

Style Exercise 1

Begin by reading “ARCS_Proverb.pdf.” It’s under the “Style Exercise Readings” subheading in the “Content” section of our D2L site.

You have two options for beginning the exercise. Option 1: find a proverb about writing. Option 2: invent your own proverb about writing.

Begin by stating your found or invented proverb. From there, follow the steps outlined in *ARCS*: paraphrase or explain, give proof, supply testimony, and compose an epilogue. The final exercise should be approximately 400 words. I am fine with you approaching the proverb seriously or satirically. Bring a hard copy as well as a digital version (.doc or .docx file) of your exercise to class on Wed., Jan. 25. We’ll begin class by uploading the exercises to a dropbox on D2L. During class, everyone will read their proverbs and amplifications aloud.

Style Exercise 2: Description

Begin by reading “ARCS_Description.pdf” under the D2L “Course Readings” tab.

Your task for this style exercise is to describe something. You can choose an object, an event, a scene, a person. The only restrictions are these: (1) choose something you can observe directly—not a photograph, a YouTube video, etc. (let me know if you have a specific reason for wanting an exemption here); (2) choose something you can show the class as or after you describe it. In other words, I want the class to have a chance to compare your description to at least some representation of the thing you’re describing. The easiest options are probably to take a photo and upload it to the dropbox along with your exercise or, if you’re describing something portable, to bring it to class with you. Your description should be 400-500 words and uploaded to the corresponding dropbox folder by the beginning of class Mon., Feb. 20.

As with the proverb exercise, we’ll spend part of class reading the exercises aloud, so bring a copy (printed or digital) that you can read from.

One additional note: The *ARCS* section is from the end of a chapter on the role of emotion in rhetoric. The authors draw connections between description and emotion via the concept of *energeia*, which is a Greek term meaning to energize or actualize. More specifically, it referred to the ability of a speaker or writer to describe something so evocatively that it was brought to life before the eyes of their audience, thus allowing that audience to feel the emotions of those who witnessed the thing itself. Think about how emotion might figure in to your description: do you want to take the just-the-facts approach we associate with barebones journalistic reporting, or do you want to describe in a way meant to evoke a particular response—emotional, moral, etc.—in your audience?

Style Exercise 3: Imitation

Your assignment for this exercise is straightforward: copy, by hand, a passage of someone else's nonfiction writing. The passage must be 250-300 words long. It could be from the artifact you're focusing on for Analyzing Style or from any piece of writing by an author you like (or don't like, even).

After you've copied the passage, upload both the original and the copied version to the D2L dropbox for this style exercise. You can upload them as photographs, scanned PDFs, screenshots, etc. There will be a bonus reading reflection that goes along with this assignment.

Your exercise, as well as the reflection, is due by midnight on Fri., Mar. 17.

Style Exercise 4: Character

Begin by reading “ARCS_Character.pdf” under the D2L “Style Exercise Readings” tab, which is nested under “Course Readings.”

Throughout history, rhetoric students have been responsible for imitating the voices of others. Students have imitated fictional characters, mythical and historical heroes, religious figures, and stock characters. More specifically, they’ve responded to questions like these: “What words would Odysseus [the hero of Homer’s *Odyssey*] say to the Cyclops when he sees him eating his comrades?” “What words would a money-loving coward say upon finding a golden sword?” “What words would a farmer say upon seeing the ocean for the first time?”

For this exercise, you get to create and respond to your own question: What words would _____ say upon _____? Fill in the first blank with a writer or speaker and the second blank with a situation. While it’s fine if you want your exercise to be a little funny (serious is fine too), pick a person or character whose voice or style you respect. This is an opportunity for you to practice and expand your stylistic repertoire, so don’t waste time writing in the voice of someone you’re only interested in mocking. For example, if you like David Foster Wallace’s style, it’s fine if you apply that style to a humorous situation. Say, “What would David Foster Wallace say upon dropping his sandwich on the floor?” If you think he’s the worst, pick someone else. In short, pick someone you wouldn’t mind having your voice or writing compared to.

Once you’ve completed your exercise, add three footnotes indicating and explaining specific stylistic elements you were imitating.¹

Your style exercise should be 300-400 words (not including footnotes) and is due in the corresponding D2L dropbox by the beginning of class on Wed., Apr. 5.

¹ For example, “I used a sentence fragment here because _____ ends to use a lot of short, choppy sentences.”

Style Exercise 5: Introduction of Law

Begin by reading “ARCS_IntroductionOfLaw.pdf” under the D2L “Style Exercise Readings” tab (it’s nested under “Course Readings”).

Over the course of this semester, we’ve discussed the conventions that influence and structure linguistic and rhetorical styles. Some of those conventions are accidents of history, some are the result of powerful groups’ prejudices and snootitude, and some are the result of good-faith efforts to make the English language an efficient and effective medium of communication.

Your task for Style Exercise 5 is this: based on what you’ve learned from the reading and writing we’ve done in this course, defend or attack a popularly held stylistic convention—a widespread “law” of language—or, alternatively, propose a new one. Avoid straightforward grammatical conventions (e.g., split infinitives, prepositions at the end of sentences), focusing instead on more rhetorical ones (e.g., avoiding excessive adverbs). The sample exercise in the *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students* excerpt uses four criteria: consistency, justice, expediency, and practicability. In your exercise, use at least two of those four criteria. That means your exercise should have at least four parts: an introduction in which you state the convention you’re defending or attacking; two or more sections in which you make your case based on consistency, justice, expediency, and/or practicability; and a conclusion.

Keep in mind that, historically speaking, the kinds of style exercises you’ve done this semester built on each other. Try to draw on the skills you’ve developed in previous exercises: proverb, description, imitation, and character.

Exercises must be 300-400 words and uploaded to the corresponding dropbox by the beginning of class on Wed., Apr. 19.