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LifeTrack: Writing 101

2 

The 7 Cs of Good Writing

Lesson 1 – Introduction

3 

The 7 Cs of good writing

- 1. Clear
- 2. Concise
- **3. Colorful**
- 4. Compelling (or concrete)
- 5. Correct
- 6. Cohesive
- 7. Christ-centered

4 

Psalm 114:1-5

- *When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion.*
- *The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?*

5 

Psalm 114:6-8

- *Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs?*
- *Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob;*
- *Which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.*

6 

Colorful writing in the Bible

- The Old Testament is replete with color – especially the Psalms and Proverbs
 - Personification: Inanimate objects are assigned tasks and characteristics of people or animals
 - Metaphors and simile: *Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. (Psalm 128)*

7 

The 5-sense approach

- Close your eyes and paint a picture in your mind of what you need to describe.
- Then open your eyes and write single words or phrases based on the image in your mind.
 - Sentence fragments OK at this point.
 - This exercise is about creativity, not grammar.

8 

Example

- Sight:
 - *Smitty. Ponytail. Eyes that shifted. Clean face. Tall. Salt and pepper hair. Dark. Beneath a tree. Wind blowing. Shadows. Lights inside. Looking through window. They don't see him. He saw her. Flashes of light....a television screen?*
- Sound:
 - *Wind blowing. A dog barked in the distance. A machine hummed. Air conditioner? Plates rattled. A door slammed. A car door shut. Voices. Voices disappeared. Silence.*

9 

Example (2)

- Touch:
 - *Brittle tree bark. An insect crawling on my skin. A brushing leaf. Bit my tongue.*
- Smell:
 - *Supper. Something roasted. greenery. Something moist, perhaps mildew. Smoke. Pollen?*
- Taste:
 - *Chocolate. Mint. blood. shampoo. dust.*

10 

Now put it together....

- He stood beneath a thick sycamore tree, safely camouflaged by thick branches looming overhead. An insect crawled over his gloved hand an onto his wrist. Probably an ant. Shadows danced as a strong wind rustled leaves above his head. He stepped back, away from the street lamp and into the edge of the treeline.
- He saw her, but she couldn't see him.
- Her lights were on across the street. The kitchen window was open and he smelled supper. It would be a meal to remember. It was a roast, fresh from the oven. He could almost taste it, but he didn't; instead, he tasted blood. His blood.

He had bit his own tongue thinking about the roast.

11 **Now put it together....**

- Smitty removed a chocolate from the top pocket of his hunter's vest. Smitty was a hunter and had learned to wait patiently for the perfect moment.
- A car pulled up. The neighbors were on time. All four car doors opened. The couple and both children departed. Their voices emerged from the car but soon faded as they approached the front door. A small dog barked from inside the house.
- Smitty was certain of one thing: His wife would not be expecting the roses and chocolate.

12 **The “matter of fact” vs. “give it life” approach**

- Write a “matter of fact” description of something or someone.
- Rewrite it to add personality, feeling, emotions, history.

13 **Matter of fact**

- My visit is to the old Pilgrim church, about 15 miles outside of Palestine, Texas. Texas' oldest Protestant church, it is a log building, approximately twenty feet square with wooden shingles on top. On the south end of the building, three or four rocks of the old broken chimney composed of iron ore still protrude above the rooftop. There is one window on both the east and west sides of the building. The window is made up of five or six wooden slats with two crosspieces which form the wooden hinges which fasten over two dowels on the window frame. The chinking is old, cracked, and has been patched with bits of concrete having been put here and there. The base of building rests on iron ore rock. The doors on the front of the building are fastened on the same kind of hinges as the window. The termite-eaten doors vibrate as wind blows on the north side of the old church. The chinking here has dirt and grass in it. The beams above the door are about 20 feet long. The door opening is about four feet wide by six and one half feet high....

14 **Give it life**

- Away from the din of Monday through Friday shuffle, the log building remains of Pilgrim Primitive Predestinarian Baptist Church linger lethargically alongside the founding Parker family's graves. Hard, rust-colored iron ore slabs fill the gap from ground to log. The logs -- no longer the brown figures of strength that provided a place of vibrant worship -- now crack with the advancing seasons. The upper layer of the wood which once inflicted splinters now softly peels into small shavings which collapse wearily to the ground and melt away into the earth.
- Three or four layers of rock still survive past the rooftop of the church hinting of a fireplace long abandoned by all but the chimney sweeps. The sun-bleached shingles, hand-hewn from scraps of wood, attest of resolute reliability until viewed from inside where clouds and constellations come clearly into focus from six or seven select seats....

15 **Give it life (2)**

- The window shutter yields to the rhythm dictated by the sweltering, searing, arid air-blast as it parches the pungent honeysuckle that perseveres underneath the window, filling the old church with its aroma. Two dowel pins on the crosspieces of the six-slat window permit it to swing freely or be held firmly shut by means of a locking arm. But it remains open, longing for a passing stranger to find the silence inviting him to offer a hymn, a prayer, or a sermon.
- The doors, blocked open by two large rust-colored heaps of iron ore, no longer swing on their wooden hinges. Instead the wind weaves between, back around, and between the termite-eaten boards again and again, making these door-remnants vibrate stiffly back and forth in creaking opposition to one another. The doorway -- by its width -- still encourages old couples cleaning family graves to enter hand in hand. But by its height it reminds tall men that a church building -- no matter how old, or dead, or dry, or dull -- is a proper place to remove their hats.

16 **Give it life (3)**

- Inside the doorway, eight ashen white half-log benches on the left and five on the right sit on whittled legs fitted neatly into two holes on either end of the seat. The back two benches lean against the rear wall of the church -- the result of long-legged men supporting labor-tired spines with the wall. Heel-dug holes in the ground between the benches record the history of sermons suffered too long by children anticipating an afternoon swim in the nearby creek and by men mindful of pressing chores. A two-inch high mimosa pushes up from the ground between the back two benches on the left side where these feet once packed and pawed the dirt.
- Time, decay, and neglect leave bits of fallen grass and mud chinking littering the floor's hardened dirt.

17 **Give it life (4)**

- ... Four feet right of the fireplace, the pacing of Pilgrim Primitive Predestinarian Baptist preachers has worn smooth hollows into a three foot square platform of otherwise rough two-by-six boards. Between the pacing platform and the half-log pews stands the two-by-six plank pulpit upon which they rested Bible and notes.
- Even with the two windows open and the shaft of light upon the pulpit from a crack in the roof, the room still lacks the vitality of light at noontime.
- No sounds of preaching or singing peal forth into the summertime. Only the chatter of birds to one another and the creak, creak, creak of the dilapidated doors. No smells of women's perfume or men's leather penetrate the stuffy summer air. Just hot, dying grass and struggling g honeysuckle. No fiery Pilgrim Primitive Predestinarian Parkers congregate in this building any more.

18 **Give it life (5)**

- The eleven charter members who came from Crawford County, Illinois, in November, 1833, meet elsewhere now. No one remembers all their names. The barely readable tombstones near the creek, give the names of only seven: Elder Daniel Parker, John Parker, Patsy Parker, Phebe Parker, Julius Crist, Rachel Crist, and Sally Brown. Only the memory of life still lives here.

19 **How to do it**

- Avoid intransitive or “to be” verbs
- Use adjectives that convey emotion, feeling, atmosphere, and appeal to each of the 5 senses
- Use active verbs that give the desire connotation (not just the right denotation)
- Use imagination and stir up the reader's imagination
 - Vivid imagery (use this power for righteousness)

20 **How to do it (2)**

- Use adverbs ONLY when they add meaning to a sentence:
 - “Linger lethargically” – adds information or description
 - Use adjectival phrases instead of adverbs when possible
- Describe the significant absence of something: sounds, items, people

- PRACTICE and get feedback

21 **Limitations**

- All writing can be colorful
- Term papers or research writing needs to restrict the use of color so that you are not:
 - Injecting conclusions that are not supported
 - Introducing irrelevant material
 - Turning fact into fiction
- Remember that God must be pleased with all our writing. Creative writing is powerful; use the skill wisely for His glory.

22 **Homework**

1. Go somewhere new.
2. Capture a mental image.
3. Return home.
4. Use the 5 senses approach.
5. Write a “matter-of-fact” description.
6. Rewrite your description to give life, feeling, and emotion to the place.