

Grammar and Style

CHOOSE EFFECTIVE WORDS

Auden wanted his poetry to reflect common language. He did not want to write flowery poems filled with complex, figurative language. Instead, he selected simple and direct diction to present clear images. Notice his use of everyday nouns and verbs in these lines from “Musée des Beaux Arts”:

. . . *[suffering] takes place*

*While someone else is eating or opening a window or just
walking dully along* (lines 3–4)

Directions: On another sheet of paper, rewrite the following stanza to better reflect Auden’s style, replacing flowery language with simple concrete words and images.

The last rays of the sun disappear beyond the horizon,
And playfully pull down the deep velvet curtain of the night.
A lone figure meanders in the blackened plot.
Oh, what pleasures await a garden visitor at night!
Crimson and strident blue disappear,
Leaving behind gentler and subtler delights.
The wanderer traces a circuitous path from flower to flower,
Stopping to smell the sweet saturated perfume of a rose,
Feel the soft footfall of the rain-soaked path,
Or listen to the hissing whisper of the wind in a starchy pine.