

## *Exercises in Style* by Raymond Queneau

*Exercises in Style* is a playful, experimental book that retells the same simple story in 99 different styles, tones, and linguistic forms, from poetry to slang to exaggerated literary styles. Each variation plays with language, structure, and point of view to show how many ways a story can be shaped.



In the S bus, in the rush hour. A chap of about 26, felt hat with a cord instead of a ribbon, neck too long, as if someone's been having a tug-of-war with it. People getting off. The chap in question gets annoyed with one of the men standing next to him. He accuses him of jostling him every time anyone goes past. A snivelling tone which is meant to be aggressive. When he sees a vacant seat he throws himself on to it.

Two hours later, I meet him in the Cour de Rome, in front of the gare Saint-Lazare. He's with a friend who's saying: "You ought to get an extra button put on your overcoat." He shows him where (at the lapels) and why.

incomplete sentences, like bullet points

\* use of adjectives to describe in detail

Writing Style	Notation
Description	A sparse, telegraphic format that resembles quick, observational notes
Keywords	observations, essential details, objective
Phrases that builds the style of the writing	S bus, rush hour, chap of about 26, felt hat with a cord instead of a ribbon, neck too long, tug-of-war, gets annoyed, jostling, snivelling tone, aggressive, throws himself on to it, two hours, Cour de Rome, in front of the gare Saint-Lazare, "You ought to get an extra button put on your overcoat", (at the lapels)
Commentary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• focuses solely on brief, factual details and omits emotional or subjective language</li><li>• highlights how minimal language can still convey a scene</li><li>• emphasizes the power of brevity in storytelling, leaving much to the readers' interpretation and imagination</li></ul>

# Double Entry

Towards the middle of the day and at midday I happened to be on and got on to the platform and the balcony at the back of an S-line and of a Contrescarpe-Champerret bus and passenger transport vehicle which was packed and to all intents and purposes full. I saw and noticed a young man and an old adolescent who was rather ridiculous and pretty grotesque; thin neck and skinny windpipe, string and cord round his hat and tile. After a scrimmage and scuffle he says and states in a lachrymose and snivelling voice and tone that his neighbour and fellow-traveller is deliberately trying and doing his utmost to push him and obtrude himself on him every time anyone gets off and makes an exit. This having been declared and having spoken he rushes headlong and wends his way towards a vacant and a free place and seat.

Two hours after and a-hundred-and-twenty minutes later, I meet him and see him again in the Cour de Rome and in front of the gare Saint-Lazare. He is with and in the company of a friend and pal who is advising and urging him to have a button and vegetable ivory disc added and sewn on to his overcoat and mantle.

\* Debit  
↓  
credit

\* again, very detailed.

Writing Style

Double Entry

Description

Uses the structure of a financial ledger or accounting record to retell the story

Keywords

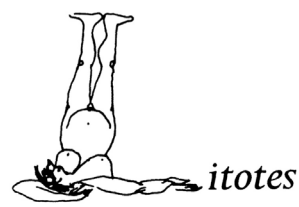
Clinical tone, Accountant format, Debit & Credits

Phrases that builds the style of the writing

Debit	and	Credit
Two hours after	<->	a-hundred-and-twenty minutes later, I meet him
see him again in the Cour de Rome	<->	in front of the gare Saint-Lazare
He is with	<->	in the company of a friend
pal who is advising	<->	urging him to have a button

Commentary

- story becomes a series of transactional entries
- emphasizes how different forms of writing can drastically alter the tone and perceived meaning of a simple story
- highlights the versatility of narrative style and plays with the idea that even the most mundane actions can be transformed into formal, structured records



Some of us were travelling together. A young man, who didn't look very intelligent, spoke to the man next to him for a few moments, then he went and sat down. Two hours later I met him again; he was with a friend and was talking about clothes.

Writing Style	Litotes
Description	a form of understatement, often involves expressing a positive by negating its opposite
Keywords	Understatement, Negative phrasing
Phrases that builds the style of the writing	A young man, who didn't look very intelligent
Commentary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• downplays actions and descriptions</li><li>• softening or indirectly suggesting qualities instead of stating them outright</li><li>• creates a restrained, ironic tone that makes ordinary details seem less emphatic or significant</li><li>• demonstrates how understatement can subtly influence readers' interpretations</li></ul>



In the centre of the day, tossed among the shoal of travelling sardines in a coleopter with a big white carapace, a chicken with a long, featherless neck suddenly harangued one, a peace-abiding one, of their number, and its parlance, moist with protest, was unfolded upon the airs. Then, attracted by a void, the fledgling precipitated itself thereunto.

\* use of metaphors.

In a bleak, urban desert, I saw it again that self-same day, drinking the cup of humiliation offered by a lowly button.

Writing Style	Metaphorically
Description	Use of vivid and exaggerated metaphors
Keywords	Figurative Language, Abstract, Exaggeration
Phrases that builds the style of the writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• tossed among the shoal of travelling sardines in a coleopter witha big white carapce</li><li>• a chicken with a long, featherless neck</li><li>• a peaceabiding one, of their number, and it parlance, moist with protest</li><li>• the fledging precipitated itself thereunto</li><li>• urban desert</li><li>• drinking the cup of humiliation</li><li>• lowly button</li></ul>
Commentary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gives the story a poetic and imaginative twist</li><li>• emphasizes the expressive power of metaphor, transforming an ordinary scene into a surreal experience</li><li>• Highlights how metaphors can reshape reality</li></ul>



You ought to put another button on your overcoat, his friend told him. I met him in the middle of the Cour de Rome, after having left him rushing avidly towards a seat. He had just protested against being pushed by another passenger who, he said, was jostling him every time anyone got off. This scraggy young man was the wearer of a ridiculous hat. This took place on the platform of an S bus which was full that particular midday.

\* written in reverse-chronological order

Writing Style	Retrograde
Description	Story retold in reverse chronological order, starting with the events at the end and working backward to the beginning
Keywords	Abnormal sequence, Sense of detachment, Reverse
Phrases that builds the style of the writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>after</b> having left him</li><li>• This scraggy young man <b>was the wearer</b> of a ridiculous hat</li><li>• This <b>took place</b> on the platform of an S bus which <b>was</b> full <b>that particular midday</b></li></ul>
Commentary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• draws attention to the structure and progression of narrative</li><li>• highlights how manipulating time and sequence can change a story's impact,</li><li>• Not cause-and-effect, but effect-to-cause</li><li>• challenges conventional storytelling, making it feel unfamiliar and thought-provoking</li></ul>



How tightly packed in we were on that bus platform! And how stupid and ridiculous that young man looked! And what was he doing? Well, if he wasn't actually trying to pick a quarrel with a chap who—so he claimed! the young fop! kept on pushing him! And then he didn't find anything better to do than to rush off and grab a seat which had become free! Instead of leaving it for a lady!

Two hours after, guess whom I met in front of the gare Saint-Lazare! The same fancy-pants! Being given some sartorial advice! By a friend!  
You'd never believe it!

Writing Style	Surprises
Description	narrates the story by inserting unexpected or surprising twists into the ordinary events, deviating from the straight-forward telling
Keywords	Tone shifts, Exaggerated details, Out-of-place descriptions
Phrases that builds the style of the writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>use of "!" exclamation point &gt;&gt; total 12 times used</b></li><li>• so he claimed!</li><li>• Instead of leaving it for a lady!</li><li>• guess whom I met in front of the gare Saint-Lazare!</li><li>• You'd never believe it!</li></ul>
Commentary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• introduces humor and unpredictability into the simple story</li><li>• plays with the element of surprise to engage the reader</li><li>• demonstrates how unexpected details or shifts in storytelling can dramatically alter the tone and mood of a narrative</li></ul>