

ENGL210/CA - WEEK 5 - DAY 1

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# INTRODUCTION TO ESSAY WRITING

## WHAT I DID TODAY:

In an email to my superior, I wrote, "Let's let the process do its process."

This is the person who has entrusted me to teach writing.



WHY WE STUDY

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**ESSAY WRITING**

**THE ESSAY FORM IS STILL THE BEST WAY FOR STUDENTS TO THINK HARD ON THE PAGE -- BUT WE ARE NOT FANS OF FORMULAE. INSTEAD, WE'RE IN FAVOUR OF INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING, EVIDENCE-RICH ANALYSIS AND PROCESS WORK.**

**Gwen Hyman and Martha Schulman**

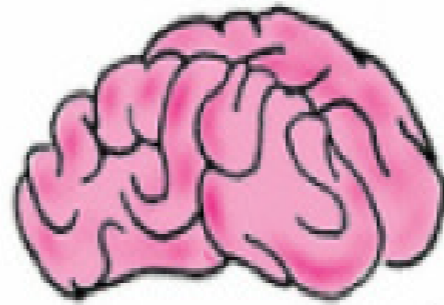
**ESSAYS DON'T EMERGE, FULLY FORMED, LIKE ATHENA FROM ZEUS'S HEAD. NO STUDENT (NO WRITER, REALLY) CAN CREATE SUCH AN ESSAY IN ONE DRAFT. TO GET THERE, WE TELL OUR STUDENTS, THEY'LL NEED A MEANINGFUL, EFFECTIVE, MULTISTEP WRITING PROCESS.**

**Gwen Hyman and Martha Schulman**

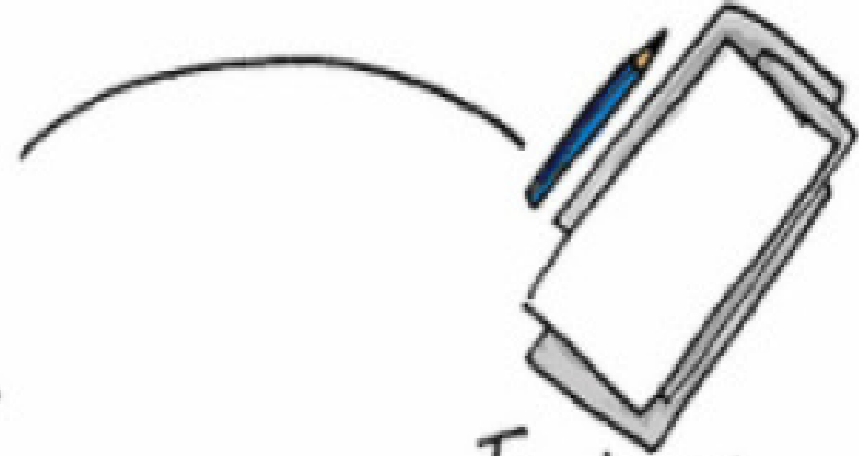
**PREWRITING?**



The eternal struggle.



getting stuff  
from here

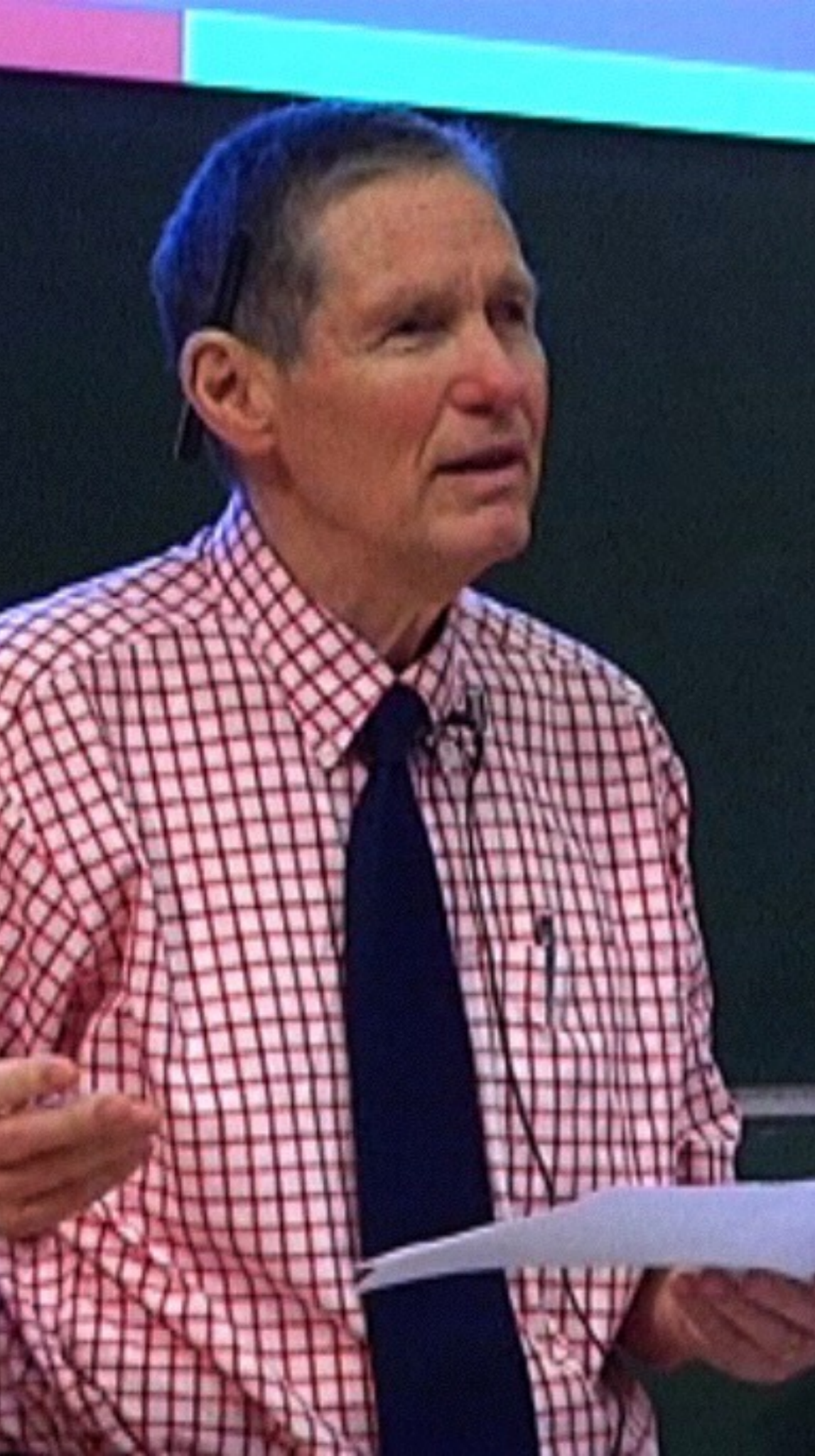


To here.



The idea isn't to produce a polished piece of writing, but to simply get in the habit of writing without censoring and editing. In freewriting, "[n]ever stop to look back, to cross something out, to wonder how to spell something, to wonder what word or thought to use, or to think about what you are doing." The only rule to follow in freewriting is to simply not stop writing.

Peter Elbow



**"Freewritings are vacuums. Gradually you will begin to carry over into your regular writing some of the voice, force, connectedness that creep into those vacuums."**

**Peter Elbow**

**“I REMEMBER...”**



**RENNNS**

## RENNS BODY PARAGRAPHS:

▶ REASONS

▶ EXAMPLES

▶ NAMES

▶ NUMBERS

▶ SENSES

DEVELOPMENT OF IDEAS IN DETAIL:

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**ABSTRACT VS. CONCRETE**

## ABSTRACT VS. CONCRETE

Effective writers use and mix language at all levels of abstraction, so we must learn to use language on all levels. But first, it's important to understand what is meant by **abstract** and **concrete** language and also by **general** and **specific** language. In brief, we conceive the abstract through our mental processes and perceive the concrete through our senses.



## **MAKE THESE PHRASES CONCRETE**

- 1. To excel in college, you'll have to work hard.**
- 2. Voters must be willing to protect our freedoms.**

## MAKE THESE PHRASES CONCRETE

**Abstract:** To excel in college, you'll have to work hard.

**CONCRETE:** To excel in college, you'll need to do go to every class; do all your reading before you go; write several drafts of each paper; and review your notes for each class weekly.

**Abstract:** Voters must be willing to protect our freedoms.

**CONCRETE:** Voters must be willing to give up some individual protections against wiretapping so that the government can track down terrorists and protect the nation as a whole.

**CONCRETE:** Voters must protect their right against illegal searches and seizures by calling or writing their representatives to protest the administration's warrantless wiretapping program.



The more syllables a euphemism has, the further divorced from reality it is.

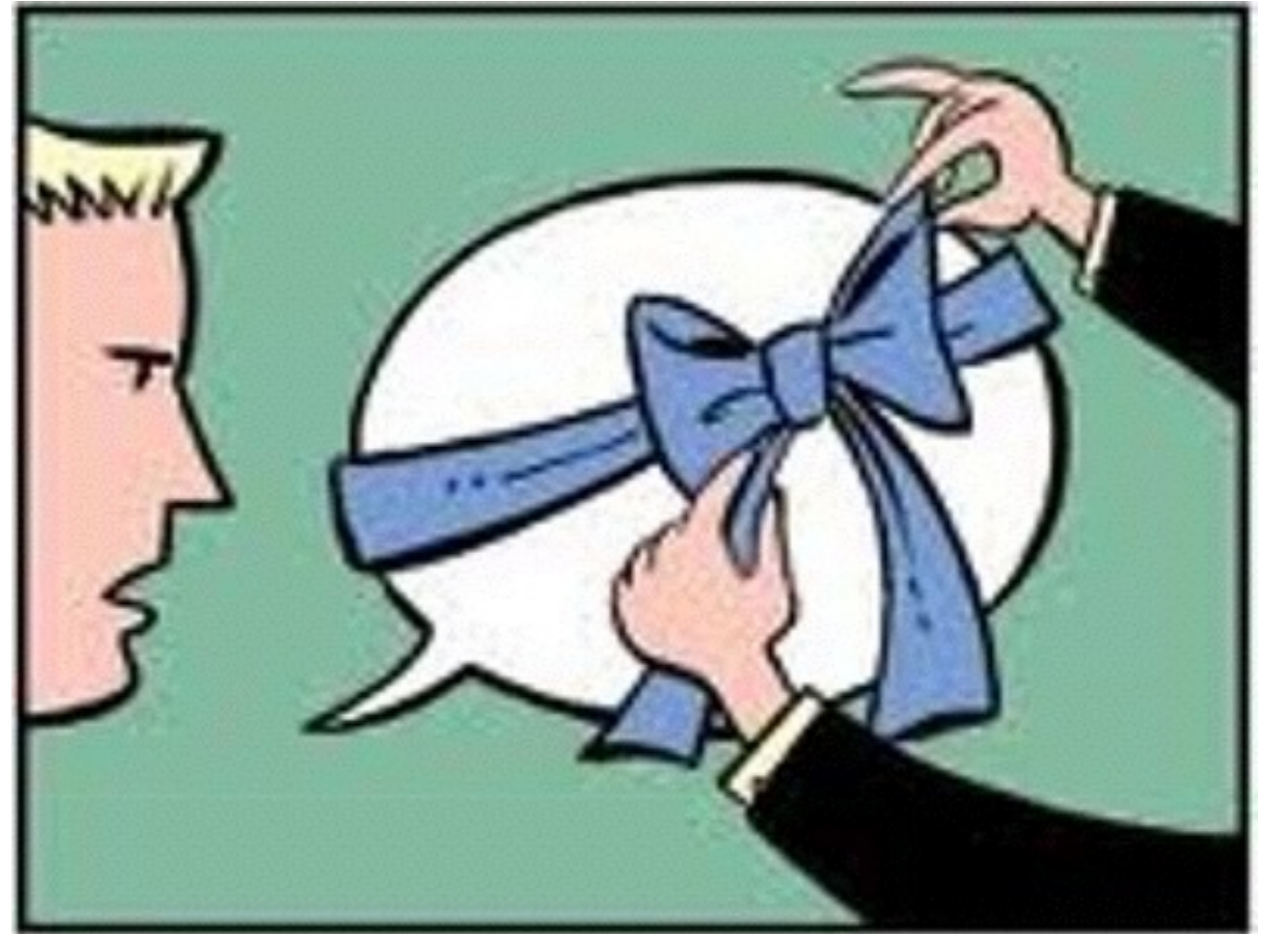
(George Carlin)

## EUPHEMISM:

- ▶ a mild or indirect word or expression substituted for one considered to be too harsh or blunt when referring to something unpleasant or embarrassing.
- ▶ Can you think of any examples?

# EUPHEMISM

- ▶ "Passed Away."
- ▶ "Go to the bathroom."
- ▶ "We have to let you go."



**Prefer the familiar word to the far-fetched.**  
**Prefer the concrete word to the abstract.**  
**Prefer the single word to the circumlocution.**  
**Prefer the short word to the long.**  
**Prefer the Saxon word to the Romance.<sup>1</sup>**



DOUBLESPEAK IS NOT A MATTER OF SUBJECTS AND VERBS AGREEING; IT IS A MATTER OF WORDS AND FACTS AGREEING. BASIC TO DOUBLESPEAK IS INCONGRUITY, THE INCONGRUITY BETWEEN WHAT IS SAID OR LEFT UNSAID, AND WHAT REALLY IS. IT IS THE INCONGRUITY BETWEEN THE WORD AND THE REFERENT, BETWEEN SEEM AND BE, BETWEEN THE ESSENTIAL FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION—AND WHAT DOUBLESPEAK DOES—MISLEAD, DISTORT, DECEIVE, INFLATE, CIRCUMVENT, OBFUSCATE.

**William Lutz**

## DOUBLESPEAK

- ▶ "Friendly fire" is the prime example of an institution's attempt to sanitize language to the extent that we know what a phrase is trying to tell us, yet reflect little on its actual meaning. It is a military term, designed to shield the horrors of death and prevent animosity towards a war mission.

## DOUBLESPEAK

- ▶ Collateral Damage:
- ▶ Term used to define an innocent person being murdered in war (undeclared or otherwise), with the defense that they were at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Some people say  
that weasel words  
are great!



## WEASEL WORDS

Special renditions:

kidnapping

Sleep management: sleep  
deprivation

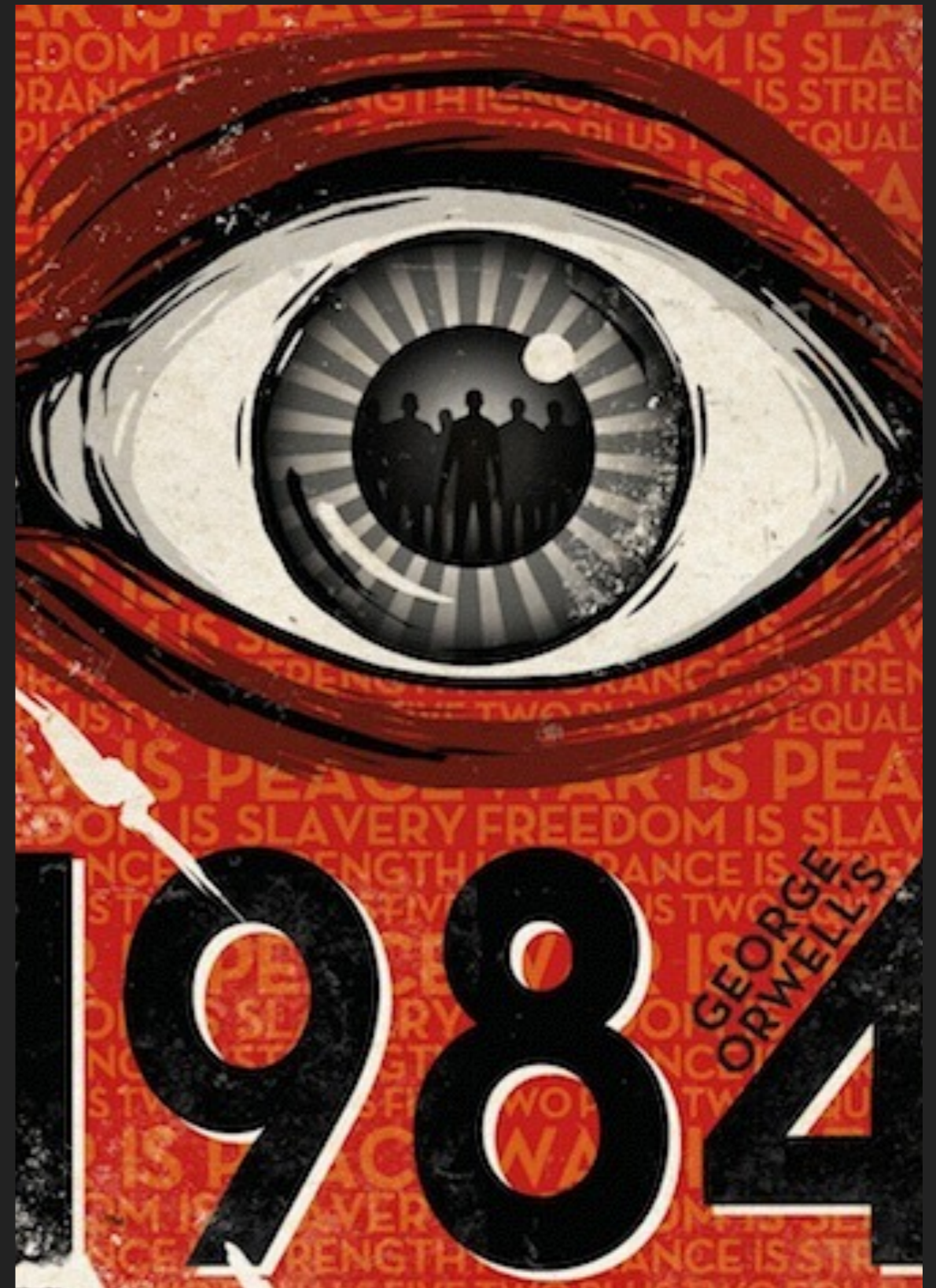
Stress position: rather  
stressful indeed

Pre-emptive strike: unilateral  
attack

Soft target: people

Incursion: invasion

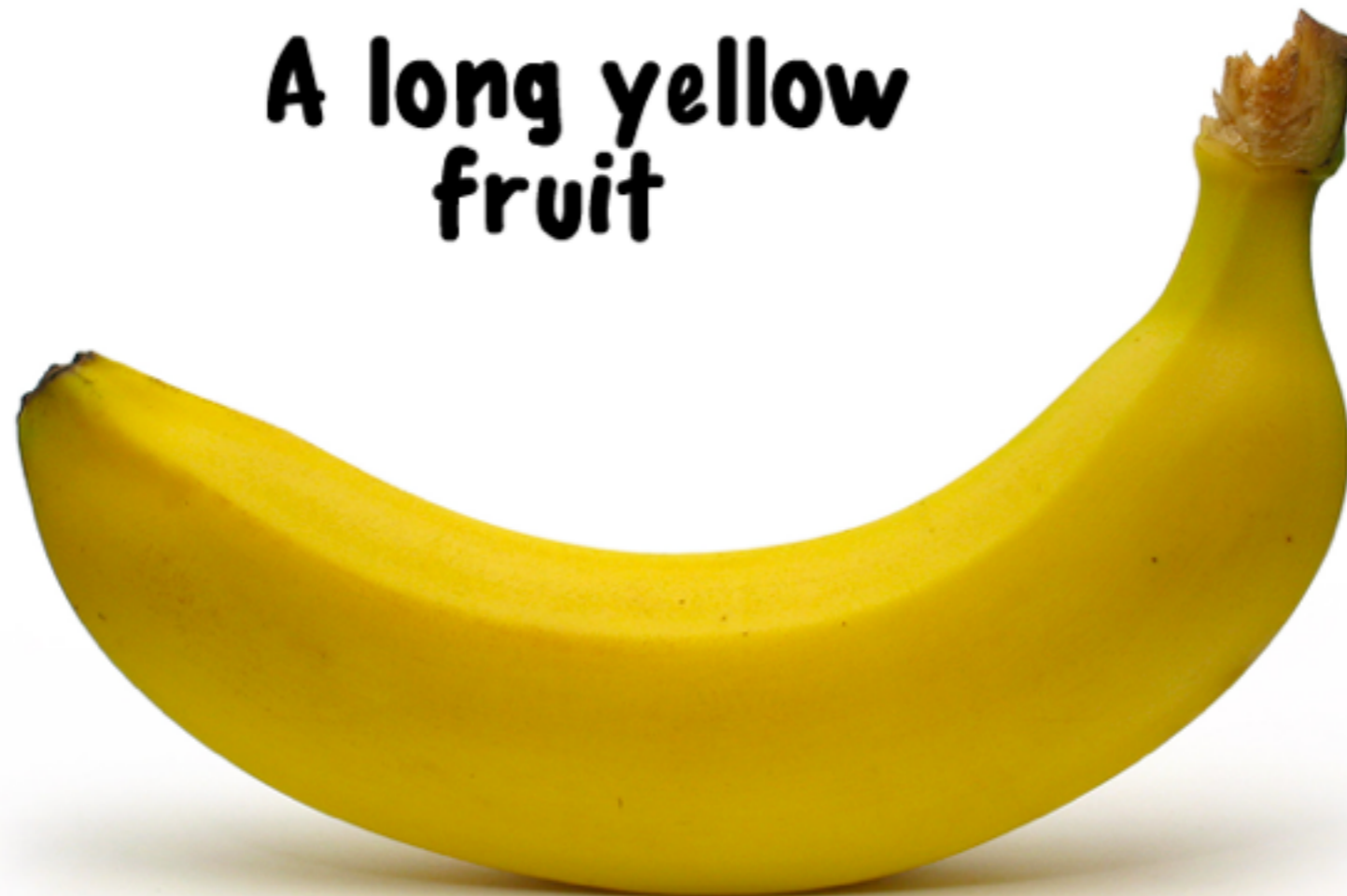
IED: Bomb



## CIRCUMLOCUTION:

- ▶ the use of many words where fewer would do, especially in a deliberate attempt to be vague or evasive.

**A long yellow  
fruit**



**JARGON**

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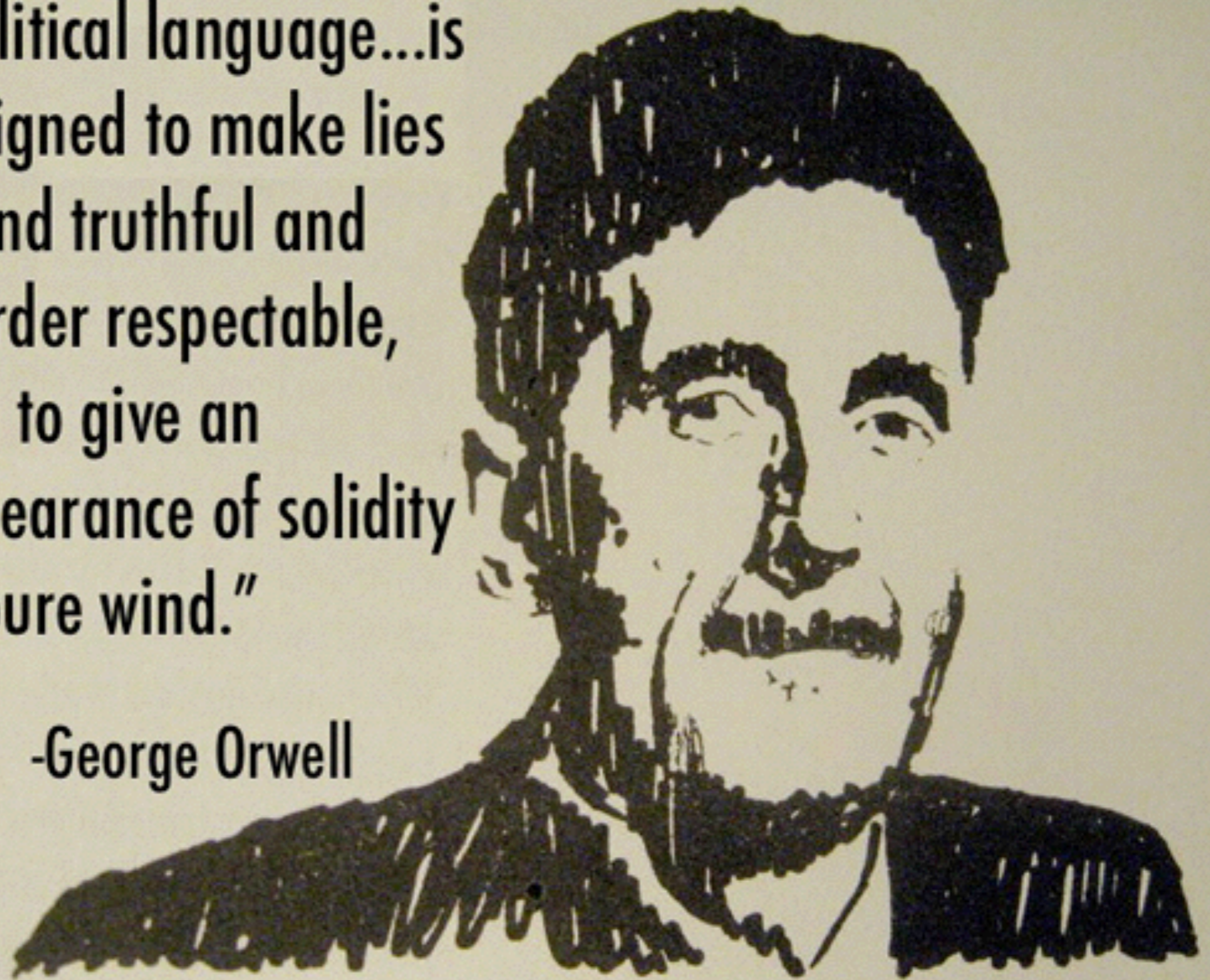
“This is gobbledeygook. I asked for mumbo-jumbo.”

## BUSINESS TALK

- ▶ Core competency
- ▶ Disrupt
- ▶ Thought leader
- ▶ Touch base
- ▶ Leverage a best practice
- ▶ Shift a paradigm

**"Political language...is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind."**

**-George Orwell**



## LANGUAGE AND TOTALITARIANISM

- ▶ Orwell warns us that clichéd and pretentious language is more than a stylistic nuisance -- it also obscures the truth. Such language is potentially dangerous. It has been used by governments to manipulate public opinion in support of destructive policies

GEORGE ORWELL



**“NEVER USE  
A METAPHOR, SIMILE,  
OR OTHER  
FIGURE OF SPEECH  
WHICH YOU ARE  
USED TO  
SEEING IN PRINT.”**

GEORGE ORWELL



**“NEVER  
USE**

**A LONG WORD  
WHERE A  
SHORT ONE  
WILL DO.”**

GEORGE ORWELL



**“IF IT IS POSSIBLE TO  
CUT A  
WORD OUT,  
ALWAYS  
CUT IT OUT.”**

GEORGE  ORWELL

**“NEVER USE  
THE PASSIVE**

**WHERE YOU CAN USE  
THE ACTIVE.”**

GEORGE ORWELL



**“NEVER USE  
A FOREIGN PHRASE,  
A SCIENTIFIC WORD, OR A  
JARGON WORD  
IF YOU CAN THINK OF  
AN EVERYDAY  
ENGLISH EQUIVALENT.”**

Break any of these rules

**sooner**

than say anything

**outright barbarous**

- George Orwell

Americans don't like plain talk anymore. Nowadays they like fat talk. Show them a lean, plain word that cuts to the bone and watch them lard it with thick greasy syllables front and back until it wheezes and gasps for breath as it comes lumbering down upon some poor threadbare sentence like a sack of iron on a swayback horse.

Russell Baker, "American Fat"

## “AMERICAN FAT” BY RUSSELL BAKER

"Facilitate" is nothing more than a gout-ridden, overstuffed "ease." Why has "ease" fallen into disuse among us? It is a lovely little bright snake of a word which comes hissing quietly off the tongue and carries us on, without fuss and French horns, to the object which is being eased. This is English at its very best. Easing is not one of the great events of life; it does not call for Beethoven; it is not an idea to get drunk on, to wallow in, to engage in multiple oleaginous syllabification until it becomes a pompous ass of a word like "facilitate."





**“The trouble for the George Orwells of this world is that they don't like the ways in which our tongue is being shaped,” writes Self. “Orwell and his supporters may say they're objecting to jargon and pretension, but underlying this are good old-fashioned prejudices against difference itself.**

**Will Self**

The best ~~way~~ to ge

you focus on th

GRAMMAR MATTERS

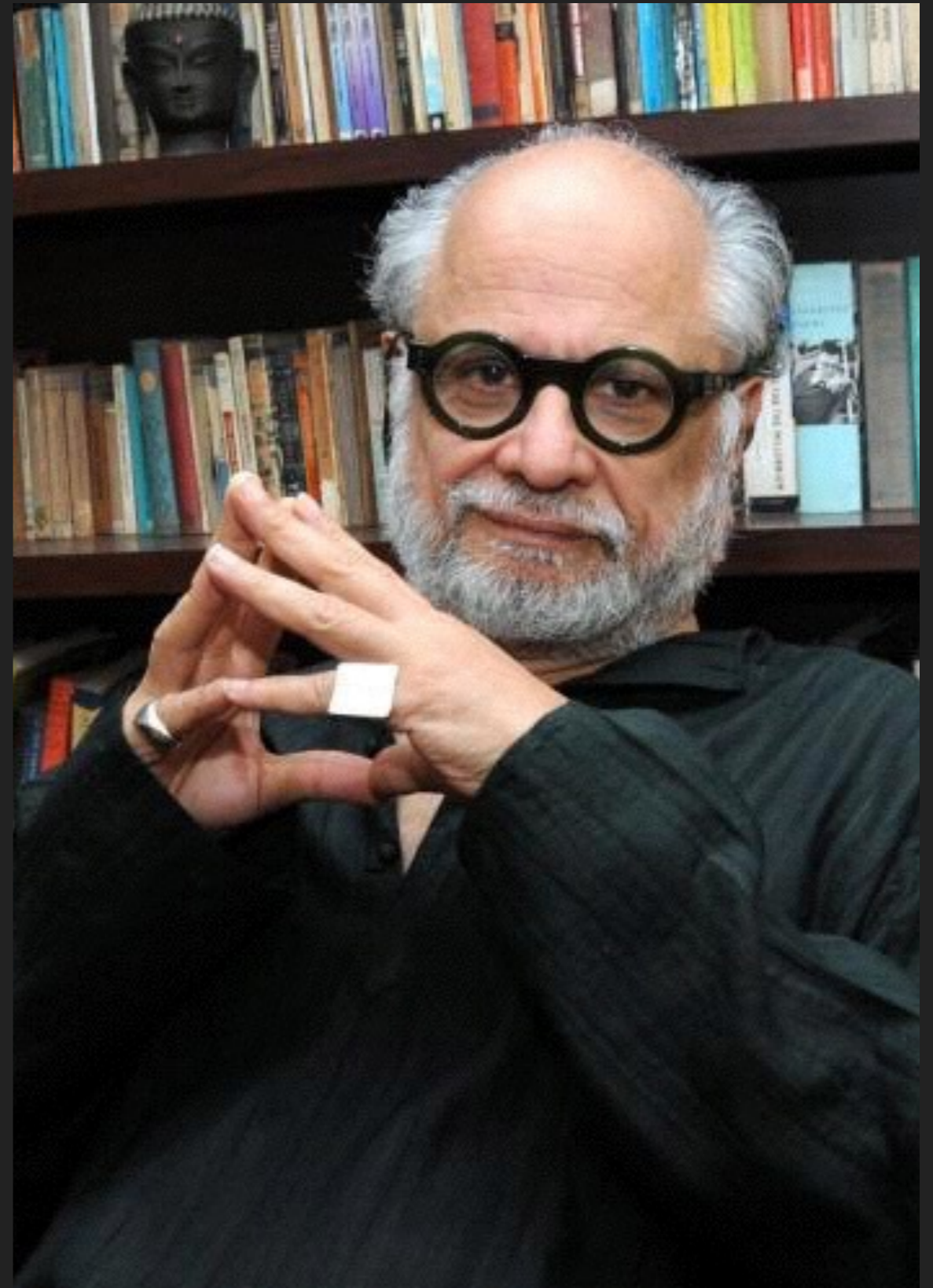
you're

# PRONOUNS

# COMBATTING WORDINESS

## HOMI BHABHA

- ▶ If, for a while, the ruse of desire is calculable for the uses of discipline soon the repetition of guilt, justification, pseudo-scientific theories, superstition, spurious authorities, and classifications can be seen as the desperate effort to “normalize” formally the disturbance of a discourse of splitting that violates the rational, enlightened claims of its enunciatory modality.





**“Clear thinking becomes clear writing: one can't exist without the other. It is impossible for a muddy thinker to write good English. He may get away with it for a paragraph or two, but soon the reader will be lost, and there is no sin so grave, for he will not easily be lured back.”**

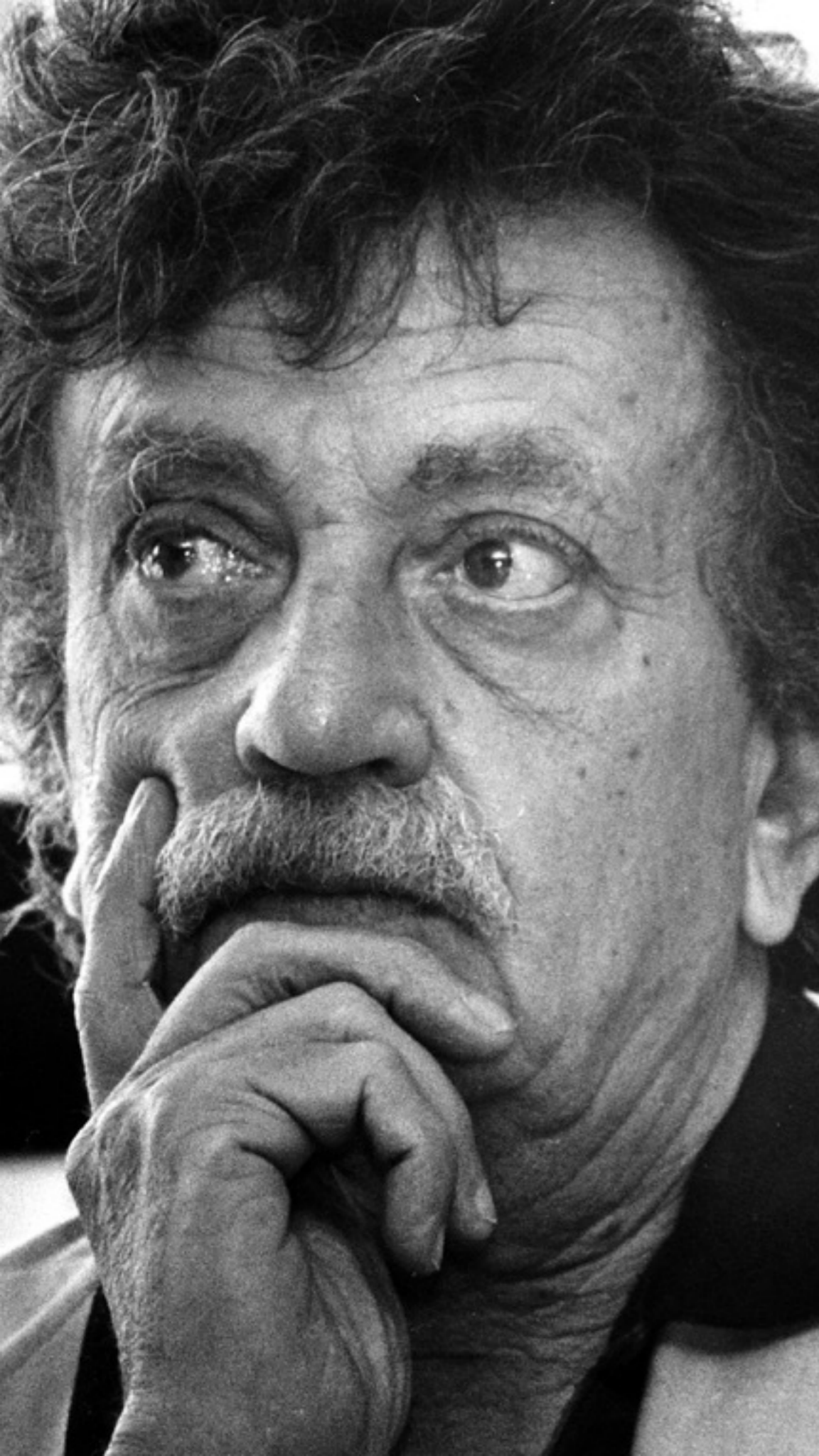
**William Zinsser**

**Simplify, simplify.**

**William Zinsser**

For all reporters and editors, writing must come into sharper focus. We write many excellent stories, but in total, every day we write too many long stories and aren't nearly creative enough about how to tell stories in ways that engage our readers. We must urgently understand and address the reality that busy readers are looking to us to help them understand what is important and what not, what stories need a lot of time and focus and which ones less so. So we must be vigilant in keeping story lengths appropriate. Bluntly - but obviously, I hope - every story should be as short as it needs to be. There's no excuse for a single otiose word or punctuation mark in our writing. Too many stories have repetitive anecdotes or unnecessary quotes. We will cut them.

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# PITY THE READER

**Kurt Vonnegut**

# PARAMEDIC METHOD



IN-CLASS WRITING:

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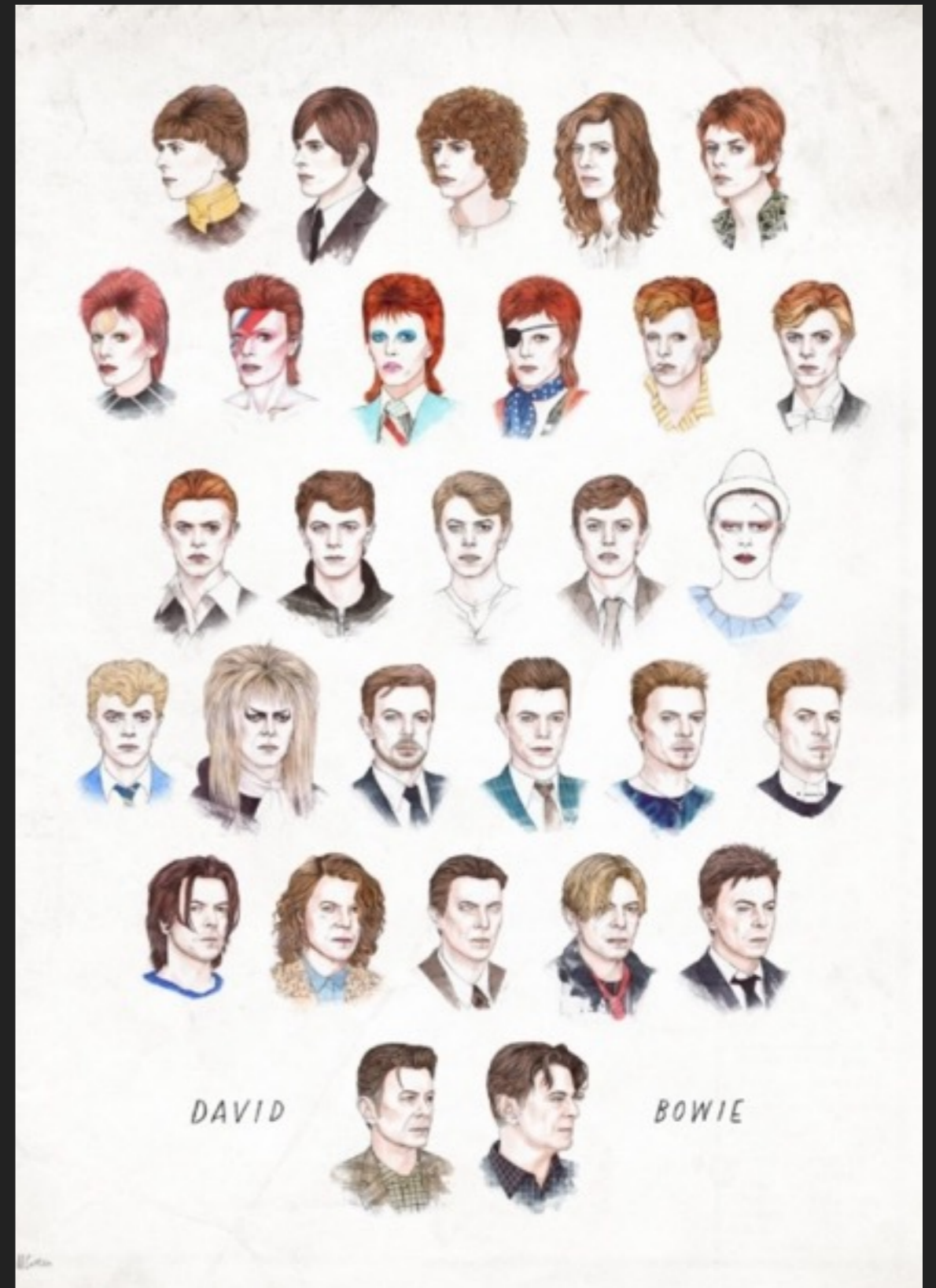
# PARAGRAPH #3

**BE SPECIFIC**



## CONSIDER: PERSONA

► What are the advantages of writing in a persona?



## WRITING PROMPT

- ▶ **Write a paragraph describing your week from the point of view of something in your pocket or bag. Be specific!**