4th of July

What does the 4th of July mean to you? Andrew is soliciting paragraphs on this for the Peace Newsletter.

Scene Meditation

“Writing is like meditation: You sit breathing in silence, only you add one thing—the writing. Instead of letting thoughts and pictures and feelings go by, you hold on to them. You slow them down. You find the words for them. Writing, you shine light—the light of your intelligence—into a scene of the past, into the dark of forgotten things, fearful things. Writing, you change. And you change the world, even the past. You make history. Write things out, and you won’t need to carry memories in your body as pain. The paper will carry your stories. We, your readers, will help you carry your stories. See how light paper is?”

“A scene is an event, an action in continuous time. Write a scene of joy, a scene of sorrow that happened once. Once upon a time … One morning … One night, it happened that … Envision the scene, and don’t look away. Tell us—the people here with you—what you see, and help us to see it. We want to see it. We want to hear you. Use the other senses too. Something happened—a tragedy, a joy. What was the smell and taste of it, the sound and touch of it?”

---Maxine Hong Kingston from the Fifth Book of Peace

Sentence Variation

The late medieval/early Renaissance writer Erasmus in his widely-used rhetorical guide, De duplici copia verborum ac rerum, showed the student 150 different styles one might use when phrasing the Latin sentence, "Your letter has delighted me very much" (Tuae literae me magnopere delectarunt). Edward Corbett shows some examples translated into English:

Your epistle has cheered me greatly.

Your note has been the occasion of unusual pleasure for me.

When your letter came, I was seized with an extraordinary pleasure.
What you wrote to me was most delightful.

On reading your letter, I was filled with joy.

Your letter provided me with no little pleasure. (1)

We could add many other examples to these:

I liked your letter.

My heart was all a-throbbing after finishing your note.

Your words brought a smile to my face.

I had to grin as I read your letter.

Your letter was a refreshing spot of color in my otherwise black-and-white existence.

The perusal of your epistle uplifted me from spiritual ennui.

Your letter pleased me.

What a joy it was to read your letter!

Of course, some of the resulting sentences will be monstrous and unusable. For instance, "The perusal of your epistle uplifted me from spiritual ennui" is downright supercilious.” Yet this sort of artificial experimentation will help you become aware of the flexibility of language and your range as a writer.

So choose a sentence from a piece you’ve written recently or sentence you create right now. Rewrite it ten different ways, experimenting with sentence structure and word choice, but try to stick to the original meaning of the sentence. Pick your best one to read out loud along with your original sentence.

**SOURCE:**