

## PLAIN AND ORNATE STYLES

Adapted from: *An American Rhetoric* by William W. Watt

The plain and ornate styles are both used frequently; one is not better or worse than the other; neither is good or bad until writing makes it so.

### Passage #1

I ate the ham and eggs and drank the beer. The ham and eggs were in a round dish - the ham underneath and the eggs on top. It was very hot and at the first mouthful I had to take a drink of beer to cool my mouth. I was hungry and I asked the waiter for another order. I drank several glasses of beer. I was not thinking at all but read the paper of the man opposite me. It was about the break through on the British front. When he realized I was reading the back of his paper he folded it over. I thought of asking the waiter for a paper, but I could not concentrate. It was hot in the cafe and the air was bad. Many of the people at the tables knew one another. There were several card games going on. The waiters were busy bringing drinks from the bar to the tables. Two men came in and could find no place to sit. They stood opposite the table where I was. I ordered another beer. I was not ready to leave yet. It was too soon to go back to the hospital. I tried not to think and to be perfectly calm. The men stood around but no one was leaving, so they went out. I drank another beer. There was quite a pile of saucers now on the table in front of me. The man opposite me had taken off his spectacles, put them away in a case, folded his paper and put it in his pocket and now sat holding his liqueur glass and looking out at the room. Suddenly I knew I had to get back. I called the waiter, paid the reckoning, got into my coat, put on my hat and started out the door. I walked through the rain up to the hospital. ERNEST HEMINGWAY, *A Farewell to Arms*

Use a T-Graph and list what you *know* from this excerpt and what you *infer* based on this excerpt.

What is the *average* word count per sentence? (You don't need to count exactly - estimate. )

How might you describe the rhythm of the sentences?

What is the only phrase which would not 'fit' into the pattern of *everyday* speech?

Can you find any figurative language?

### Example:

Know	Infer
Narrator ate ham, eggs, drank beer	hungry, thirsty, skipped breakfast—beer for breakfast?, having breakfast for dinner,

### Passage #2

And for a moment all the silver space was printed with the thousand forms of himself and Ben. There, by the corner in from Academy Street, Eugene watched his own approach; there by the City Hall, he strode with lifted knees; there, by the curb upon the step, he stood, peopling the night with the great lost legion of himself - the thousand forms that came, that passed, that wove and shifted in unending change, and that remained unchanging Him.

And through the Square, unwoven from lost time, the fierce bright horde of Ben spun in and out its deathless loom. Ben, in a thousand moments, walked the square; Ben of the lost years, the forgotten days, the unremembered hours; prowled by the moonlit facades; vanished, returned, left and rejoined himself, was one and many - deathless Ben in search of the lost dead lusts, the finished enterprise, the unfound door - unchanging Ben multiplying himself in form, by all the brick facades entering and coming out.

And as Eugene watched the army of himself and Ben, which were not ghosts and which were lost, he saw himself - his son, his boy, his lost and virgin flesh - come over past the fountain, leaning against the loaded canvas bag, and walking down with rapid crippled stride past Gant's toward [downtown] in young pre-natal dawn. And as he passed the porch where he sat watching, he saw the lost child-face below the lumpy ragged cap, drugged in the magic of unheard music, listening for the far - forested horn-note, the speechless almost captured pass-word. The fast boy-hands folded the fresh sheets, but the fabulous lost face went by, steeped in its incantations. -THOMAS WOLFE, *Look Home ward Angel*

Use a T-Graph and list what you *know* and what you *infer*

Estimate-the average word length per sentence.

**How** many instances of **repetition** can you identify?

Can you find any figurative language?

Which specific characteristics of each passage identify the style as either plain or ornate?