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WORDS IN THE RIGHT ORDER

PRESENTING THOUGHTS ON WRITING FROM THE MEMBERS OF BALTIMORE'S WRITER'S BLOCK

MONDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2008

Worst Words

Mouthfeel.

I hate that word. (Is it really a word?) It makes me a little icky and uncomfortable.

Anyone else have a word that qualifies as "worst"? Is there some word that you wish you would never have to hear someone say, never again have to read it in an article or restaurant review? A word that qualifies as an abomination of the English language?

I'd love to know what word bugs you the most!

POSTED BY JES AT 5:42 PM

4 COMMENTS:

Mr. Mitchell said...

Literally.

It's almost ALWAYS used when the intent is figuratively.

If you need to say "literally" or "figuratively" to clarify your meaning, then you need to get your thoughts straight before speaking.

DECEMBER 29, 2008 9:19 PM

ABOUT US

Writer's Block started out as a collective of students from Goucher College who met to critique each other's work, and later expanded and mutated to include members from all around the greater Baltimore area. This forum represents an online expansion of the group's face-to-face discussions, where members share thoughts and advice, pose new questions, and generally discuss the art, philosophy, and practice of writing.

We are all *amateurs* in the literal and best sense: pursuers of a craft out of the love of doing it well, seeking to better our creations because the creating is an end in itself.

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

[Biographical blurbs coming soon here. Watch This Space.]

Elly Zupko said...

I'll have to think about this. Mostly I get caught up with my own little grammatical pet peeves, like when people say "further" when they mean "farther," and that virtually no one knows how to use the word "comprise" correctly. In fact, comprise is so often used incorrectly that some dictionaries have started to list both definitions--and that REALLY irks me!

DECEMBER 30, 2008 1:35 PM

Elly Zupko said...

I saw this article today and thought of you. It's about Lake Superior State University's annual List of Words to Be Banished from the Queen's English for Mis-use, Over-use and General Uselessness.

DECEMBER 31, 2008 9:20 AM

Dan L-K said...

Oddly, I don't seem to have any words that squick me aesthetically, though I share some frustration about "comprise" and "literally" (not to mention the lie/lay confusion, and the fact that almost no one seems to know how to use the expression "to beg the question" correctly). But I'm famously immune to annoyance at neologisms and portmanteau words - I'm far too deeply a Shakespearean to take offense at people doing new and clever things with language. I imagine some sour-faced crank in a ruff probably had a conniption about "assassination" once too, but history (and English) was not on his side...

JANUARY 9, 2009 10:20 AM

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SOME WORDS IN THE RIGHT ORDER

"There are no 'don'ts.' There are only techniques that work, and techniques that don't work."

- Elizabeth Bear

"I'd rather live in a world where artists who can be encouraged are encouraged, because I'm more interested in good art than hardy artists."

- Will Shetterly

"Plot is a literary convention. Story is a force of nature."

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- Teresa Nielsen Hayden

"Let us leave it to the Reviewers to abuse such effusions of fancy at their leisure, and over every new novel to talk in threadbare strains of the trash with which the press now groans. Let us not desert one another; we are an injured body."

- Jane Austen

"The pages are still blank, but there is a miraculous feeling of the words being there, written in invisible ink and clamoring to become visible."

- Vladimir Nabokov

"Why do writers write? Because it isn't there."

- Thomas Berger

"Have a life. Go to interesting places, do interesting things. Observe people. You have to be the best observer around. No matter what you're doing, part of your brain should be turning the scene into descriptive prose."

- James D. Macdonald

"But above all let there be pleasure. Let there be textural delight, let there be silken words and flinty words and sodden speeches and soaking

speeches and crackling
utterance and utterance that
quivers and wobbles like
rennet. Let there be rapid
firecracker phrases and
language that oozes like a lake
of lava. Words are your
birthright.... Give them
rhythm and depth and height
and silliness. Give them filth
and form and noble stupidity.
Words are free and all words,
light and frothy, firm and
sculpted as they may be, bear
the history of their passage
from lip to lip over thousands
of years. How they feel to us
now tells us whole stories of
our ancestors."

- Stephen Fry

"There's no magic answer, I'm
afraid. This is how you do it:
you sit down at the keyboard
and you put one word after
another until it's done. It's
that easy, and that hard."

- Neil Gaiman

"We're all living on borrowed
time. The trick is to come up
with works of sufficient
interest to pay off the debt."

- John M. Ford

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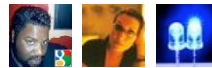
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