

Grammar B

What is Grammar B?

Grammar A = standard written English (think SAT test)

Grammar B = alternate style; breaks rules purposefully (Emily Dickinson)

Stylistic Techniques

Repetition – is used to achieve a kind of momentum in writing by repeating sounds, words, ideas, forms, and parallel patterns.

Doom! Doom! Doom! Something seems to whisper it in the very dark trees of America. Doom! Doom of what? Doom of our white day. We're doomed, doomed. And the Doom is in America. The doom of our white day... Melville knew it. He knew his race was doomed. His white soul doomed. His great white epoch doomed. Himself doomed. The idealist doomed. The spirit doomed.

-D.H. Lawrence

Repetend – is similar to repetition except the purpose is to create a central theme in your writing, usually in a collection of writings. It provides your reader with reoccurring images and phrases, which can create consistency and connectedness between your writings. (Remember, the line “So it goes” in *Slaughterhouse Five*? Or “The farmer in the dell...” in *I am the Cheese*?) Incorporate into your writing as suggested below:

- Include the same phrase, sentence, or passage throughout your writings
- Include a description of design in your writings (written or visual)
- Include story line commentary following and precluding each writing
- Create a character and follow his/her reaction to the various writings
- Create a character involved somehow in each piece of writing

Sentence Fragment – is a word or phrase that is *intentionally* not a complete sentence, usually used to emphasize an isolated idea. It looks like a sentence – it has a capital letter and a period – but is not really a complete sentence. Its purpose is to make the reader isolate and concentrate on individual images, ideas, or even words.

Pounding feet now, echoing on the pavement and the echoes loud because his ear was pressed to the pavement; his cheek felt bruised, lacerated, and he was still facing his mother and she was still dead, of course, her head at a peculiar angle. He did not want to look at her anymore. He lay numb, in a vacuum except for the echo of sounds in his ear and he tried to raise his head from the pavement but couldn't and he wanted to close his eyes but couldn't and he couldn't bear to look at his mother anymore. He. Did. Not. Want. To. Look. At. Her. Anymore. She. Was. Dead.

-Robert Cormier

Labyrinth Sentence – is a finely crafted collection of words that weaves in and out, adding information, riding rhythms of parallel sentence structure, tacking on phrases and clauses to form a flowing sentence. Yes, it is often a run-on.

Into them. Into his father, his mother, himself. The car smashing, shattering. A flash of steel, sun glinting, and he felt himself, crazily, moving through the air, no feeling, no pain, no sense of flight, but actually in the air, not flying but moving as if in slow motion, everything slowed down, tumbling now and twisting and in the tumbling and the twisting he saw his mother die.... One moment, she was spinning the way he was spinning, like a top released from its string, and suddenly she was actually on the hood of the car, sliding, sliding toward the windshield in that terrible kind of slow motion, and then she was back toward the front of the car, as if someone had reversed the film projector, and she fell to the pavement, not sliding off but plunging to the pavement strangely, awkwardly, her head at an odd angle, almost at a right angle to her body.

-Robert Cormier

Orthographic Variation – is calculated and controlled respelling.

- Invention: Chocaholic. Feminazi.
- Creative Precision: Instead of “What’s up?” you could write “Wassup?” to reflect how it is actually said. Dialect does this.

Double Voice – is when you present two contrasting points of view simultaneously, juxtaposing them in order to highlight the contrast and make your reader think. There are many ways to do this: one voice could be in regular font and the other voice could be in *italics*; they could be set side-by-side by columns (this works well in emphasizing the duality of the two points of view). What is important is synchronicity – *all things present in the present moment*. Have the voices synchronize at least one line. We will practice this in class.

The List – is when you present items without any comment at all. Sounds, thoughts, objects, details, adjectives, names. It creates a “still life” of ideas and images that allows the reader to create the images. These can be used for all sorts of things: describing a setting or creating depth to a character occur to me right off the bat. Here’s a list of my very own:

baseball
movies
sci Fi
music
Mountain Dew
minty gum
guitars
computers

Crot – is a weird way to say a bit or a piece that is comparable to a stanza of poetry with a length of one to thirty sentences. Crots are separated from text with white space. They should be able to stand alone, making a point all by itself, and a series of crots would have a culminating effect. Think of it as a verbal slide show.

Winston Weathers, *An Alternate Style: Options in Composition* (Rochelle Park, NJ: Hayden, 1980).

THE most important text to cultivate an erratological approach to writing.

I

Options!—conventional and not.

Any number of grammars are available to us at any moment as writers—yet we tend to restrict ourselves to one: “good” grammar, i.e. Grammar A. Writing that uses other grammars is “bad” or “creative”—and therefore liable to be corrected as *erroneous* or ignored as *exceptional*.

Grammar A the well-made box	Grammar B many different containers
consistency [homogeneity] diachronicity/chronology, linearity beginning, middle and end logical order, continuity [clarity] [rigidity]	variegation [heterogeneity] synchronicity, non-linearity beginning in medias res, open-endedness “non-logical” order, discontinuity ambiguity flexibility

II

Grammar B has been relegated to fiction and poetry—but has sometimes been used in lieu of Grammar A (Sterne, Blake, Whitman, Lawrence, Stein, the postmodernists: Barth, Barthelme, Brautigan, Burroughs, etc, who used montage, pastiche, linguistic generation, and supersaturation), in particular, since the arrival of New Journalism.

Why use Grammar B?

- a. It makes writing more complete to have access to the “contraries” of style (and presumably enlivens Grammar B [→ Grammar C]), and
- b. it is representationally more adequate or responsive to our reality, discontinuous/fragmentary, various, “democratic” (unhierarchical) and relativistic.

III

1. Crot (fragment)

metastasis: rapid transition, according to Fritz Senn, a.k.a. *transmotionem*, the “flitting figure” (actually, it is passing over something quickly or turning an insult, etc., against your opponent [a.k.a. *antistrephon*, a species of *anticategoria* or *tu quoque/ accusatio adversa, translatio in adversarium*]); *epitrochasmus*: a rapid succession of statements

→ the fragmentation and egalitarianism of contemporary experience, i.e. no teleological metanarrative

2. Labyrinthine Sentence

[cf. *epanalepsis*, an “echo sound,” a.k.a. resumption/repetition or, to be more precise, the textual repetition of the same part of a word or phrase, e.g., “A lie begets a lie”—vs *palilologia*: the repetition of a word or phrase with no intervening words (a.k.a. *epizeuxis*, *iteratio*)]

→ circularity or the complexity, confusion or prolixity of contemporary experience

Sentence Fragment

→ concentration/ipseity or dynamism or the atomism of contemporary experience

3. List

enumeratio (a figure of amplification, in which a subject is divided, detailing parts, causes, effects, or consequences to make a point, cf. *paradeigma* [examples > generalisation]), catalogue.

→ values, egalitarianism (hierarchy)

4. Double Voice (<http://rpdp.net/adm/uploads/english/635DoubleVoicePoetry.pdf>)

→ ambivalence, multi-interpretability

5. Repetition/Repetend/Refrain

epinome = refrain—or *antistrophe*, if there is a semantic shift [cf. *palilologia* above]

cf. *anaphora* and *epiphora*.

→ (+) movement, throb of life, (-) recurrence

IV

[See also: non sequitur, mixed metaphor—and linguistic (and topographical) variegation.]

6. Synchronicity

→ the here-and-now, presentism

Grammar A is diachronic/chronological. Grammar B uses: simultaneity (double voice, list, scrambling, presentism), recurrence (repetition/repetend/refrain), circularity (the labyrinthine sentence, structural *epanalepsis*), the present tense and transitional and relating words (so, therefore, thus, then → non sequiturs).

7. Collage/Montage

Collage: a composition made by arranging and pasting materials/objects on a surface, often with unifying lines and color [“gluing”].

Montage: a composition made by juxtaposing or superimposing many pictures or designs; it is often three-dimensional; in photography, it can be multi-dimensional [“mounting”].

→ synthesis; multigenre, citationality; fact/fiction

In Grammar B, heterogeneous elements (e.g. multiple materials, forms, genres or media) are often patched together into a whole (cf. cut-up), thus revealing what seems inconsistent in its parts to be consistent as a whole. It is, in effect, higher-level citationality.

V

[See also: *anacoluthon* (“inconsistent”; shifting grammatical construction halfway through, e.g. “The subject of the lecture was—I didn't really understand it”), *anastrophe* (“turning back,” inversion; changing word order for effect, especially shifting the order of *one* word, e.g. “The helmsman steered; the ship moved on; yet never a breeze up blew” = a form of *hyperbaton*, “overstepping,” a.k.a. *tranpositio*: “this I must see,” i.e. disrupting or inverting word order for effect), *amphibole* (“ambiguity”; ambiguous grammar creating equivocal meaning, e.g. “Used cars for sale: Why go elsewhere to be cheated? Come here first!”), etc.]

Compositions in Grammar B often begin in medias res and are usually open-ended, even circular. Often they are short and/or single in focus; larger examples often break down into parts, each “grammatically” distinct.

Nonetheless, they adhere to certain principles:

- a. they are internally “grammatically” consistent or holistic, that is,
- b. they exhibit a certain rationale or logic, however “illogical,” though
- c. that logic often encompasses variation/variegation.
- d. They involve a tacit “social” contract with the reader about which of their devices are conventional and which are experimental.

Using Grammar B seems to put less distance between invention and composition than does Grammar A (almost as if we have an ucs resistance to translating our ideas using Grammar A).

While Grammar B may lose you readers, it will gain you others.

VI

Grammar B is already practised broadly in our writing, literary *and* otherwise.

Both grammars are part of a stylistic repertoire: the old argument that one must learn Grammar A first is misled—in fact, Grammar B is probably primary or fundamental, and Grammar A a reduction for special purposes. Nonetheless, because academia etc has inculcated Grammar A one ends up teaching Grammar B; this process is one of recovery or “restoration.”

VII

Let the research material determine the style of its presentation [substance → style].

Teach the alternate grammar (B) or (the survival of alternate) grammars alongside the traditional (or main) grammar (A), revealing the virtues of one by comparison with the other.

Identify this or that feature as belonging to one style or another, i.e. a system of *identification* that opens the writer to the possibilities of a given speech situation [openness and “open-mindedness,” i.e. charity] is better than a system of *correction* that aims to eliminate error [closure (and “close-mindedness,” presumably)].

Writing is largely a matter of *convention*.

The real issue is therefore *rhetorical*, i.e. how the conventions are manipulated to suit the speech situation [think ethos, logos, pathos and kairos]:

- a. organisation and arrangement,
- b. appropriateness, and
- c. logic.