Royal Fireworks Language Arts by Michael Clay Thompson

Essay Voyage

Third Edition

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CHAPTER ONE

CORRECTNESS

The ability to write a correct, formal essay is a requirement of academic achievement. Most academic work is submitted as formal writing, and there are standards of correct word usage, sentence structure, punctuation, paragraphing, and essay elements (including the structure of the essay, the quality of the reasoning, the merit of the thesis, and the presentation and documentation of quoted evidence). These standards are expected in advanced schoolwork, in colleges and universities, in graduate schools, and in the professions.

Do we see published works that do not adhere to correct standards? Yes, sometimes, but those works are of an informal genre (pronounced JON-ruh, meaning type or kind) in which casual words, colloquial sentences, and conversational tone are permitted. We might see informal writing in novels or short stories, but we should not imagine from the informal sentences in a novel that the novelist is incapable of formal writing or could not adhere to formal standards. Furthermore, a knowledge of correct standards is not less necessary for a creative writer. If you know how to write correctly, how to use words properly, how to punctuate, and how to organize paragraphs and longer works, that makes you more—not less—capable of excellent creative writing. Ignorance is never a creative advantage.

In this book we will explore the elements of the correct, formal essay—the kind of essay that will be expected and graded in English classes, history classes, science classes, and all other classes where we are expected to write essay exams, research papers, critical responses, and other formal analyses of academic subjects. Correct writing involves knowing and thinking about the correct use of words, sentences, paragraphs, and essay elements.

word - sentence - paragraph - essay

A CORRECT WORD

To use a word correctly, we must know its grammar. Most words change form to become different parts of speech; for example, the word *manifest*, which as an adjective means obvious, has many forms:

Noun: The gesture was a **manifestation** of his curiosity.
Noun: He carefully read the ship's **manifest**.
Adjective: The nation adopted a philosophy of **manifest** destiny.
Verb: The gesture **manifested** his curiosity.
Adverb: His curiosity was **manifestly** intense.

Each chapter of this book will examine the meaning and grammar of vocabulary from *Caesar's English II*. We will observe important Latin or Greek stems in the words, and we will use sentences from classic works to illustrate the vocabulary's grammar.

SUPERFLUOUS

super • flu

Definition: *Superfluous* means unnecessary, too much, overflowing.
Pronunciation: soo-PER-flu-us
Etymology: The Latin stem *super* means over, and *flu* means flow.
Grammar: We often see *superfluous* as an adjective, *superfluously* as an adverb, and *superfluity* and *superfluousness* as nouns. Here are examples from classic authors:

Adjective: ***superfluous***
In her 1847 novel *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë wrote that "There was no superfluous ornament in the room." Ralph Ellison, in his 1952 novel *Invisible Man*, wrote, "So don't waste time with superfluous questions." In Mary Shelley's 1816 *Frankenstein*, we read that "Your repentance…is now superfluous."

Noun: ***superfluity***
Henry David Thoreau, in his 1854 philosophical classic *Walden*, wrote that "There is another alternative than to obtain…superfluities." In his 1878 novel *The Return of the Native*, Thomas Hardy wrote that "He was a superfluity." In Benjamin Franklin's 1788 *Autobiography*, he wrote that "It discouraged useless expense in foreign superfluities."

ADHERE

ad • here

Definition: *Adhere* means to stick to.
Pronunciation: ad-HERE
Etymology: The Latin stem *ad* means to, and *here* means stick.
Grammar: We see *adhere* as a verb, *adhering* as an adjective, and *adherent* or *adherence* as a noun. Here are examples from classic authors:

Adjective: ***adhering***
Thomas Hardy, in his 1886 novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, described the "road, still adhering to its Roman foundation.…" In 1955 Joseph Heller wrote in *Catch-22* that "Havermeyer had tiny bits of peanut brittle adhering to his lips...."

Noun: ***adherent***
In his 1820 novel *Ivanhoe*, Sir Walter Scott wrote, "He returns to punish as a rebel every adherent of his brother...." Mark Twain, in his 1876 novel *Tom Sawyer*, wrote that he "now found himself suddenly without an adherent." Stephen Crane, in his 1895 novel *The Red Badge of Courage*, described "...those who yesterday had been stern adherents of his views."

Verb: ***adhere***
In his 1904 novel *Peter Pan*, James Barrie wrote that "He still adhered in his walk to the school's distinguished slouch." Mark Twain, in *The Prince and the Pauper*, wrote that "The woman still adhered to her declarations." Jonathan Swift, in his 1726 novel *Gulliver's Travels*, wrote, "I strictly adhere to truth."

Correct Word Assignment

1. Write a short sentence using *superfluous* as an adjective, and then write a short sentence using *superfluity* as a noun.

2. Write a short sentence using *adhere* or *adhered* as a verb, and then write a short sentence using *adherent* as a noun or *adhering* as an adjective.

3. Write three sentences that use at least one form of each word. Example:

I have never been an **adherent** of expending **superfluous** energy.

A CORRECT SENTENCE

If the words of an essay are not correct, then the essay, regardless of its merits, is not correct. A correct essay must have correct words. The same applies to the sentences of an essay. If the sentences are not correct, the essay is not correct.

When we write, we group words into complete thoughts called *sentences*. The word *sentence* comes from the Latin *sententia*, which means opinion. A sentence makes a complete thought by saying something about something.

In formal English we have grammar rules that help us write clear, complete sentences. These rules are not arbitrary, trivial, or pointless. They are good. They are based on centuries of thought about writing.

Just as we cannot use words correctly if we do not know the grammar of the words, we cannot write correct sentences if we do not know the grammar of the sentence. Grammar is the sentence-logic, and just as a mathematical statement can be incorrect if it has an error, a sentence can be incorrect if it has an error. Sentences can be incomplete or even self-contradictory.

Furthermore, every sentence must be punctuated, and punctuation is a function of grammar. Punctuation involves knowing where to put required punctuation marks and knowing not to put punctuation that should not be there. Wrong punctuation can make nonsense of a sentence, even if the words are right.

To learn what a correct sentence is, study correct examples. In each chapter of *Essay Voyage*, we will study one sentence. We will use a sentence from a classic author that also contains a vocabulary word from *Caesar's English II*. The vocabulary word from *Caesar's English II* will be in **boldface**, and a code such as *C1* will mean that the word is from Chapter One of that book. We will look at grammar using the **four-level analysis** taught in *Grammar Voyage* (using standard abbreviations for parts of speech), but we will also look at other aspects of the sentence, such as the poetic techniques taught in *A World of Poetry*.

From Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*, 1859

	Madame	Defarge	looked	**superciliously**	at	the	client.
PARTS OF SPEECH	n.	n.	v.	adv.	prep.	adj.	n.
PARTS OF SENTENCE		subj.	AVP				
PHRASES					------prep. phrase------		
CLAUSES	----------independent clause----------						
	a simple declarative sentence						

Grammar: We see the two sides of a correct sentence. The complete subject is *Madame Defarge*, and the complete predicate is *looked superciliously at the client*. The heart of the predicate is the action verb *looked* (AVP stands for action verb predicate), which is modified by an adverbial prepositional phrase *at the client*.

Vocabulary: The adjective *supercilious* means condescending, arrogant. The Latin stem *super* means over; *cili* means hair; the word shows the raised eyebrow of the arrogant person. Dickens used the adverb form *superciliously* to modify the verb *looked*. C1

Poetics: Notice the hissy *s* sounds in *SuperCiliouSly*. Notice the repetition of sounds in *LooKeD CLienT*.

Punctuation: We must not put a comma after the subject *Defarge*; that would split the subject from its verb and damage the sentence.

Writing: This sentence is a complete thought; we are not waiting for the idea to conclude. Every word counts; it has only the words it needs.

PRACTICE

There are four levels of traditional grammar, and these four levels contain the terminology (e.g., *noun*, *adjective*, *verb*, *subject*, *direct object*, *phrase*, *clause*) used by teachers, professors, editors, and other professionals who work with language. These are also the language terms that you will find in a dictionary.

Our method of analyzing a sentence will be the **four-level analysis** introduced in *Grammar Voyage*. You may wish to refer to *Grammar Voyage* as you work on this four-level analysis. The method gets easier with practice.

From James M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, 1904

In a moment he had recovered his shadow.

PARTS OF SPEECH

_____

PARTS OF SENTENCE

_____

PHRASES

_____

CLAUSES

_____

Comment:

PUNCTUATION ,

All correct writing is punctuated, and **punctuation is a function of grammar**. If you do not know grammar, then you cannot learn punctuation. We do not apply punctuation expressively or emotionally or in response to vague feelings that there should be a pause; in formal academic writing we follow standard rules.

Here are five **comma** punctuation rules:

1. Do *not* put a comma before a coordinating conjunction that joins two parts of speech into a compound (such as a compound noun or compound verb).

   We thought his remarks were superfluous and supercilious.

2. Put a comma after an introductory interjection.

   Yes, he is an adherent of the typical dogma.

3. Put a comma before the coordinating conjunction at the end of a list of three or more adjectives, nouns, or other parts of speech. Put commas after all but the last item.

   The intravenous drip was cold, glowing, blue, and anesthetic.

4. Put two commas around nouns of direct address.

   Yes, Hamlet, you will read the page about the centurion.

5. Put a comma between multiple adjectives preceding a noun.

   The complex, intracellular compounds were transferred.

PRACTICE

After each sentence below there are four choices. Select all answers that describe the required punctuation for each sentence. The correct final answer can be any combination, including all four or none.

1. Well the description of the conifers was complete and complex.
   a. a comma after the verb
   b. a comma after the introductory interjection
   c. a comma between the multiple adjectives preceding the noun
   d. a comma after the noun of direct address

2. The complete complicated transfer was finished in ten minutes.
   a. a comma after the noun *transfer*
   b. a comma before the preposition
   c. a comma to separate the adjectives preceding the noun
   d. two commas around the noun of direct address

3. Subterranean caverns and green conifers are common in those mountains.
   a. a comma to separate multiple adjectives preceding the noun
   b. commas around the noun of direct address
   c. a comma before the coordinating conjunction in the list
   d. a comma before the coordinating conjunction *and*

4. Oh just you wait Henry the trees will soon be yellow orange and red.
   a. commas around the noun of direct address
   b. a comma after the introductory interjection
   c. commas to separate the multiple adjectives preceding a noun
   d. commas after the first two adjectives in the list

BUGS

There are deliberate mistakes hidden in the passage below. Some are errors we have mentioned, but there are other errors as well. How many errors can you find? Assume that the passage is part of a formal academic assignment.

> The land crab has it's problems. With one small pincer and one large one, we think the land crab looks off balance but the large pincer is not superfluous. Land crabs have eight legs, and two pincers. They can be brown, gray, or white in color. Each land crab has their eyes on stalks that can fold down. Breathing with gills, scientists say the land crab can damage crops.

A CORRECT PARAGRAPH

We put **sentences that are about the same topic** into groups called *paragraphs*. If we are writing about the Himalayan country of Nepal, we might have a paragraph about the mountains, a paragraph about the Buddhist religion, a paragraph about the Sherpa people, and a paragraph about the capital Kathmandu. We might also have a paragraph of introduction and a paragraph of conclusion. A paragraph usually has at least several sentences, but some paragraphs have only one. There are different kinds of paragraphs and different ways of organizing sentences in a paragraph. A paragraph usually begins with a **topic sentence** that connects back to the idea of the previous paragraph and expresses what the new paragraph is about.

Here is a passage from James M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* about Tinker Bell's jealousy of Peter Pan's friend Wendy. Each paragraph is about its topic:

From James M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, 1904

I don't know whether the idea came suddenly to Tink, or whether she had planned it on the way, but she at once popped out of the hat and began to lure Wendy to her destruction.

Tink was not all bad: or rather, she was all bad just now, but, on the other hand, sometimes she was all good. Fairies have to be one thing or the other, because being so small they unfortunately have room for one feeling only at a time. They are, however, allowed to change, only it must be a complete change. At present she was full of jealousy of Wendy. What she said in her lovely tinkle Wendy could not of course understand, and I believe some of it was bad words, but it sounded kind, and she flew back and forward, plainly meaning "Follow me, and all will be well."

What else could poor Wendy do? She called to Peter and John and Michael, and got only mocking echoes in reply. She did not yet know that Tink hated her with the fierce hatred of a very woman. And so, bewildered, and now staggering in her flight, she followed Tink to her doom.

The first paragraph is one sentence long (though it contains three clauses). It introduces the event, *the idea*, but is neither all about Tinker Bell nor all about Wendy:

> I don't know whether the idea came suddenly to Tink, or whether she had planned it on the way, but she at once popped out of the hat and began to lure Wendy to her destruction.

The second paragraph is about Tinker Bell. It contains five sentences that explain her personality, in terms of how goodness and badness exist in fairies. We find out that Tink is too little to have more than one feeling at a time, that she is jealous of Wendy, that she is saying terrible things in her little tinkling voice, that she is flying about, luring Wendy to an ill fate. The paragraph begins with a topic sentence about Tink:

> Tink was not all bad: or rather, she was all bad just now, but, on the other hand, sometimes she was all good. Fairies have to be one thing or the other, because being so small they unfortunately have room for one feeling only at a time. They are, however, allowed to change, only it must be a complete change. At present she was full of jealousy of Wendy. What she said in her lovely tinkle Wendy could not of course understand, and I believe some of it was bad words, but it sounded kind, and she flew back and forward, plainly meaning "Follow me, and all will be well."

The third paragraph has four sentences about Wendy. We see that Wendy did not know what else to do, that she called for the boys, that she did not understand Tink's feelings, that she was bewildered, and staggering, and following Tink to a trap. The paragraph begins with a topic sentence showing that the topic has changed from Tinker Bell to Wendy:

> What else could poor Wendy do? She called to Peter and John and Michael, and got only mocking echoes in reply. She did not yet know that Tink hated her with the fierce hatred of a very woman. And so, bewildered, and now staggering in her flight, she followed Tink to her doom.

Barrie's paragraphs are organized. Each paragraph is about one topic. Not one sentence is in the wrong paragraph. Each paragraph is as long as it needs to be. No paragraph repeats itself. James M. Barrie was not writing without thinking; he was writing thoughtfully.

Correct Paragraph Assignment

One of the following three paragraphs was written by James M. Barrie, and the other two are impostors. Guess which paragraph is from *Peter Pan*, and explain why.

A.

Tink agreed to travel by hat if it was carried in the hand. The hat was large, and wide. Wendy hoped that she would not have to carry Tink, because she thought Tink was a lot of trouble. The second star to the right began to sparkle in anticipation, and soon it gave off beams that showed Wendy the sky path, and they flew up into the night.

B.

Tink agreed to travel by hat if it was carried in the hand. John carried it, though she had hoped to be carried by Peter. Presently Wendy took the hat, because John said it struck against his knee as he flew; and this, as we shall see, led to mischief, for Tinker Bell hated to be under an obligation to Wendy.

C.

Tink agreed to travel by hat if it was carried in the hand. Wendy's mother would never miss the hat. There were dozens of hats in the closet. John offered to carry Tink in the hat, but Tink twinkled her displeasure at the very idea. Wendy could see that Tink wanted to be carried by Peter. The streetlights winked on, one by one, all down the street. Through the windows Peter could see the neighbors preparing for their evening dinners.


RICHARD REISS

A CORRECT ESSAY

Scholarly essays have important elements in common, and as we gain experience writing essays, they become a powerful way of thinking.

1. **The essay is a three-part exploration of one subject, called the *thesis***. This thesis is the focus of the essay, and nothing that is not about it may enter the essay. The thesis is expressed in the title, introduced in the introduction, developed in the body, and brought to its highest expression in the conclusion. Everything points to the thesis.

2. **The essay has three sections**. First, the **introduction** explains what the essay is about and the purpose, goal, or question of the essay. The introduction of a short essay may be only one paragraph, but longer essays may use more than one paragraph to suggest the complexities and problems of the subject. Second, the **body** of the essay usually contains three or more (sometimes many more) paragraphs. In the body the different parts of the argument are arranged, the different areas of evidence are presented, readers are informed by all of the facts, and the case is made. Third, the **conclusion** brings all of the facts and ideas of the body together and assesses the *meaning* of the evidence. The conclusion is the first moment that readers are finally in possession of all of the facts, so it must tie the loose threads of the argument into a coherent meaning.

3. **The essay is meaningful**; it has a worthwhile thesis. If readers are going to devote time to reading the essay, it must be worth reading. An essay communicates a truth that we care about.

4. We often teach the essay with a **five-paragraph model**. Students can learn the principles of the essay from this little model and then advance to more complicated essays that have more paragraphs but still are organized into the same three sections. The actual size of an essay is a function of the size and complexity of the subject; a tiny essay—five paragraphs, for example—can only address a tiny topic.

INTRODUCE THESIS

DEVELOP THESIS

CONCLUDE THESIS

1

2

3

Quis Mihi Dabit Adquiescere in Te

INTRODUCTION

quiescere in te? quis dabit mihi, ut venias in cor meum et inebries illud, ut obliviscar mala
um amplectar, te? quid mihi es? miserere, ut loquar. quid tibi sum ipse, ut amari te iubeas
a me et, nisi faciam, irascaris mihi et mineris ingentes miserias? parvane ipsa est, si non amem te? ei mihi! dic mihi
per miserationes tuas, domine deus meus
eae: salus tua ego sum. sic dic, ut audiam.
ecce aures cordis mei ante te, domine; aperi eas et dic animae meae: salus tua ego sum. curram post vocem hanc
et adprehendam te. noli abscondere a me faciem tuam: moriar, ne moriar, ut eam videam.

Magnus es, domine, et laudabilis valde: magna virtus tua, et sapientiae tuae non est numerus. et laudare
te vult homo, aliqua portio creaturae tuae, et homo circumferens mortalitem suam, circumferens testimonium
peccati sui et testimonium, quia superbis resistis: et tamen laudare te vult homo, aliqua portio creaturae tuae.tu
excitas, ut laudare te delectet, quia fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te. da mihi,
domine, scire et intellegere, utrum sit prius invocare te an laudare te, et scire te prius sit an invocare te. sed quis te
invocat nesciens te? aliud enim pro alio potest invocare nesciens. an potius invocaris, ut sciaris? quomodo autem
invocabunt, in quem non crediderunt? aut quomodo credent sine praedicante? et laudabunt dominum qui requirunt
eum. quaerentes enim inveniunt eum et invenientes laudabunt eum. quaeram te, domine, invocans te, et invocem
te credens in te: praedicatus enim es nobis. invocat te, domine, fides mea, quam dedisti mihi, quam inspirasti mihi
per humanitatem filii tui, per ministerium praedicatoris tui.

BODY

Quid est ergo deus meus? quid, rogo, nisi dominus deus? quis enim dominus praeter dominum? aut quis
deus praeter deum nostrum? summe, optime, potentissime, omnipotentissime, misericordissime et iustissime,
secretissime et praesentissime, pulcherrime et fortissime,stabilis et inconprehensibilis, inmutabilis, mutans omnia,
numquam novus, numquam vetus, innovans omnia; in vetustatem perducens superboset nesciunt; semper agens,
semper quietus, colligens et non egens, portans et implens protegens, creans et nutriens, perficiens, quaerens,
as nec aestuas, zelas et securus es, paenitet te et non doles, irasceris et tranquillus es,
opera mutasnec mutas consilium; recipis quod invenis et numquam amisisti; numquaminops et gaudes lucris,
numquam avarus et usuras exigis. supererogaturtibi, ut debeas, et quis habet quicquam non tuum? reddens debita
nullidebens, donans debita nihil perdens. et quid diximus, deus meus, vita mea, dulcedo mea sancta, aut quid dicit
aliquis, cum de te dicit? et vae tacentibus de te, quoniam loquaces muti sunt.

BODY

Sed tamen sine me loqui apud misericordiam tuam, me terram et cinerem,sine tamen loqui, quoniam ecce
misericordia tua est, non homo, inrisormeus, cui loquor. et tu fortasse inrides me, sed conversus misereberismei.
quid enim est quod volo dicere, domine, nisi quia nescio, unde venerim huc, in istam, dico vitam mortalem, an
mortalem vitalem? nescio. et susceperunt me consolationes miserationum tuarum, sicut audivi a parentibus carnis
meae, ex quo et in qua me formasti in tempore; non enim ego memini. exceperunt ergo me consolationes tactis
humani, nec mater mea vel nutrices meae sibi ubera implebant, sed ut mihi per eas dabes alimentum infantiae,
secundum institutionem tuam, et divitias usque ad fundum rerum dispositas. tu etiam mihi dabas nolle amplius,
quam dabas, et nutrientibus me dare mihi velle quod eisdabas: dare enim mihi per ordinatum affectum volebant
quo abundabant ex te. nam bonum erat eis bonum meum ex eis, quod ex eis non, sed per eas erat: ex te quippe
bona omnia, deus, et ex deo meo salus mihi universa. quod animadverti postmodum clamante te mihi per haec
ipsa, quae tribuis intus et fori.

Vel potius ipsa in me venit et successit infantiae? nec discessit illa: quo enim abiit? et tamen iam non erat. non
enim eram infans, qui non farer, sed iam puer loquens eram. et memini hoc, et unde loqui didiceram, post adverti.
non enim docebant me maiores homines, praebentes mihi verba certo aliquo ordine doctrinae sicut paulo post
litteras, sed ego ipse mente, quam dedisti mihi, deus meus, cum gemitibus et vocibus variis et variis membrorum
motibus edere vellem sensa cordis mei, ut voluntati pareretur, nec valerem quae volebam omnia nec quibus
volebam omnibus, pensebam memoria: cu
quam et cum secundum eam vocem corpus
ebam et tenebam hoc ab eis vocari rem illam, quod sonabant, cum eam vellent ostendere.
hoc autem eos velle, ex motu corporis aperiebatur, tamquam verbis naturalibus omnium gentium, quae fiunt
vultu et nutu oculorum certerorumque membrorum actu et sonitu vocis indicante affectionem anim in petendis,
habendis, reiciendis fugiendisve rebus. ita verba in variis sententiis locis suis posita et crebro audita quarum rerum
signa essent paulatim colligebam measque iam voluntates, edomito in eis signis ore, per haec enuntiabam. sic cum
his, inter quos eram, voluntatum enuntiandarum signa conmunicavi; et vitae humanae procellosam societatem
altius ingressus sum, pendens ex parentum auctoritate nutuque maiorum hominum.

CONCLUSION

CLASSIC ESSAYS: Montaigne

We owe our word *essay* to the French writer Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), who used the French verb *essais* (attempts) to describe his writings. Montaigne's *Essais* were not like the five-paragraph model that we use as a trainer; rather, they were loose explorations, sometimes slightly wandering, about everything from education to friendship to solitude. Montaigne used himself as his point of reference, tried to write simply and directly, thought about moral questions, and was influenced by Plutarch (46-127), the Greek historian who wrote about noble Romans and Greeks.

Montaigne began writing the *Essais* in 1572, and they were published in two volumes in 1580. Nearly twenty years later Francis Bacon was the first English writer to refer to his works as *essays*, and Ben Jonson coined the word *essayist* in 1609.

Here are three paragraphs from Montaigne's essay "Of the Education of Children," translated by Donald M. Frame. This selection—and others in *Essay Voyage*—may seem difficult to read, but it is vital for you to practice reading this style, which so many famous documents use. Read carefully; then reread.

> He will not so much say his lesson as do it. He will repeat it in his actions. We shall see if there is prudence in his enterprises, if he shows goodness and justice in his conduct, if he shows judgment and grace in his speaking, fortitude in his illnesses, modesty in his games, temperance in his pleasures, unconcern in his tastes, whether flesh or fish, wine or water, order in his economy: *Who makes his learning not a display of knowledge, but the law of his life; who obeys himself and submits to his own injunctions*. [Cicero] The true mirror of our discourse is in the course of our lives.
>
> Zeuxidmus replied to a man who asked him why the Lacedaemonians [Spartans] did not draw up in writing the rules of prowess and give them to their young men to read, that it was because they wanted to accustom them to deeds, not words. Compare with our pupil, after fifteen or sixteen years, one of your school Latinizers, who has spent that much time merely learning to speak. The world is nothing but babble, and I never saw a man who did not say rather more than less than he should. And yet half of our life is wasted on that. They keep us for four or five years learning to understand words and stitch them into sentences; as many more, to mold them into a great body, extending into four or five parts; and another five, at least, learning how to mix and interweave them briefly in some subtle way. Let us leave that to those who make a special profession of it.
>
> Going to Orleans one day, I met, in that plain this side of Cléry, two teachers coming to Bordeaux, about fifty yards apart. Further off, behind them, I perceived a company and a lord at the head, who was the late Monsieur le Comte de la Rochefocault. One of my men inquired of the first of these teachers who was the gentleman that came behind him. He, not having seen the retinue that was following him, and thinking that my man was talking about his companion, replied comically: "He is not a gentleman; he is a grammarian, and I am a logician."

Montaigne then described how, when we know our subject well and are "well equipped with substance, words will follow only too readily." He quoted the Roman lyric poet Horace: "Master the stuff, and words will freely follow." This idea—that before you write, you first acquire deep knowledge of your subject—is important. *Learning is the first stage of writing*.

The bold-face words on this page are from *Caesar's English II*, Lesson II.

ESSAY VOYAGE PART ONE

I am in the Hotel Quimera in Veracruz, Mexico, waiting for my ship to be repaired. Last week I **procured** an old, black Remington portable typewriter from the back shelf of a pawn shop, grabbed a stack of hotel stationery, and started writing about what I've seen, or what I think I have seen. I say *think* because I fear your **derision** if you do not believe me.

After years using computers, I thought I would hate this typewriter, but I was low on cash, and it was cheap. The forsaken thing was crusted in dust and scum; the keys were sluggish or stuck, but with a roll of paper towels and a can of oil, I loosened it up. It took me a day or two to get used to typing, to find the finger force necessary—the rhythm that lets each letter hit its mark and sink back before the next letter slaps in—but I got used to it.

I had forgotten about typewriters, about the clackety **retort** of the keys, the smell of the ink and paper, and the ding of the carriage when you return at the end of a line. When I write with a computer, my words appear silently before my eyes, but with a typewriter, each letter is a separate act in the play of the sentence. I feel more conscious of the words, more aware of the impact of each letter. I am happy with my little lamp and my old Remington, clacking out my **vivacious** symphony of words as light fades and the street outside the window grows quiet.

I wrote this description today. If you dislike it, I will try to **placate** you with the next one. Tomorrow I board the ship for Sao Paolo, Brazil. I will write again from there.