

Collaborative Style Activity

For this activity, you'll translate passages of one writer into the style of another. Some key features of each author's style are listed below. In your groups, work to rewrite each quotation as it might have been written by the other author.

Names:

Features of John Steinbeck's Style:

- **A thorough description of the land and environment, in simple, sometimes disturbing terms.** (*the long seeders...raping methodically, raping the land.*)
- **A seeming judgment on people and machinery and what they've done to the earth.** (*We've got to take the cotton quick, before the land dies. Then we'll sell the land. Lots of families in the east would like to own a piece of land.*)
- **People described as simple everyday folk.** (*The tenant men stood beside the cars for awhile, and then squatted on their hams and found sticks with which to mark the dust.*)
- **Symbolism and metaphor and personification related to the treatment of the land.** (*The Bank--or the Company—needs—wants—insists—must have—as though the Bank or the Company were a monster, with thought and feeling, which had ensnared them.*)
- **Parallel sentence structure and repetition, building on previous ideas.** (*He could not cheer or beat or curse or encourage the extension of his power, and because of this he could not cheer or whip or curse or encourage himself. He did not know or own or trust or beseech the land.*)
- **Dialog and dialect, when people talk.** (*The children crowded around the women in the houses. What we going to do, Ma? Where we going to go?*)

Features of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Style:

- **A statement followed by a list of adjectives.** (*The only thing we have to fear is fear itself – nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.*)
- **Parallel sentence structure and repetition.** (*Faced by failure of credit, they have proposed only the lending of more money. Stripped of the lure of profit by which to induce our people to follow their false leadership, they have resorted to exhortations, pleading tearfully for restored confidence.*)
- **Use of semicolons to strengthen the argument.** (*Values have shrunk to fantastic levels; taxes have risen; our ability to pay has fallen; government of all kinds is faced by serious curtailment of income; the means of exchange are frozen in the currents of trade; the withered leaves of industrial enterprise lie on every side...)*
- **References to war as a metaphor.** (*With this pledge taken, I assume unhesitatingly the leadership of this great army of our people dedicated to a disciplined attack upon our common problems.*)
- **Complicated sentence structure with many commas.** (*Primarily, this is because the rulers of the exchange of mankind's goods have failed, through their own stubbornness and their own incompetence, have admitted their failure, and have abdicated.*)
- **Higher level vocabulary.** (*The joy, the moral stimulation of work no longer must be forgotten in the mad chase of evanescent profits.*)

Style Example Quotations

AN EXERCISE IN STYLE

STEINBECK (from <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> , 1939)	ROOSEVELT (from First Inaugural Address, 1933)
1. "A large red drop of sun lingered on the horizon and then dripped over and was gone, and the sky was brilliant over the spot where it had gone, and a torn cloud, like a bloody rag, hung over the spot of its going."	1.
2. "This is the zygote. For here "I lost my land" is changed; a cell is split and from its splitting grows the thing you hate—"we lost <i>our</i> land." The danger is here, for two men are not as lonely and perplexed as one."	2.
3. "Casy said solemnly, "This here ol' man jus' lived a life an' jus' died out of it. I don' know whether he was good or bad, but that don't matter much. He was alive, an' that's what matters. An' now he's dead, an' that don't matter.'""	3.
4.	4. "More important, a host of unemployed citizens face the grim problem of existence, and an equally great number toil with little return. Only a foolish optimist can deny the dark realities of the moment."
5.	5. "Compared with the perils which our forefathers conquered, because they believed and were not afraid, we have still much to be thankful for. Nature still offers her bounty and human efforts have multiplied it. Plenty is at our doorstep, but a generous use of it languishes in the very sight of the supply."
6.	6. "Recognition of that falsity of material wealth as the standard of success goes hand in hand with the abandonment of the false belief that public office and high political position are to be valued only by the standards of pride of place and personal profit; and there must be an end to a conduct in banding and in business which too often has given to a sacred trust the likeness of callous and selfish wrongdoing."