becoming.

He decided: he must act a reality. He acted acting: he lived the reality of all those empty years as actor-in-becoming. And several decades later he acted his enactment of reality. And so on, he enacted his

enactments: immortalized in the infinite recursive stack, becoming fuller in his emptiness in every iteration. He is still there, animating his inanimated body for the camera of the textual: he lives here, along the lines of the text.

Write an interaction between two or more characters where there is some sort of conflict between them due to differing understandings of what they're talking about (maybe they are stubborn and unwilling to see the others' perspective, or maybe they come around by the end, up to you!). Try and emphasize the ways in which each character in the scene informs the tension that exists due to their differing understandings of the topics being spoken about.

"What's up?" - "Not much." - "... " - "How about you?" - "... " - "... " - "I'm good." - "Nice." - "... " - "... " - "So what's up?" - "Well..." - "... " - "... " - "... " - "... " - "... " - "Come on, what's up?" - "... " - "... " - "I'm not sure." - "Okay, are you sure?" - "... " - "... " - "Yes, I think so." - "... " - "... " - "Alright." - "... " - "Are you really sure?" - "... " - "... " - "... " - "Yes, I am sure." - "... " - "... " - "No, you're not. What's going on?" - "Nothing." - "Liar." - "I'm not a liar." - "Yes, you are. Tell me what's going on." - "I said, nothing." - "Liar. Fucking liar. Tell me." - and then I said fine and I told him how he wasn't paying me enough and how it wasn't even about the money and how just because he was paying me didn't mean he could control me like that and do whatever he wanted with me and how the only reason I did this in the first place was for his filthy money and how I didn't even want his filthy money now and how he could take his filthy check and burn it and how people like him were scum on this wretched Earth and I left that filthy place as soon as I could.

"..."

ENERGY

Write a scene where a conflict happens in or near the end. Then, when you're done, go back and write an introduction to the scene, where you try to hint towards the conflict/resolution without giving anything important away.

Conflict. The wind screams, the sonic pitch of air traveling too fast. His jacket balloons, expands, contracts, gestures urgently and aimlessly: a tissue falling through empty space. That cursed body is fated to fall forever - even the ground refuses to meet it.

Precursor. He is a condemned man; a wrongdoer, a criminal. He wears his guilt across his face, although one does learn to be a convincing actor in imprisonment. He was apprehended soon after he had pushed that woman off the building by nearby policemen - ingested and excreted by the state justice system. Unforgivable, the judge had said. Disgusting, the woman's husband had spat. Why is mama gone, the two young children

whispered. A parasite of society, they had said. Now he stands at the gallows; the noose rests rough. A parasite no more.

Write a fast-paced action scene where a character is driven by an impulse. The more misguided the better!

The sharp end punctures, then glides across tissue and tendon: the flesh encloses, parts, makes way. The pain pierces; implosion of the senses. The cool steel coats with warm viscosity. It rests for a moment, lodged - paralyzed. Soon it exits where it came in, faster than its entrance: it plunges out into the sticky air, dripping in burgundy paint. The sharp end punctures a foreign body: it glides through, then out; then in, out; in, out; in, out; in, out, in, out; in, in, deeper, out, faster; tendons, organs; in, out, out, higher, plunged in, deeper; tissue, skin; out, in; in, out; flesh; the psychosexual movement of maniacal death. At last it falls onto the freshly painted concrete; the smooth metal chips; it becomes jagged. One body keeps it company; the other retreats away.

Write a short scene where two or more characters are in two different locations, one juxtaposing the other, keeping in mind the change in energy in each setting.

The stars are out tonight. Bright, but not too brilliant; dulled, too accustomed to praise - tired.

The forest sways dark; quiet only in imagination, too loud. Too many sounds.

A body, sitting by the river. Two legs.

A body, standing by the forest clearing. Two legs.

A body, standing by the river. Two legs.

A body, standing by the river. Two legs.

A body, crumpled over the river. One leg.

A body, at the bottom of the river. No legs.

A body, running through the forest. Four legs.

A body, in the sky. No legs.

INSIGHT

After seeing the idea of insight being portrayed in the book Jane Eyre, write a paragraph or two in which you use the three pillars of insight — tension, yearning and subtext — clearly throughout your piece. Highlight the tension in green, the yearning in yellow, and the subtext in pink. Explore the idea of what the story is saying without saying.

They told me not to get close, not to look at it too long, not to touch it. They told me it was sacred, that it was holy, that its purity held all the world together. They told me why are you looking for so long, look away, only a

few seconds at a time, the energy is too strong. They told me stop looking, stop getting closer. They said stop, stop, stop now, stop, stop. They pull out their knives and say stop, stop, stop now, stop, stop. They scream do not touch it, pull your hands back, stop reaching forwards, stop it now. They raise the metal blades high in the air, muscles tense. But the ground begins shaking and the knives flow into silvery liquid, and all dissolves into space until space itself collapses.

(Highlighting is preserved in the Canvas post)

Write a scene with a fantastical element — magical realism, sci-fi, even just an incredibly unlikely event, or something else entirely — and use it to explore an aspect of our mundane reality.

Metal shines off round arcs along stretches of hot pavement. The simmering air holds space still; action potentials in the static frame - tires perched, engines humming. Movement is inverted; temporality corrupted. An hour passes faster than a minute. Slowly, the tires begin to melt; burnt rubber coats the concrete, metal frames sink to the ground. Coagulating rubber bubbles and boils, spills over, runs wild; moves synchronously, hardens. The silky metal erupts into the drenched ground: fills it full, pierces it whole. The people inside begin screaming, screaming, but she does not hear them, and the vehicles continue to sink into the skillet; remnants of boiled organs and curdled blood stain the metallic rubber. She takes a handful. Yes, this will do, this will do fine. Power sources are not easy to come by these days.

Come up with a character who has a particular worldview or outlook, then write a scene in which that worldview is revealed entirely through action and dialogue.

“You shouldn’t have done that.”

“Done what?”

“Saying that. In front of them? Do you not know the rules?”

“Of course I know the rules.”

“And you still said it?”

“What, that ————?”

“Lower your voice.”

“ ”

“You’ll never find work; you’ll be exiled, removed.”

“So be it.”

“ ”

SETTING & TONE/VOICE/MOOD

Write a scene in which the setting juxtaposes a character's situation/mood they're in. Let there be at least two characters, character A and character B, in which character B is part of the "opposing" setting, making things more difficult for character A.

Squirrels rush through the green grass. Little droplets of dew speckle the leaves, but not too much -- golden dogs laugh and prance, and their owners share tall glasses of sophisticated alcoholic drink and chat amiably. An adorable little girl hits the pinata on the first try. Candy spills out, and ecstatic children rush to grab them, but none of them fight, and each comes away with exactly eight delicious pieces. Under the old Japanese cherry blossom, a beautiful man proposes to an even more beautiful woman, and she beams. The two embrace, to the smiles and applause of the audience. The ring glistens under the gold of the sun. A young boy and girl, both teenagers, smile at each other. They know that they'll be like this in a few years. By the playground, a woman hugs her husband and tells him that their first baby will be a beautiful little girl. He cries and kisses her. An old woman with elderly white hair tied into a neat bun watches the excited warbles and shouts of small children riding a slide for the first time. She reminisces about her husband, who fought in all the wars, to her grandson, who eagerly listens to all her stories, every time she tells them. It begins to snow, and the little children whoop and build snowmen, each perfectly proportioned. The teenagers have a snowball fight, but the snow is fluffy enough such that no one gets hurt or wet. Santa's sled hovers over the air and presents wrapped in vivid holiday wrapping slowly fall to the ground. Little children rush over and find teddy bears, toy trains, and other Christmas paraphernalia. They jump up and down and run over to the fathers and mothers, who wink at each other and say yes Santa is sure great isn't he. A flock of storks drop babies from the sky, and desperate single women rush to catch them. Each of them beams when they see how fulfilled they will be with the remainder of their maternal lifetimes. The old woman coughs. Once, twice. Three times. Her grandson breaks his smile and looks at her, concerned. Four times. Five times. A hacking cough, lungs crippled. She collapses, her frail arms spasm, her leg jolts. Her head hits the floor, where it splinters apart into a gruesome crimson piece of modern art. --- The director shakes his head, stops the scene. Everyone returns to their original places. The stage hands move the old woman's body off the stage, and another old woman replaces her location. Let's try it again, the director says.

Refer to the excerpt in the presentation. Then, answer the following questions:

- *How does Peck use setting, voice, tone, and mood all together in this excerpt? How does this affect your experience of the text as a reader? (No right answer!)*
- *Is there a place (real or fictional/imagined) you feel you know well enough to write within and not just about (similar to image craft concept) like Peck does?*

- *If yes, brainstorm about this place. What are the sounds? The smells? What does the air feel like? What are the people there like—are there people there? How do they talk? Include this brainstorming in your discussion post.*

1. Peck's voice, as others have noticed here, paints a vivid picture of the setting. The narration between the characters has a rustic charm of the small-town American South: "My grandson's in a gang, so you don't want to mess with him. He's meaner than he looks." -- I can hear the sly drawl. Same with Earnie: "Naw you never" -- "Naw" -- even in the absence of much dialogue, I get an idea of what Earnie is like and the function he plays in this narrative. But even beyond the narration, Peck himself shades the narration with a similar charm: "He was a big, tall galoot of a kid with narrow eyes. His gaze kept flitting to the shotgun" -- a very particular, easygoing but observant description.

2. The ceiling arches high; swathes of tall clear windows fall from the sky. But even in the open space, the air is cold, frigid. Young men and women sit alongside a long wooden table spanning the length of the room, in rigid posture -- hands in lap, legs crossed -- and in rigid attire -- dress shirts and pants for the boys, assorted multicolor dresses for the girls. The laughter and banter is orchestrated: we're all reading the cue cards, when to laugh and groan and just be quiet, even though no one's holding them up. Everyone's handsome or pretty (but not both), with carefully combed hair and mascara laden eyes and sharp facial features and aesthetically proportioned noses and makeup-caked cheeks. (Everyone was given permission to be handsome and pretty, but again, not both.) We act in Synecdoche: we perform for no one but ourselves, and under the pretense that we are making the world better by doing so.

The narrator remarks that all the holiday trappings of the neighborhood(s) make them feel disparaged. This is a particularly strong and specific word choice: what kind of tone does this cast across the passage for you, and why?

There is a strong sense of distance channeling through the description of the festively-decked neighborhood: this creates an immanent tension, a separation from the event which is itself immanently characterized by its drawing in of all. The description doesn't hold back at all on describing the holiday decorations, but it is the cold distance from which they are viewed which makes me see the alienation: "the light just gets pulled away", even though there are lights everywhere.

You could say that mood is the overall atmosphere or emotional resonance of a piece. What is your interpretation of the story's mood in excerpt 2?

The excerpt is tricky, complicated: a character who seeks to project fault from herself to the world, whose theft is a small part of a much longer campaign to establish oneself as the progenitor rather than the twisted orphan of the world. The character is motivated, driven, a determinist: both an observer and a maker of her own history

Write a short passage that demonstrates use of strong, surprising voice/tone. It can be sardonic and dry like “Eileen,” or another tone of your choice. (Strong, surprising voice/tone: clear and intentional.)

A scratch to the head. Itching, searching. Soft hands digging against soft hair. Searching, searching. I’m not sure what he’s looking for because there’s nothing in that vacuous head. Looking, reading. Slow, like his wit. Stopping, like he always does. Leaning back and stretching, two thick arms spread wide. A show-off, a show-boat, too confident. Overconfident. Drinks from his water bottle, which is much larger than what any normal person would carry around. Dribbles some water onto the table. Incapable of oral motor control. Wipes it with his sleeve, like an unhygienic child. Reads two more lines but then stops again because he’s incapable of prolonged intellectual stimulation. Crosses two hands in the front and raises his sweater high, pulling up his t-shirt until it struggles against his chest. The hem falls down when the sweater’s off. He knew what he was doing. A flir. Show-off, show-boat.

NARRATIVE SHAPE, STRUCTURE, & PATTERN

Write a short passage where the narrative structure is not completely linear. Intertwined experiences, memories, telling a past story from present view, etc.

I’ll ask him if he wants to go out.

He’ll say no.

I’ll look at him. He won’t look back.

I’ll wave at him. He’ll pause for a little bit, nod.

I’ll walk towards him. He’ll become visibly uncomfortable.

I’ll say hey how are you doing. He’ll say nothing much, like they all do.

I’ll keep on standing there until he says something less stupid. He’ll look at his feet, make noises through his nose.

I’ll tell him that he’s stupid, that he’s socially awkward. He’ll glare and mutter shut the fuck up under his breath.

I’ll demand what did you say you fucker. He’ll flare up and clock me hard straight on the nose.

I’ll clutch my face in pain and give him a shark kick in the knees, then another. He’ll crumple to the floor, a sack of disjointed bones.

I’ll ask him if he wants to go out.

He says no.

Write a few paragraphs where the narrator is not the same person as the main character, but someone they know. If you want to get even more specific to Groff's story, write a few paragraphs about an older family member as a child (or perhaps a younger family member as an adult!). Now write the same story where the main character is the narrator. Notice the ways in which each perspective changes and shapes the story. Does each passage have a different tone? Meaning? Shape?

Real horrorshow. Viddy in and out, sploosh, the krassney vada flows out everywhere, yes, malenkey first and bolshkey next, real horrowshow, very good. Put your hand nice on that wood handle, real strong, don't rub your rooko all over your grimy litzo you piggish sviney, keep all the vada in the vada. Raise it high, real veesockey, then plunge it in again. The krassney moloko spurts, bubbles, yes, put it in the chashk, quickly, faster, before it runs smooth. Slooshy the screams. It's a real musickey concert. Don't stop, don't stop, why are you stopping you meeshey gloobzhey? Eedtey, go, stop, don't point it at my litzo you gloopey idiot, put your rookey down, stop, stop.

I stab once, twice. The internal pressure ruptures pasty skin. My hands are painted in crimson. Traces streak my shirt. Very good, he says, keep on going, small first and big next, raise it high, go in again, listen to the screams. Disgusting, what a little pig of violence he is, I raise my dagger high and push it into his face and leave it there, now he is quiet, good. Real horrorshow.

Write a short story (length up to you) whose form is taken from somewhere outside the realm of traditional create writing (tv episodes, dictionary definitions, autopsy notes, grocery list, instruction booklet etc.) The weirder the better! Don't come in with too many ideas of what you want to happen but allow the format to guide the narrative as you go. You might be surprised by the story you end up telling.

Grocery list

- Six tomatoes
- Two bottles of ketchup
- Baking soda
- Cornstarch
- Corn syrup
- Red food coloring
- Yeast
- Two large knives
- Six small onions
- Three chocolate popsicles
- A knife sharpener
- Two dark sunglasses

- A blowtorch
- A pitchfork
- Two heavy-duty cloths
- Dark, sound-absorbing fabric
- Thick rope, at least 10 feet
- Zip ties
- Two bandanas
- Salt
- A paring knife
- Pig liver
- Two large black trash bags
- A teddy bear -- small, with sad eyes

Please have it delivered at 11:00 PM tonight. The door is open, please leave groceries inside.

WRITER (IMPLIED AUTHOR) & AUDIENCE (IMPLIED READER)

“Omelas” blurs the line between writer/implicit author and audience/implicit reader. Consider the excerpts on slide 6. Given that this is a story that works in allegory for social commentary, what are some ways the writer might lengthen the distance between themselves and the implied author, and what sort of effect might that have on the commentary being made?

Allegorical fiction is always political, and the project of politics is always about power. It is true in all fiction, but particularly for allegorical fiction, that the reader understands their own situation within the frameworks and systems of power which are explicated in the text. If the reader fails to do so, the text risks incorporation into the dominant hegemonic ideology: neutralization via acknowledgement, via repetition – we say it and read it enough that it loses any revolutionary potential. This is why the brilliant critical theorists always note that the true sign of ideological power is not intellectual censorship but rather intellectual saturation. By distancing the implied author from themselves, the author complicates and ruptures the traditional easily assimilable relationship between narrator, reader, author.

Identify a specific audience you would like to target and then write a piece targeted directly at them. This could be readers of a food blog, a radio program (political?), a short story for YA. Try to make it clear who you are writing for.

The Ministry's Intersectionality project is almost complete: a campaign to redirect all roads in the city such that they intersect in the center. Relocating our avenues of transportation and movement towards an intersectional model, the Ministry had said, allows us to make our city more connected. It was always meant to be connected all along. There is already significant economic activity occurring in regions which were previously isolated or otherwise difficult to access from the center of the city: luxury fashion stores and high-end restaurants are populating previously desolate streets. The culture is more vibrant, bright, and beautiful. Although the Ministry is encountering minor problems with eviction and protests by the original inhabitants, this sort of Luddite resistance is to be expected. The Ministry expects for full integration by the end of the month.

(Not sure how clear this is, but I tried my hand at writing a more explicit political allegory: understanding how intersectionality as political dogma can overlook the nuances and complexities of conflict and (anti-)identity, and which can function as a hegemonic system even when it tries to work against these.)

How do you interpret or reconcile the actual Writer's context between the conflicting perspectives/duality of two implied authors — that is, the same story with two separate characters' POV? Think: do the two characters tell their stories to the same implied audience?

It is an interesting question of whether two implied authors can write to the same implied audience. I am inclined to suggest that the answer is no: that two implied authors might *desire* to write to the same audience, but that epistemic difference is irreconcilable and that there forms an unsurpassable gap, a critical cut, in the audience. But this is what characterizes the experience of reading unreliable and epistemically diverse narration: we begin to feel uneasy, that something is not quite there, that truth is not only accessible but that even its presence might not be guaranteed.

Write a short piece with two conflicting narrators, or two different implied authors. You can differentiate them however you want (i.e. gloomy and sunshine, brave and scared, two characters with different beliefs or cultures that clash). The point of this exercise is to have two different underlying messages at the same time. And each character will appeal to a different reader.

I reach out my hand to him. How are you doing, I offer.

I look at the outstretched hand. I pause a little bit, enough to make him doubt himself. I grasp it, more firmly than he grasps mine, and say I'm fine and how are you.

He waits too long before he responds. He says he's fine.

He doesn't respond. I resume reading.

He returns to reading. Perhaps he is not one for socialization. Or perhaps I have already irked him in some way.

The pages rise and fall softly under my fingers.

I wonder what I could have done differently.

He is still standing in front of me. Nice to meet you, I smile at him, and he nods and turns away. Bizarre.

Nice to meet you, he says finally. Alright, I'll leave.

How soft his hands were.