

# CREATIVITY & IMAGE GRAMMAR

FROM FINGER-PAINTING TO  
BRUSHSTROKES

**“GRAMMAR IS THE SOUL OF HUMANKIND.  
ITS INTRICACIES TRIGGER OUR LAUGHTER,  
OUR TEARS, OUR DREAMS.  
GRAMMAR IS THE SECRET MUSE OF ALL  
EXPRESSION,  
THE PORTRAIT OF LIFE’S EMOTIONS...  
NOTHING IN LIFE IS MORE ESSENTIAL,  
MORE SENSITIVE,  
MORE INTRINSIC TO THE HUMAN SOUL.  
WHEN STUDENTS COME  
TO SHARE THIS VISION,  
GRAMMAR BRIDGES THE WORLD OF LIVING TO  
THE WORLD OF WRITING, READING, AND  
SPEAKING.  
IMAGE GRAMMAR ATTEMPTS TO  
BUILD THIS BRIDGE.”**  
HARRY NODEN



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OCC GATE CONFERENCE 2010:  
“MIND THE EXCELLENCE GAP”  
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HOW CAN WE ENABLE OUR STUDENTS TO DEVELOP A UNIQUE VOICE AND DEPTH IN THEIR WRITING? PROPELLING *BEYOND* THE STANDARD GRAMMAR WORKSHEETS, CONSIDER HOW THE DETAILS, RULES, AND TOOLS OF THE DISCIPLINES IN HARRY NODEN'S *IMAGE GRAMMAR, USING GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES TO TEACH WRITING* PROVIDE THE “CANVAS” AND INSPIRATION FOR WRITING WITH ANY GIFTED STUDENT.

THE NEW CONCEPT / FACT / PRINCIPLE / SKILL:

# IMAGE GRAMMAR: BRUSH STROKES



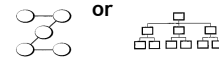
DEFINITION



## USING GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES AS TOOLS TO "PAINT" IMAGES IN WRITING.

THE PREMISE: the writer as an artist and the grammatical structures as the artist's tools for creating images, which, in turn, brings "grammar into a meaningful relationship with stories, novels, screenplays, poems, reports, songs—the ultimate products of the writer's art." (NODEN)

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS / ATTRIBUTES



- Absolute
- Appositive
- Participle
- Adjectives Out of Order
- Action (Vivid) Verb
  
- Images
- Nouns, Verbs
- Syntax, Semantics, Lexicon

EXAMPLES



Core Sentence: The car went into the parking lot.

1. Adding an Absolute Brush Stroke

**Engine smoking, gears grinding,** the car went into the parking lot.

2. Adding an Appositive Brush Stroke

The car, **a 1936 Ford,** went into the parking lot.

3. Adding a Participle Brush Stroke

**Sliding on the loose gravel,** the car went into the parking lot.

4. Adding an Adjectives-Out-of-Order Brush Stroke

The car, **dented and rusty,** went into the parking lot.

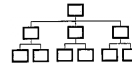
5. Adding an Active Verb

The car **chugged** into the parking lot.

VARIATIONS



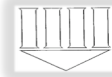
SYNONYM FRENZY / VERTICAL SENTENCES [LEXICON]



SHADES OF MEANING [SEMANTICS]



SUMMARY / CONNECTION / APPLICATION



- OBSERVE AND NOTE IMPORTANT DETAILS ABOUT THIS PICTURE.
- QUICKLY COMPOSE A SENTENCE DESCRIBING WHAT YOU SEE.

**1<sup>ST</sup> SENTENCE:**



TAKE YOUR 1<sup>ST</sup> SENTENCE AND REVISE IT WITH A BRUSHSTROKE:

**REVISED SENTENCE (WITH BRUSHSTROKE):**

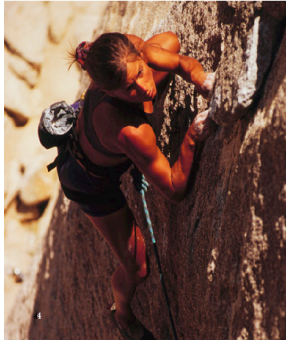
**???** FOR FURTHER STUDY...



THE BRUSH STROKE: PAINTING WITH ABSOLUTES

THE IMAGE

[OR NOTE / CITE / LIST THE IMAGERY FROM THE TEXT YOU WANT TO REVISE]



NOTE THE PARTS OF SPEECH



Nouns:

Verbs:

MY "1ST DRAFT"

USING THE NOUN/S AND A VERB FROM ABOVE, COMPOSE YOUR SENTENCE.



OF THE BRUSH STROKE

CONSIDER & APPLY THE "FORMULA" OF THE BRUSH STROKE

- Noun + Participial (-ing, -ed)



AN EXAMPLE

The mummy was moving. The mummy's right arm was out-stretched, the torn wrappings hanging from it, as the being stepped out of its gilded box! The scream froze in her throat. The thing was coming towards her - towards Henry, who stood with his back to it - moving with a weak, shuffling gait, that arm outstretched before it, the dust rising from the rotting linen covering it, a great smell of dust and decay filling the room.

ANNE RICE, THE VAMPIRE LESTAT



MY REVISED SENTENCE

APPLY THE "FORMULA" TO YOUR "1ST DRAFT" SENTENCE



VARIATIONS

- SYNONYM FRENZY / VERTICAL SENTENCES [LEXICON]: SELECT A NOUN, VERB, ADJECTIVE, OR ADVERB FROM YOUR SENTENCE. GENERATE SYNONYMS FOR THAT PART OF SPEECH AND WRITE THEM UNDER/ABOVE THE WORD [IN YOUR SENTENCE ABOVE]. IN THE SPACE BELOW, RE-WRITE YOUR SENTENCE WITH THE SYNONYM.



- SHADES OF MEANING [SEMANTICS & SYNTAX]: CONSIDER RE-ORDERING A WORD OR A CLAUSE AT ANOTHER PART OF YOUR SENTENCE. HOW DOES THAT CHANGE THE MEANING OF WHAT YOU ARE TRYING TO SAY?

THE BRUSH STROKE: PAINTING WITH APPOSITIVES

THE IMAGE

[OR NOTE / CITE / LIST THE IMAGERY FROM THE TEXT YOU WANT TO REVISE]



NOTE THE PARTS OF SPEECH



Nouns:

Verbs:

MY "1ST DRAFT"

USING THE NOUN/S AND A VERB FROM ABOVE, COMPOSE YOUR SENTENCE.



OF THE BRUSH STROKE

CONSIDER & APPLY THE "FORMULA" OF THE BRUSH STROKE

- a noun that adds a second image

AN EXAMPLE

Plowing through the choppy gray waters, a phalanx of ships bore down on Hitler's Europe, fast new attack transports, slow rust-scarred freighters, small ocean liners, channel steamers, hospital ships, weather-beaten tankers, and swarms of fussing tugs.

CORNELIUS RYAN, THE LONGEST DAY

MY REVISED SENTENCE

APPLY THE "FORMULA" TO YOUR "1ST DRAFT" SENTENCE



VARIATIONS

- SYNONYM FRENZY / VERTICAL SENTENCES [LEXICON]: SELECT A NOUN, VERB, ADJECTIVE, OR ADVERB FROM YOUR SENTENCE. GENERATE SYNONYMS FOR THAT PART OF SPEECH AND WRITE THEM UNDER/ABOVE THE WORD [IN YOUR SENTENCE ABOVE]. IN THE SPACE BELOW, RE-WRITE YOUR SENTENCE WITH THE SYNONYM.

- SHADES OF MEANING [SEMANTICS & SYNTAX]: CONSIDER RE-ORDERING A WORD OR A CLAUSE AT ANOTHER PART OF YOUR SENTENCE. HOW DOES THAT CHANGE THE MEANING OF WHAT YOU ARE TRYING TO SAY?

THE BRUSH STROKE: PAINTING WITH PARTICIPLES

**THE IMAGE**

[OR NOTE / CITE / LIST THE IMAGERY FROM THE TEXT YOU WANT TO REVISE]



**NOTE THE PARTS OF SPEECH**



Nouns:

Verbs:

**MY "1<sup>ST</sup> DRAFT"**

USING THE NOUN/S AND A VERB FROM ABOVE, COMPOSE YOUR SENTENCE.



**OF THE BRUSH STROKE**

CONSIDER & APPLY THE "FORMULA" OF THE BRUSH STROKE

- an **-ing** (or **-ed**) verb tagged on the beginning or end of a sentence.



**AN EXAMPLE**

Shifting the weight of the line to his left shoulder and kneeling carefully, he washed his hand in the ocean and held it there, submerged, for more than a minute, watching the blood trail away and the steady movement of the water against his hand as the boat moved.

ERNEST HEMINGWAY, *THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA*



**MY REVISED SENTENCE**

APPLY THE "FORMULA" TO YOUR "1<sup>ST</sup> DRAFT" SENTENCE



**VARIATIONS**

- SYNONYM FRENZY / VERTICAL SENTENCES [LEXICON]:** SELECT A NOUN, VERB, ADJECTIVE, OR ADVERB FROM YOUR SENTENCE. GENERATE SYNONYMS FOR THAT PART OF SPEECH AND WRITE THEM UNDER/ABOVE THE WORD [IN YOUR SENTENCE ABOVE]. IN THE SPACE BELOW, RE-WRITE YOUR SENTENCE WITH THE SYNONYM.



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THE BRUSH STROKE: PAINTING WITH **INVERTED ADJECTIVES**

**THE IMAGE**

[OR NOTE / CITE / LIST THE IMAGERY FROM THE TEXT YOU WANT TO REVISE]



**NOTE THE PARTS OF SPEECH**



Nouns:

Verbs:

**MY "1<sup>ST</sup> DRAFT"**

USING THE NOUN/S AND A VERB FROM ABOVE, COMPOSE YOUR SENTENCE.



**OF THE BRUSH STROKE**

CONSIDER & APPLY THE "FORMULA" OF THE BRUSH STROKE

- Adjectives shifted out of order amplify the details of the image.**



**AN EXAMPLE**

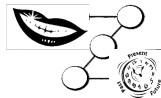
I could smell Mama, crisp and starched, plumping my pillow, and the cool muslin pillowcase touched both my ears as the back of my head sank into all those feathers.

NEWTON PECK, *A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE*



**MY REVISED SENTENCE**

APPLY THE "FORMULA" TO YOUR "1<sup>ST</sup> DRAFT" SENTENCE



**VARIATIONS**

- SYNONYM FRENZY / VERTICAL SENTENCES [LEXICON]:** SELECT A NOUN, VERB, ADJECTIVE, OR ADVERB FROM YOUR SENTENCE. GENERATE SYNONYMS FOR THAT PART OF SPEECH AND WRITE THEM UNDER/ABOVE THE WORD [IN YOUR SENTENCE ABOVE]. IN THE SPACE BELOW, RE-WRITE YOUR SENTENCE WITH THE SYNONYM.



- SHADES OF MEANING [SEMANTICS & SYNTAX]:** CONSIDER RE-ORDERING A WORD OR A CLAUSE AT ANOTHER PART OF YOUR SENTENCE. HOW DOES THAT CHANGE THE MEANING OF WHAT YOU ARE TRYING TO SAY?

THE BRUSH STROKE: PAINTING WITH AN ACTION (VIVID) VERB

THE IMAGE

[OR NOTE / CITE / LIST THE IMAGERY FROM THE TEXT YOU WANT TO REVISE]



NOTE THE PARTS OF SPEECH



Nouns:

Verbs:

MY "1<sup>ST</sup> DRAFT"

USING THE NOUN/S AND A VERB FROM ABOVE, COMPOSE YOUR SENTENCE.



OF THE BRUSH STROKE

CONSIDER & APPLY THE "FORMULA" OF THE BRUSH STROKE

- a verb that **shows action** - not passive voice
- try to eliminate as many *linking* and *being* verbs as possible (*is, am, was, were, be, being, been, has, have, had, do, does, did, shall, will should, would, may, might, must, can could*)



AN EXAMPLE

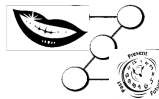
The result was spectacular. The voltage hit his wet mouth like a sledge and stiffened him like a poker. He snarled, growling deeper, and tried to hang on, but the jolt was too powerful and slammed him back and down on his rump.

GARY PAULSEN, *MY LIFE IN DOG YEARS*





MY REVISED SENTENCE

APPLY THE "FORMULA" TO YOUR "1<sup>ST</sup> DRAFT" SENTENCE



VARIATIONS

- SYNONYM FRENZY / VERTICAL SENTENCES [LEXICON]:** SELECT A NOUN, VERB, ADJECTIVE, OR ADVERB FROM YOUR SENTENCE. GENERATE SYNONYMS FOR THAT PART OF SPEECH AND WRITE THEM UNDER/ABOVE THE WORD [IN YOUR SENTENCE ABOVE]. IN THE SPACE BELOW, RE-WRITE YOUR SENTENCE WITH THE SYNONYM.

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CREATIVITY & IMAGE GRAMMAR

THE BRUSH STROKE: PAINTING WITH \_\_\_\_\_

**THE IMAGE**

[OR NOTE / CITE / LIST THE IMAGERY FROM THE TEXT YOU WANT TO REVISE]

**NOTE THE PARTS OF SPEECH**

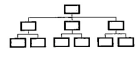


Nouns:

Verbs:

**MY "1<sup>ST</sup> DRAFT"**

USING THE NOUN/S AND A VERB FROM ABOVE, COMPOSE YOUR SENTENCE.



**OF THE BRUSH STROKE**

CONSIDER & APPLY THE "FORMULA" OF THE BRUSH STROKE



**AN EXAMPLE**





**MY REVISED SENTENCE**

APPLY THE "FORMULA" TO YOUR "1<sup>ST</sup> DRAFT" SENTENCE



**VARIATIONS**

- SYNONYM FRENZY / VERTICAL SENTENCES [LEXICON]:** SELECT A NOUN, VERB, ADJECTIVE, OR ADVERB FROM YOUR SENTENCE. GENERATE SYNONYMS FOR THAT PART OF SPEECH AND WRITE THEM UNDER/ABOVE THE WORD [IN YOUR SENTENCE ABOVE]. IN THE SPACE BELOW, RE-WRITE YOUR SENTENCE WITH THE SYNONYM.

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**FINAL REFLECTIONS:**



**“We serve students best when we  
*EMPOWER THEM TO MAKE PURPOSEFUL CHOICES* and  
decisions based on  
an understanding of *THE EFFECTS THOSE  
GRAMMATICAL CHOICES* will have  
on both our minds and our hearts and  
the way they can affect and reinforce  
meaning.”**

*THE POWER OF GRAMMAR*, MARY EHRENWORTH AND VICKI VINTON  
[EMPHASES MINE]

**REFERENCES**

- Clark, Roy Peter. *The Glamour of Grammar: A Guide to the Magic and Mystery of Practical English*. NY: Little, Brown, and Company, 2010.
- Dean, Nancy. *Discovering Voice: Voice Lessons for Middle and High School*. FL: Maupin House Publishing, 2006.
- Ehrenworth, M, & Vinton, Vicki. *The Power of Grammar: Unconventional Approaches to the Conventions of Language*. NH: Heinemann, 2005.
- Noden, Harry. *Image Grammar Activity Book*. Iowa: Perfection Learning Corporation, 2007.
- Noden, Harry. *Image Grammar: Using Grammatical Structures to Teach Writing*. NH: Heinemann, 1999.

**WEBSITES:**

- University of Akron. <http://www3.uakron.edu/noden/> [free PowerPoint slides introducing Brushstrokes]
- Perfection Learning. <http://www.perfectionlearning.com/image-grammar-program> [online catalog to order the activity book and/or teacher guide]