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IMITATION

A person once said that "Imitation is the highest form of flattery." Well, in an academic sense, it can be; moreover, imitation can be a useful technique for improving writing.

Writers should practice imitation not only to understand how language works but to understand how language of a particular writer works. Imitation is more or less an exercise in understanding how a writer writes and more importantly how they write well.

Here is an example.

EX: (Excerpt from Beatrix Potter, The Tale of Peter Rabbit)

Once upon a time there were four little Rabbits, and their names were--

Flopsy, Mopsy, Cotton-tail, and Peter.

They lived with their Mother in a sand-bank, underneath the root of a very big fir-tree.

'Now my dears,' said old Mrs. Rabbit one morning, 'you may go into the fields or down the lane, but don't go into Mr. McGregor's garden: your Father had an accident there; he was put in a pie by Mrs. McGregor.'

[End]

Now, ask yourself: Based on this sample of writing, how could I imitate and recreate the writing style of Beatrix Potter?

First, you should look at the word choice. Here are some significant words (more or less modifiers) which Potter uses: little; very big...

Her nouns are very simple. Most of the regulars words seem monosyllabic (one syllable); however, names of people seem multi-syllabus (more than one syllable - preferably two). She uses names which include the diminuitive "y" (e.g. Flopsy, Mopsy... but also found in names such as Johnny, Tommy, Larry, and Sonny)

What about sentences? Her sentence length is rather long. She tends to use combined sentences.

Applying these traits to an idea, we can attempt to mimic her work (keeping in mind to pay attention to the length and rhythm of lines as well).

EX:

Once upon a time there were five little turtles, and they were named--

Poopsy, Loopsy, Willow-tree, and, David.

They worked hard making ribbons by night by the light of a very big moon.

"I think that we should have a snack" said the oldest turtle, "perhaps we should float down the stream and gather some leaves for food and bring a few leaves to feed our families."

[End]

Notice how the word and sentence structure of the original and the imitation are very similar, yet the content is different. In a sense, we implement similar characteristics and directly insert traits which we find important to the original (such as the modifiers: very big, and little). We maintain the approximate length of the sentences, and we even include some names with the diminutive "y."