

## The Third Canon: Style

Style is the complement of invention; whereas invention provides the “content,” style provides and fills out the “form.” Although style is often thought of simply as “ornamentation,” the Latin term *ornare* is substantive and means “to equip, fit out, or supply.” A soldier was thus “ornamented” with the weapons of war, meaning that a soldier without style was not, in fact, prepared to fight as a soldier. Similarly, rhetorical style is not the frivolous decoration of ideas; it is the filling out and forming of ideas in order to allow them to stand on their own and organize themselves as a coherent whole. Just as the military is made up both of individual soldiers and whole platoons, style includes both particular parts of the speech (“figurative style”) as well as the tone of the speech in its entirety (“formal style”). It is important to keep this distinction in mind, for often speakers focus too much on the style of the parts at the expense of the whole.

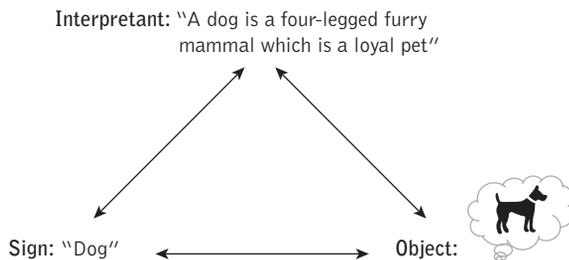
With respect to the notion of form as the arousing and satisfying of the appetites of the audience, style represents the unique manner in which a speaker guides an audience through a speech and makes transitions between different items gathered through invention and then structured through arrangement. One can think of style as a way of linking or threading different things together so that they all feel like parts of the same thing. For instance, one might think of a speech through the metaphor of a museum. Invention acquires the artworks and arrangement places them in certain categories and in certain rooms. However, arrangement itself does not guarantee a worthwhile experience for the museum-goer. Sometimes even the most masterfully arranged material seems to just hang there on the wall as people move methodically from room to room, looking at each individual picture but not feeling like it all adds up to anything. Yet a tour guide can add “style” to the experience simply by the manner in which he or she introduces a particular artwork and then transitions the audience to the next room or the next work with little more than his or her personality. A poor tour guide simply relies on the “psychology of information” to keep the attention of the audience by deluging them in surprising facts; a masterful tour guide will emphasize the “psychology of form” and rely more on creating a certain lively atmosphere that makes the experience intrinsically enjoyable. The feeling of “style” is thus akin to the overall feeling of movement produced by the tour guide—whether it was slow and deliberate or lively and entertaining or grandfatherly and contemplative, for example.

There are two kinds of style, with each serving an important function. **Formal style** is effectively synonymous with what I have called “form,” which is the overall tone and feel of a speech in its totality. Formal style is connected with the notion of genre, such that we might think of a speech as fitting a certain type that carries with it a certain feeling, like a “somber eulogy” or an “impassioned defense” or a “soapbox oration” or an “old-time revival.” It is the complete impression left upon us by a speech that allows us to reflect upon it as a whole experience and gives it its unique “character.” **Figurative style** represents specific elements of the speech designed to capture the attention and seduce the ear of the audience, thereby making them engaged with what is being said and creating more of a feeling of continuity and unity. Figurative style focuses on providing

short, refined, effective parts of a speech that give clarity and power to specific ideas or images.

**The Meanings of Signs** Understanding the basis not only of style, but also of substance, requires a brief excursion into **semiotics**, or the study of signs. Whenever we ask why a word (a “sign”) means what it does, we are discussing semiotics. This discussion is important for rhetoric for the simple fact that the success of speeches often is contingent on the very careful choice of words. Oftentimes, speakers will simply use words that are familiar to them without realizing that words can have multiple meanings for multiple audiences, and that often what we think is a very clear expression of a concrete idea becomes, when expressed in a speech, a vague expression of a muddled thought that results in misunderstanding. Correcting this state of affairs is what led the logician, scientist, and philosopher Charles Peirce to study the logic of signs. For him, “to know what we think, to be masters of our own meaning, will make a solid foundation for great and weighty thought.”<sup>15</sup> Similarly, to know how to speak well and to be masters of our own meaning will make a solid foundation for great and weighty rhetoric.

For the goal of making our ideas and language clear, Peirce designed a triadic theory of the meaning of a sign that consist of a *sign*, an *object*, and its *interpretant*. A **sign** is that which addresses somebody, in some respect or capacity, for something else (for instance, when a child exclaims “doggy!” to her mother when she sees the neighbor’s dog being walked on a leash). The **object** is what is represented by the sign (in this case, the thing which the child perceives to “be” the doggy out in the world). The **interpretant** is a more developed sign that mediates between the sign and its object that explains why they should go together (for instance, that “doggy” highlights the cute, furry, and friendly qualities of a domestic canine which makes the object more meaningful to a child). If one uses the metaphor of dictionary, the sign is the word, the interpretant is the definition, and the object is the picture which is the side the word and the definition. This relationship would be represented graphically in this way:



The arrows go in both directions because the relationship can begin with anyone of the three elements. For instance, a toddler might see a picture (the *object*) of a

<sup>15</sup>Charles Peirce, “How to Make Our Ideas Clear,” in *The Philosophy of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler, 23-41 (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1950), 25.

dog and ask “what is it?” The response is the *sign*: “A dog.” The child then asks: “But what is a dog?” The answer is the *interpretant*: “A cute, furry, friendly animal that people like to have as a pet.” Or one might know both the *object* and the *interpretant* but forget the sign. For instance, an adult might ask “what is that brown and black dog with pointed ears that police usually use?” The answer is a *sign*, “German Shepherd.” Or one might know the *sign* and *interpretant* but actively seek its “real” object. For instance, a parent wishes to find a “pet” (sign) which will be a gentle and affectionate friend for small children (interpretant). Although there existed an image of the object in the parent’s imagination, only after seeing many dogs does she point to one and say “that one!” The sign has now found its “real” object which corresponds to the “idea” of the object previously in the parent’s mind.

From this example, one can see that it is important to keep in mind that the “object” of the sign is not necessarily an actual, concrete thing; it is merely the “thing” that is called forth in the mind by the sign. Peirce writes that we should think of an object “in that sense in which we say that one man catches another man’s idea, in which we say that when a man recalls what he was thinking of at some previous time, he recalls the same idea, and in which when a man continues to think anything, save for a tenth of a second, insofar as the thought continues to agree with itself during that time...it is the same idea.”<sup>16</sup> An “idea” thus need not be real, only coherent and identifiable. This is what allows purely fictional entities such as centaurs or ghosts to still be “objects” despite the fact that they do not exist. “Real” objects are only rarely the content of signs, indicated by indexical terms like “this” or “that” that accompany an act of pointing. Most often, the objects of signs are ideas in the mind (as when we talk about somebody present “as if” they weren’t there). However, the more our signs accurately represent “real” objects, the more they help us predict and control our environment when we do interact with them in the “real world.” For instance, imagine that you have a friend under a great deal of stress at work who never seems to be able to relax. You might suggest: “Why don’t you get a dog so you can take it for walks?” This calls forth the idea of walking a dog, which through imagined interaction, produces confidence in your friend that he or she would actually feel better if they bought a dog that could take his or her mind off of work. Obviously, then, there existed no “real” dog which was the object of the sign; it was only the idea of a hypothetical dog called forth by the sign which functioned as an object for that sign. But the usefulness of the advice is nonetheless dependent on the person having a relatively clear and realistic notion of the pragmatic effects of owning a dog as a pet. It is the function of interpretants to give us this greater understanding. The function of interpretants, then, is to tell us why certain signs are more appropriate to use over others when describing objects in certain situations. It makes a big difference, for instance, whether one uses the sign “dog,” “canine,” or “doggy” when speaking to a child, even if all three technically “refer” to the same object. This is because the interpretants

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<sup>16</sup>Charles Peirce, “Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs,” in *The Philosophy of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler, 98–119 (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1950), 99.

differ both in content and form. Peirce points out that interpretants come in three forms, emotional, energetic, and logical. The **logical interpretant** is analogous to the dictionary definition and corresponds to what is conventionally called the **denotative meaning** of a word, or what “thing” it objectively refers to. For instance, the term “dog” used in a veterinary classroom will mostly have a logical interpretant that emphasizes its biological characteristics as a type of mammal with certain health and nutritional needs. The **emotional interpretant** represents the feeling produced by the sign and comes closest to what is conventionally called the **connotative meaning**, or what qualities we associate with the object. The term “doggy” thus evokes feelings of affection and playfulness, whereas “carnivorous mammal” the same term would likely produce fear and anxiety for a person who has in the past been bitten by a dog about opposite affective responses. Finally, the **energetic interpretant** is the appropriate action or effect produced by the sign and corresponds to what we might call the **pragmatic meaning** of a word, or how it affects our behavior. The term “dog!” shouted by a burglar to his partner will literally “mean” that this object is something to flee from as soon as possible. In each case, the interpretant performs the function of telling the **interpreter** (the actual person interpreting the sign) what he or she should think, do, or feel about the object called forth by the sign.

Rhetorically, semiotics is important in encouraging us to take a close look at the words that we use in order to avoid misunderstanding and maximize our persuasive power. A rhetorical speaker must therefore be highly attuned to the unique circumstances of the speech act and the idiosyncratic qualities and attitudes of the audience and be prepared to modify a speech on the spot when it becomes apparent that words that were intended to do one thing start doing another. Here is a brief list of things to consider when trying to choose the right sign (or “word”) for the right occasion:

1. *For certain audiences, some signs may not refer to any objects:* This simple fact is readily apparent any time we visit a foreign country in which we do not know the language and the signs simply do not call forth any object whatsoever. We also have this experience when we encounter unfamiliar slang or technical jargon. Simply because a sign may be meaningful to certain audiences does not mean it is meaningful to any audience. It is the responsibility of the speaker to speak in meaningful signs.
2. *Simply labeling an object with a sign does not produce an interpretant:* Oftentimes, people are content simply with pointing at something and giving it a name and thinking that is sufficient for the production of meaning. For instance, one might walk into a garden and find lots of Latin names stuck in front of plants. But this does not convey much in the way of meaning to those unfamiliar with botanical terminology. It does not tell us what characteristics the plant has, what emotions we should attach to the plant, or what we should do when encountering the plant. When introducing new signs for objects, the burden falls on the speaker to suggest to the audience the proper interpretants, as when the Latin name suggests a species of poison ivy that we should avoid direct contact with and then tear up from the root using gloves.

3. *A single sign may refer to multiple objects:* For instance, the sign “table” can be both a noun and a verb. As a noun, it can call forth the image of  or of . As a verb, its object is the act of putting off an item of business until a later time. Only the context of its use determines which object is called forth by the sign.
4. *Members of an audience may each have different interpretants for the same object:* For instance, the sign “the American dream” for most people may call forth the same basic image of a person aspiring to a better life. However, for some people, the logical interpretant will be “the guiding principle of American political economy” (with its corresponding emotional interpretant of pride), whereas for others it will be “a myth propagated to mask economic inequality” (with its corresponding emotional interpretant of disgust). Still others will call forth an energetic interpretant to take out a loan and start a business.
5. *Some signs have only emotional interpretants:* For instance, Peirce writes that “the performance of a piece of concerted music is a sign” whose meaning “usually consist merely in a series of feelings.”<sup>17</sup> Consequently, often when we talk about music, our reactions usually deal with our emotional responses of like and dislike. Most of our interactions with the signs of art or nature call forth objects that primarily have emotional interpretants.
6. *Some signs have only energetic interpretants:* For instance, imperative signs such as “Go!” or “Fire!” or “Hey!” are primarily intended to bring about immediate actions rather than any particular “idea” that can be stated as a proposition.
7. *Some signs have only logical interpretants:* Many technical terms bring forth neither emotional nor energetic reactions because they refer to objects that are not connected with our everyday lives. Few people feel passion or the need to act when they encounter the signs “hexide” and “blastocyst.” However, it is not infrequent that signs normally confined to technical jargon become terms loaded with emotional and energetic interpretants when they cause potential health concerns, as with the signs “asbestos” and “dioxin.”
8. *Referring to the same object with different signs produces different interpretants:* The interpretant is not tied to the object. It is produced by the interaction between the sign and the object. For instance, the signs “water” and “H<sub>2</sub>O” technically both refer to the same object. However, the sign “water” produces stronger emotional and energetic interpretants than H<sub>2</sub>O because water is something we drink and swim in, whereas H<sub>2</sub>O refers simply to the atomic composition of a molecule. Similarly, the words “dog,” “doggie,” “mutt,” “pooch,” and “canine” all arguably refer to pretty much the same object; however, each one has very different potential logical, emotional, and energetic interpretants. A master rhetorician will select the precise sign for each audience that produces the desired interpretants of specific objects.

<sup>17</sup>Charles Peirce, “Pragmatism in Retrospect: A Last Formulation,” in *The Philosophy of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler, 269–290 (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1950), 277.

**Concrete Words** We begin to see the practical utility of semiotics when we begin applying it to matters of style. For instance, most public speaking textbooks advise speakers to use concrete words in their speeches. A **concrete word** has a meaningful reference to specific and readily identifiable qualities or actions in order to give an audience a more vivid experience of some thing or an event. From a semiotic perspective, a concrete word is a familiar sign that immediately calls forth clear and distinct objects that have explicit logical interpretants and powerful emotional interpretants. Peirce defines something that is “clear” as being “so apprehended that it will be recognized where ever it is met with, and so that no other will be mistaken for it. If it fails of this clearness, it is said to be obscure.”<sup>18</sup> Too often, we use relatively obscure words like “good” and “people” and “virtuous” because they come to mind easily, usually avoid risk, and are vague enough not to be wrong. When we are not sure what we are talking about and do not want to offend anyone, speaking obscurely is a way of playing it safe. However, obscure language never persuaded anyone of anything. Only language that calls forth vivid images in the mind that carry with them strong emotional and energetic responses can carry the day with rhetoric.

The advice to use concrete words therefore is simply to use clear and powerful words whenever possible. Usually when people think of concrete words, they think of nouns. For instance, the noun *the red table* is preferable to the pronoun *it*, the word *Brazil* is preferable to *country*, or the word *fire ants* is more concrete than *insects*. However, it is important to point out that a concrete word does not refer only to nouns. Concrete words also apply to verbs and adjectives. In terms of verbs, the weakest way of writing is the use of the “passive voice,” which makes the subject a target of an action rather than the initiator of one. Consider, for example, “The book was read today” or “He is being punished.” Notice how much more “concrete” it sounds to write, instead, “Janet read the book” or “His father punished him.” Also, overuse of the verb *to be* tends to make a speech repetitive. A sentence like “I am mad” can be turned into “My blood boils,” and “Rain is good” can be turned into “Rain gives life.” Finally, adjectives can also be made more concrete. Rather than sticking to generic adjectives such as *good*, *bad*, *happy*, *sad*, *helpful*, *harmful*, and the like, try to pick out the specific aspects of a thing that makes it those things. For example, “That’s a pretty car” can be made into “The red color on the hood made a striking contrast with the bright white roof.” In other words, the more specifically you can describe something, the more vivid the image will be in the mind of the audience and the more they will enjoy your speech.

**Figures and Tropes** Whereas concrete words attempt to use clear language that conveys ideas that cannot be mistaken for any others, figures and tropes exploit the capacity for signs to take on multiple meanings and to convey multiple feelings. A **figure** is a series of signs designed to produce emotional interpretants based on an appeal to the ear (e.g., alliteration: “The day dawned with delight”). A figure uses language that departs from its conventional structure for the purpose of integrating

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<sup>18</sup>Charles Peirce, “How to Make Our Ideas Clear,” in *The Philosophy of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler, 5–22 (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 195), 23.

poetic style and a musical sense of rhythm, which usually produces feelings of pleasure and harmony that we associate with beautiful works of art. By contrast, a **trope** is a series of signs designed to produce complex logical interpretants based on appeal to the mind (e.g., metaphor: “The year began with a sigh”). Whereas a figure seduces and calms the ear, a trope stimulates and challenges the mind to discern the logical meaning behind an ironic play of signs. In this case, the mind knows that a year cannot literally begin by exhaling a great deal of air once; it therefore uses the emotional interpretant of “sigh” (being a state of sadness, exhaustion, and resignation) and uses that as the proper sign to interpret the beginning of the year.

Figures are valuable to speeches because they provide a sort of “musical accompaniment” to the speech, thereby setting the tone for the occasion as well as placing the audience in a certain frame of mind to receive the message. It is a commonly known fact that messages tend to be recalled with greater clarity and emotional weight when they have a sense of rhythm and rhyme. The fact that complex song lyrics are easier to remember than clear but abstract definitions indicates the power of figures to leave a lasting impression. The same message conveyed without figures has a far greater chance of being forgotten than the one that was composed by a speaker who took the time to listen carefully to the sound of language with a musical ear. Following are listed some of the most important figures that appear in rhetoric:

1. *Parallelism*: Placing similar rhythmic structures, words, phrases, or clauses into repetitive sequence (“Rich and poor, young and old, they came here to live, and we embraced them with love.”).
2. *Antithesis*: The juxtaposition of contrasting ideas, often in parallel structure (“Do not weep for my death, but smile for my having lived.”).
3. *Alliteration*: The repetition of words that begin with the same consonant sound (“The soft, slow, surge of the sea.”).
4. *Epistrophe*: The repetition of the same word or group of words at the ends of successive clauses (“When we came, they were here. When we left, they were here.”).
5. *Repetition*: The repetition of the same word or groups of words at the beginnings of successive clauses (“We shall fight in the land, we shall fight in the sea, we shall fight in the air.”).

Tropes are useful because they stimulate the rational imagination to discern the meaning behind signs, thus generating a pleasure in participation very similar to the effects of a good puzzle or a riddle. The basis behind tropes can be understood through the previous discussion of semiotics. As described previously, not only can a single sign refer to multiple objects, but multiple signs can refer to the same object and therefore produce multiple interpretants. For instance, the statement “the man is a lion” is meaningful to us even though we know that the man is not literally a lion. The mind realizes that the two objects cannot be synonymous, so it starts sifting through other possible interpretants of those objects that then can be translated into appropriate meanings. The harder and more difficult the trope, the harder the mind has to work to discern its meaning. This can increase the pleasure and level of participation in an audience when it reaches the correct level of difficulty, but beyond that it becomes too much labor and thereby acts as a repellent to the audience members, who will turn their attention to other things.

Writing tropes that convey the correct meaning and challenge the audience at the ideal level is a most difficult art.<sup>19</sup> Following is a list of the most important tropes:

1. *Metaphor*: A description of one thing directly in terms of something of unlike nature to emphasize a particular quality that they share (“My love is a beautiful rose.”).
2. *Synecdoche*: The use of a part of something to stand in for the whole of it (“After the World Trade Center bombings, we were all New Yorkers.”).
3. *Metonymy*: A description of something personal and abstract in terms of a concrete object associated with it (“The other baseball team has its two big bats coming up.”).
4. *Irony*: The use of a word or phrase in such a way that it conveys the opposite meaning (“Lucky for us, World War I was the war to end all wars.”).
5. *Simile*: Explicit comparison between two things of unlike nature (generally using “like” or “as” to make it explicit: “She runs like a deer.”).
6. *Personification*: A description of abstract or nonhuman objects as if they possessed human qualities (“The waves leapt forward and pulled me back into the ocean.”).
7. *Hyperbole*: The use of extreme exaggeration to highlight a specific quality or idea (“When my boss started yelling at me, I could feel the whole office building shaking.”).
8. *Oxymoron*: The placement of two terms together that seem contradictory (“There is no such thing as a smart bomb. They are all equally mindless.”).
9. *Paradox*: The statement of an apparent contradiction that nevertheless contains a measure of truth (“How strange it is that getting cancer saved my life. Only now have I come to value what is important in the world.”).

**Visual Aids** A visual aid supplements the verbal component of a speech with graphic displays intended to effectively condense complex material or to convey meanings that cannot be captured with language itself. Visual aids are different from visual rhetoric. In visual rhetoric, the image is the form of persuasion itself—as in a billboard, a political cartoon, or an iconic photograph. This textbook, focusing on the act of speaking, will not address the complexities of visual rhetoric. A **visual aid**, by contrast, is a part of figurative style, using an image to more effectively convey a specific idea or emotion. Such aids include the bar graphs and tables of speech of administration, the personal objects often used in introductory speeches, the graphic images and statistics used in speeches of advocacy to dramatize problems, and the photographs or symbols useful in commemorative speeches in stimulating memory and emotion. Visual aids perform two major functions:

1. They simplify complex information that otherwise could not effectively be explained.
2. They graphically visualize an event, object, person, or process whose details are necessary for understanding a speech.

<sup>19</sup>See I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1936).

To be effective, visual aids should be large enough to see and colorful and interesting enough to capture an audience's attention. However, more is not necessarily better. We are often so inundated with visual images that we often assume that we should always try to use as many visual aids as possible. But as a general rule, visual aids should be kept to a minimum and should never be forced into a speech simply to "dress it up" if there is no reason for them to be there. If a good description can describe something with eloquence, then a picture of that event does not "add" to the speech. It replaces or competes with it. Visual aids should never be in competition with the speaker or the speech. Whenever a visual aid takes attention away from the speech itself, it has failed in its purpose as an *aid*. In other words, a visual aid should be used to supplement a speech by performing a task that only a visual aid can perform. For example,

1. A *bar graph* will easily compare the gross national products of twenty nations at a glance.
2. A *line graph* will show the growth and decline of a nation's economy over a decade.
3. A *pie chart* will demonstrate the economic wealth of ten different social classes.
4. A *map* will show where the highest concentrations of population are in a nation.
5. A *representation* will reveal the process of offshore oil drilling.
6. An *object* will best show the amount of butter people were allowed during World War II.
7. A *flowchart* will show the steps that it takes for grain to get to market.
8. A *photograph* will show how far glaciers have retreated in twenty years.
9. A *chalkboard* drawing will spell out what NAFTA stands for.
10. A *handout* will provide an audience with the specific language of a proposed law.
11. A *posterboard* will show different types of fabric manufactured in the 1900s.

The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration website has a useful summary of strategies for visual aids (<http://www.osha.gov/doc/outreachtraining/html-files/traintec.html>).

**Spoken Citation Style** Finally, style deals with the proper way of relating information. Especially for informative speeches, it is vital not only to acquire but to cite and quote accurate sources to give yourself credibility. Here are some guidelines for how to smoothly incorporate citations into your speech.

1. *Well-known and uncontroversial facts:* There is no citation needed for the obvious. Do not clutter a speech by citing things an audience takes for granted.
  - a. GOOD. "Over 2,000,000 people were killed in the Civil War."
  - b. BAD. "According to *Encyclopedia Online*. . ."
2. *Unknown or controversial facts released by people and institutions in press releases:* When your information comes directly from the source and you have access to that source, just cite that original source by name. Do not cite any subsequent news publication that may have repeated this information.

- a. GOOD. “The Economy Institute released a report in June that claimed environmental restrictions hurt economic growth.”
  - b. BAD. “*The Times* reported in July that a report by the Brookings Institute in June said. . . .”
3. *Unknown or controversial facts published secondhand by news publications:* When a newspaper has cited some startling fact, make sure to cite *both* the source and the news publication that first reported it. The fact is that sometimes news reports will “spin” facts in certain ways, so it is important to acknowledge that you are getting it secondhand.
- a. GOOD. “Hodgedale Industries recently was reported in the *New York Times* as saying that its medical screening technologies have saved over 2,000 women’s lives in the year 2001.”
  - b. BAD. “*The New York Times* claims that Hodgedale Industries has saved. . . .”
  - c. BAD. “Hodgedale Industries has saved. . . .”
  - d. BAD. “Hodgedale Industries claims to have saved. . . .”
4. *Quoting famous people:* Generally, important quotes by famous people only need a citation by the name of the person, not the time, place, or manner in which the passage was written or spoken.
- a. GOOD. “Socrates once said that “the unexamined life is not worth living.”
  - b. BAD. “In 430 B.C., Socrates was once quoted in Plato’s *Critias* that. . . .”
5. *Quoting professionals or experts:* For all other quotes, cite the name, status or position, and the forum in which the quote appeared.
- a. GOOD. “In the *New York Times*, of Sept. 3, Gail Hansen, an epidemiologist who works for Pew Charitable Trusts, said ‘at some point the available science can be used in making policy decisions.’”
  - b. GOOD. “In today’s *New York Times*, a notable epidemiologist said. . . .”
  - c. BAD. “Gail Hansen said. . . .”
  - d. BAD. “The *New York Times* reported that ‘at some point. . . .’”
6. *Citing bare, uncontroversial facts reported in newspapers:* For isolated facts that do not merit a lot of attention, just cite the publication in which that fact appeared.
- a. GOOD. “The *New York Times* reported in 2010 that 34 percent of the population is obese.”
  - b. BAD. “Thirty-four percent of the population is obese.”
  - c. BAD. “A study based on national surveys that record heights and weights of a representative sample of Americans, in which people are considered obese if their body mass index—a ratio of height to weight—is thirty or greater, noted that 34 percent of the population is obese.”
7. *Using stories or anecdotes found in magazines or websites:* When you use examples, it is important to make them sound like stories. The temptation is to ignore the need for citation. However, it is very important to cite the source and its author to give examples credibility. You simply need to find a discrete way to fit it in without ruining the flow of the narrative.
- a. GOOD. “Anna had just arrived from Russia when she was arrested by police, who accused her of spying. She was put in a cell for two months and was not able to see anyone. Her story, finally told last August in *The New Republic*, raises serious questions about our civil liberties.”

- b. BAD. “Anna had just arrived from Russia when she was arrested by police, who accused her of spying. She was put in a cell for two months and was not able to see anyone. Can we let this happen in the United States?”
- c. BAD. “In a recent issue of *The New Republic*, a story appeared about a girl. . . .”

**Discussion:** We are constantly challenged to judge when a style has “substance” and when it is just “superficial.” In terms of our judgments of self, the former is associated with reflections of “character” (like the unique habits of a superstar athlete) and the latter is indicative of mere “fashion” (like that athlete’s name-brand merchandise). How do you distinguish between substantial and superficial style? When do you think our style choices not just show something significant about ourselves and our character, but actually form our character?

### The Fourth Canon: Memory

The art of memory naturally followed style because once a speech was written, an orator in the Classical age had to memorize it before delivery. **Memory** as the fourth canon refers to the ability to memorize a text and to reproduce it in a manner that seems natural rather than artificial. The canon of memory, in short, is the act of absorbing the content and form of the speech so fully into oneself that the speech feels like an unforced expression of one’s thoughts and feelings. Often neglected, the canon of memory remains one of the most important facets of an effective speech for two reasons. For the speaker, memorizing and therefore internalizing a speech provides the level of confidence we normally feel in our casual conversations with others. One of the reasons we do not feel nervous speaking to people during most of the day is the fact that we know what we are going to say and have a reason to say it. When we fail to memorize a speech adequately, we often feel like we are speaking someone else’s words and therefore feel awkward and self-conscious. For the audience, hearing a speech that feels like it comes “from the heart” and not from a manuscript or a teleprompter makes the message more powerful and more sincere and therefore creates a much greater feeling of community and participation.

Unfortunately, memorizing a speech has never become a science. After several thousand years of human beings giving orations and performing dramas, there remain as many techniques for memorizing speeches and lines as there ever have been. However, certain general principles have largely been established that can be useful in developing one’s own preferred technique for memorization. It is important to try out various combinations and strategies in order to find the one that best suits you:

1. *Read the speech out loud:* When we read to ourselves silently our minds and bodies are not preparing themselves to perform the text out loud. We read silently to absorb information and to process it, not to memorize it and reproduce it. An absolutely essential component of memorization is reading this speech out loud and in a strong voice that fills the room. Whispering to oneself on the bus will not produce a confident speech. One must find a private place in which one can hear one’s own voice.