

# STYLE

A complex, but very accurate, definition of style:

A style is generated by its conceptual stand on truth, presentation, writer, reader, thought, language, and their relationships.

—Francis-Noël Thomas and Mark Turner  
*Clear and Simple as the Truth: Writing Classic Prose*, 4-5

## SOME EXAMPLES TO CONSIDER

(1) The need for a research center for civil justice is critically important in today's society since many criminal justice practices have had a negative impact on innocent persons and their constitutional rights. The Institute for Applied Criminal Justice Studies at Western Illinois University is prepared to take an important step in the establishment of a national clearinghouse of data and information relating to actions that have led to civil litigation and the settling of cases prior to any legal civil action. Filing a lawsuit against public officers has become all too common over the past 20 years (Ross, 2003). Two examples of high-profile civil liability cases are a bombing incident that occurred in Philadelphia in 1985 which cost the city approximately 3.2 million dollars; and, the beating of Rodney King in 1991 which cost the city of Los Angeles 3.8 million dollars. While individual lawsuits filed against the police have gained momentum since the 1980s, the federal government, through the Department of Justice, has brought civil lawsuits against several police departments (Ross, 2003).

(2) My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun. Coral is far more red than her lips' red. If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun. If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

(3) Western Illinois University President Al Goldfarb announced his plans to participate in a Spring 2007 Asian Tour, which will include visits to South Korea, Japan and Taiwan. Goldfarb, along with Alumni Programs Director Amy Spelman, Interim Director of Western's Center for International Studies Murali Venugopalan, Associate Dean of the College of Business and Technology Larry Wall and former WIU recreation, park and tourism administration faculty member Hyung "Hunter" Cho, who is now the president and CEO of Amthink Consulting Inc. in Seoul, will embark on the nine-day, five-city tour Monday, March 12 in Daejeon, South Korea.

(4) The keynote [of a pretentious style] is the elimination of simple verbs. Instead of being a single word, such as *break*, *stop*, *spoil*, *mend*, *kill*, a verb becomes a phrase, made up of a noun or adjective tacked on to some general-purpose verb such as *prove*, *serve*, *form*, *play*, *render*. In addition, the passive voice is wherever possible used in preference to the active, and noun constructions are used instead of gerunds (by examination of instead of by examining).

## AN ACTIVITY

Working with a partner you have not worked with before, write out a description of the stylistic features of the writing samples you brought to class.

- Give the title of the document, if possible, and a description of it. In what genre does it fit? (Advertisement, syllabus, memo, etc.) What features make the piece have a distinctive style? Consider all of the elements of language we have discussed today.
- Rewrite a few sentences using a different style (see the other side for examples).

# REWRITING STYLE

## HUNTER S. THOMPSON

The late Hunter S. Thompson was known for inventing “Gonzo Journalism.” His writing style was very distinctive. Below I’ve reproduced an excerpt from the *Courier* a student rewrote to emulate Thompson’s style. Google him to find some of his writing, and you’ll see the student did a pretty good job.

Original:

How many of you have seen a police chase in real life or on TV? I am sure many of you have, or if not, I am sure all of you are familiar with the topic. There will always be people that will not stop for police. Some people are just ignorant, others don’t want to be caught, and some people might have nothing better to do. Police chases do occur, and that’s it.

Let’s go back a couple weeks when here, at WIU, a girl watched her mother die as a result of a police chase. Now when I watch police chases on TV, I’m thinking to myself, “Cool, that’s what I want to do, chases are awesome.” This is when nobody gets hurt of course, or if the criminal does, I don’t feel much pity. However, it not cool when innocent people die because of these chases. It actually makes you reexamine the whole concept of a police chase, and you find yourself asking, “Is it worth it?”

Hunterized:

With adrenaline and Speed, police chase Suspects throughout the crowded streets. Hoping to put an end to the madman’s race. As time begins to pass, danger will surely rise. All hail, the spectacular Police Chase.

Denial is surely the work of the Devil, for it is never good. We must accept this danger; yes, some people are evil and will continue to break the Law. Police Chases are in our blood.

A teacher read of an accident today. “What happened over the weekend was very sad,” she said. “A girl’s mother was killed.” Her voice was depressing. I obtained the article and was urged to think. I started examining the Chase at once. Death or injury to the criminal—who cares? Death or injury to police or innocent others—bad.

## RANDOM SENTENCES

Original:

The cat likes to chase birds in the yard.

Figurized:

The sleek and wily feline, well aware his lineage connects him to fierce and efficient African killers, fills his days lusting after the colorful songbirds whose technicolor dreamcoats brighten the dun bushes and dusky trees in the green fields near his Illinois home.

Original:

You’re fired.

Bureaucratized:

The company regrets to inform you that your position has been disestablished.