

## Creative Imitation

Imitating the writing of others can help you improve your own writing. For this assignment, you will examine passages from expert stylists and try to emulate them. You will substitute different subject matter but try to imitate the exact grammatical structures, lengths and rhythms of the sentences, and the tones of the original.

Begin by carefully analyzing the style of the original passage. Consider how choices about sentence length and complexity, vocabulary, figures of speech, voice, tone, and so forth contribute to the style. Jot down all the specific observations you can make about the stylistic features of the passage.

Then, explore a new topic using the sentence structures and kinds of words used in the original. Try to imitate the original phrase by phrase and sentence by sentence.

### Sample Creative Imitation:

Original Passage	Creative Imitation
<p>Then came puberty and hunkhood. Over the last few years, the boys' domestic skills have atrophied because handmaidens have appeared en masse. The damsels have driven by, beeped, phoned, and faxed. Some appeared so frequently outside the front door they began to remind me of the suction-footed Garfields spread-eagled on car windows. While the girls varied according to height, hair color, and basic body type, they shared one characteristic. They were ever eager to help the guys out.</p> <p>– Victoria Register-Freeman, "My Turn: Hunks and Handmaidens"</p>	<p>Then came prosperity and popularity. Over the last ten years, Seattle's special charms have faded because expansion had occurred too rapidly. Traffic has multiplied, thickened, amplified, and slowed. Traffic jams appeared so often on the freeways and arterials they began to remind me of ants swarming over spilled syrup. While the congestion varied according to time, seasons, and weather conditions, it had one dominant effect. It increasingly threatened to spoil the city's beauty.</p>

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Madame de Chevreuse had sparkling intelligence, ambition, and beauty in plenty; she was flirtatious, lively, bold, enterprising; she used all her charms to push her projects to success, and she almost always brought disaster to those she encountered on her way.

– La Rochefoucauld, *Mémoires*

Imitate this sentence TWICE. First, write a positive description that ends with a negative evaluation. Then, write a negative description that ends positively.

Suggested Topic: a holiday like Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Spring Break.

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People walk up and down Fairmont street in Bethesda. Most of them have cell phones or breast implants or both as they walk briskly to their jobs or luncheons or bars.

During business hours the street serves as a runway for an unconscious fashion show.

– Adam Rice, © 2000, from the Classic Prose Website

Suggested Topic: a crowd at a live event, like a football game, a rock concert, or a church service.

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Seasickness makes you lethargic, weak, down at the mouth, and hopeless, in addition to dizzy and prone to vomit. It makes you want to roll through the lifelines and slip into the waves to end the horrible condition that flesh is heir to. You may not care if the fuel needs checking, the sails need trimming, or the navigation needs updating. It can make you furious with yourself for being out there at all, so furious that you don't care if you are wet and cold, hungry and dehydrated, or drifting into harm's way.

– Queene Hooper Foster, "Care of the Seasick," *Boating Etiquette*

Suggested Topic: a mood altering substance like beer, coffee, or marijuana.