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# KEEP ME!

## 18 Detractors from Mature Academic Voice

1. **Use of first person.** Avoid “I think,” “I believe,” “To me this means...”
2. **Use of second person “you.”** Avoid the use of the second person. No: “when you die...” Instead use: “When humans die...” No: “The slant rhyme makes you notice...” Instead use: “The slant rhyme makes the reader notice.”
3. **Colloquial speech and immature, excessively informal vocabulary.** Examples: “Your average Joe,” “Joe College,” “Back in the olden days,” “Nowadays,” “A bunch of...a ton of...” (Does the writer mean “a significant number of...”?); “I would have to say...” (Not really); “That would have to be...” (Again, not really)
4. **Use of psychobabble:** “Pap destroyed Huck’s self-esteem.” “The peer pressure on Hester Prynne,” “Gatsby was depressed by...” “Huck and Jim’s life-style on the raft...” “Virginia Woolf, herself a depressed person, writes a rather bi-polar essay.”
5. **Use of absolutes:** “always” “never” “everybody” “I’ll bet 99.9% of the people...”
6. **Excesses of tone:** hysterical, breathless, indignant, self-righteous, cute, breezy, etc. Example: “If a homeless man even talks he gets arrested.”
7. **Cheerleading,** a special kind of excess of tone when the student lavishes praise on an author or her work. Examples: “The greatest poet...” “Does a magnificent job of...” “so awesome,” “obviously a genius,” “...will affect me for the rest of my life.” (Note: this observation is not intended to squelch true passion or heart-felt response to literature.)
8. **Silly, weak, childish examples:** students’ lack of discernment with regard to quality examples or evidence; using cartoons, Disney movies, etc. as legitimate evidence.
9. **Rhetorical questions,** especially those with an indignant response, such as: “Do we Americans have to put up with this? I think not!”
10. **Clichés,** all of them. They’re as old as the hills.
11. **Exclamation points,** especially lots of them!!!!!!
12. **Most adverbs,** such as basically, obviously, surely, certainly, very, really, incredibly, totally, etc. should be used sparingly!

13. **Writing about the author or the speaker or narrator as though they are the same.** Weak: Dickinson greets death as a courtly suitor. Stronger: Dickinson's speaker greets Death as a courtly suitor.
14. **Misspelling the author's name!**
15. **Referring to authors by their first names.** Please use "Whitman and Dickinson," never "Walt and Emily."
16. **Writing about an author's life rather than his or her work or specific purpose in a text.** Weak: "Whitman and Dickinson write about death differently due to their different life experiences." Better: "Dickinson's purpose in using this image is..." or "Whitman's imagery suggests..."
17. **Using technical vocabulary incorrectly.** Examples: "Green uses emotional syntax." "She uses dictional phrases like..." "His short fragments are all connected by commas and collaborated into a few run-on sentences."
18. **Gobbledygook, usually some kind of combination of the characteristics listed above.** It imitates pretentious writing but says little. Examples: "The author brilliantly uses a hyphen in order to emphasize and reinforce motivation and justice that God provides and installs in each and every man." "Meger (sic) imagery provided by the author commences to place a precedence (sic) of their style, a conventional rhetoric that gives the passage somewhat of a quixotic tone."