**Diction Practice**

**Two Things to Remember**

**1) Remember LEAD**

**L**ow or informal diction (dialect, slang, jargon)

**E**levated language or formal diction

**A**bstract and concrete diction

**D**enotation and connotation

**2) Look for figures of speech – what is the effect on the passage?**

**Figures of Speech to Consider**

Alliteration Personification Synecdoche Oxymoron

Assonance Pun Metonymy Allusion

Consonance Apostrophe Hyperbole Irony

Metaphor Paradox Understatement

Simile Antithesis Onomatopoeia

1. An aged man is but a paltry thing

A **tattered** coat upon a stick ….

-W.B. Yeats, “Sailing to Byzantium”

Task: List three adjectives that can be used to describe a pair of shoes. Each adjective should connotate a different feeling about the shoes.

2. A rowan\* like a **lipsticked** girl. \* A small deciduous tree native to Europe

-Seamus Heaney, “Song” having white flower clusters and orange berries.

Task: Write a simile comparing a tree with a domesticated animal. In your simile, use a word that is normally used as a noun (like lipstick) as an adjective (like lipsticked).

3. Most men wear their belts low here, there being so many **outstanding bellies**, some big enough to have names of their own and be formally introduced. Those men don’t **suck** them in or hide them in loose shirts; they **let them hang free**, they pat them, they stroke them as they stand around and talk.

-Garrison Keillor, “Home,” *Lake Wobegon Days*

Task: Write a sentence or two describing an unattractive but beloved relative. In your description use words that describe the unattractive features honestly yet reveal that you care about this person, that you accept and even admire him/her, complete with defects. Use Keillor’s description as a model. Throw in a pun if you can think of one.

4. Pots rattled in the kitchen where Momma was frying corn cakes to go with vegetable soup for supper, and the homey sounds and scents **cushioned** me as I read of Jane Eyre in the **cold** English mansion of a **colder** English gentleman.

-Maya Angelous, *I know Why the Cage Bird Sings*

Task: Write a sentence using a strong verb to connect one part of your life with another. For example, you could connect a book you are reading and your mother’s dinner preparations, as Maya Angelou does; or you could connect a classroom lecture with sounds outside. Be creative. Use an exact verb (like cushioned), one which connotes that attitude you want to convey.

5. **Use LEAD to analyze the following passage.**

The side of the ship made an opaque belt of shadow on the darkling glassy shimmer of the sea. But I saw at once something elongated and pale floating very close to the ladder. Before I could form a guess a faint flash of phosphorescent light, which seemed to issue suddenly from the naked body of a man, flickered in the sleeping water with the elusive, silent play of summer lightning in a night sky. With a gasp I saw revealed to my stare a pair of feet, the long legs, a broad livid back immersed right up to the neck in a greenish cadaverous glow. One hand, awash, clutched the bottom rung of the ladder. He was complete but for the head. A head-less corpse! The cigar dropped out of my gaping mouth with a tiny plop and a short hiss quite audible in the absolute stillness of all things under heaven. At that I suppose he raised up his face, a dimly pale oval in the shadow of the ship’s side . . . I only climbed on the spare spar\* and leaned over the rail as far as I could, to bring my eyes nearer to that mystery floating alongside. As he hung by the ladder, like a resting swimmer, the sea lightning played about his limbs at every stir; and he appeared in it ghastly; silvery, fishlike.

-Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Sharer and Other Stories*

*\** a wooden or metal pole to support ringing on a ship