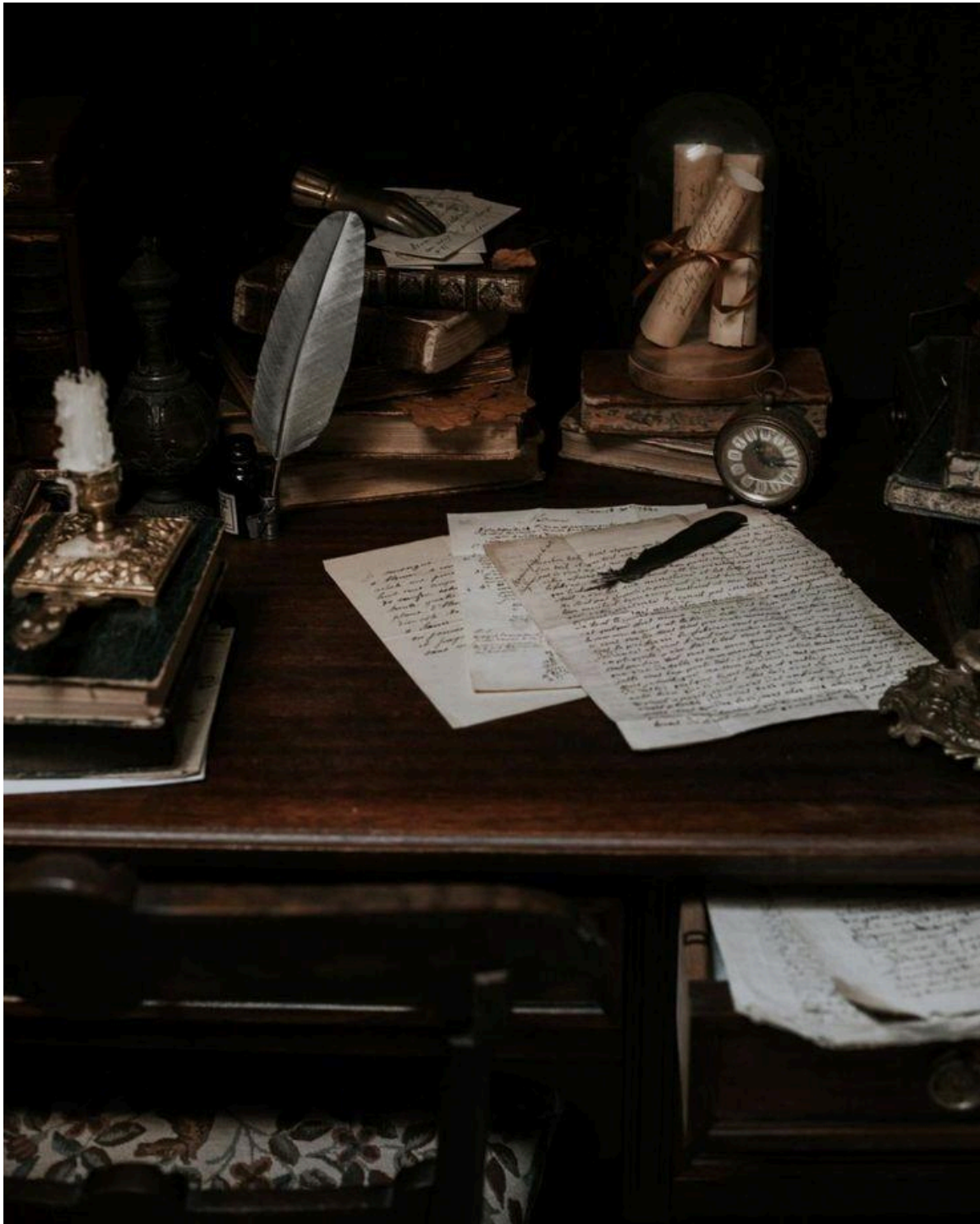


How to Write Beautifully

by Cassiopeia



Literary Description and Narrative

...Or how not to step into a pile of crap that will scare your readers away.

Since the dawn of time, every author — whether a seasoned professional or a total newbie — has been plagued by the same question: how the hell do you squeeze an interesting, or at least readable, text out of yourself? Essentially, that's a writer's main job: to dunk our drab, grayscale reality into a bucket of neon pigments and fish out a narrative that's as vibrant as it is delicious.

So, how do you turn a text into a piece of eye-candy so your readers don't just skim through it using the "one page out of every five" method?

Before we dive into the examples, I want you to embrace one simple truth: **IDEAL descriptions do not exist.** Seriously, just accept it and relax. No matter how hard you try, you can't please everyone. Some people love five-page-long emotional metaphors where the protagonist's soul is compared to a rusty radiator; others want to drown in lyrical odes to the setting sun; and a third group only cares about action and dialogue.

Leo Tolstoy: *Describes a birch*

Literature teachers:



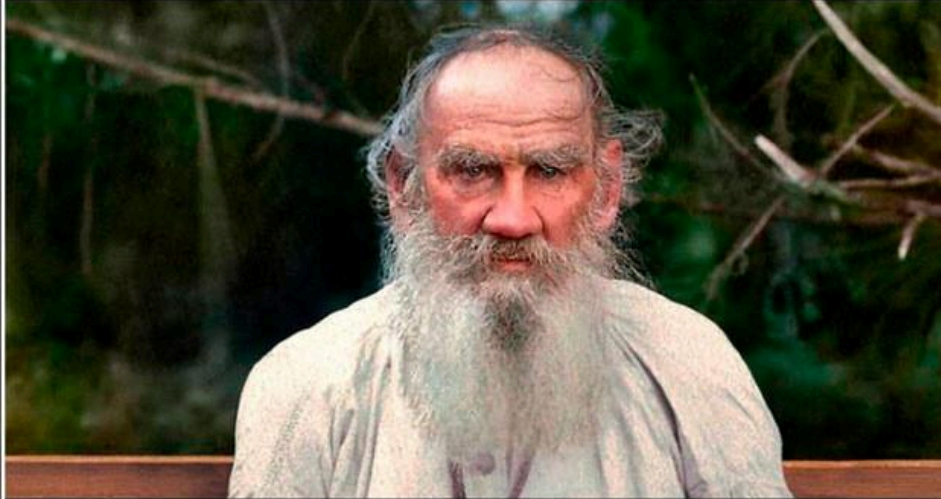
You probably have your own favorites too. Take a book by an author you consider a god of prose, re-read their work, and **shamelessly steal their style**. You won't be able to copy it perfectly anyway, but it'll definitely get your progress off the ground. *Note: We're stealing the style, not the plot or the characters!*

Also, let's talk about the importance of details. You don't need to turn every description into a three-volume encyclopedia. Sometimes it's enough to casually mention the texture, shape, or even the temperature of the surface under your character's butt.

And don't underestimate humor. A quick joke or a sharp jab from a character can brighten up and decompress even the heaviest story.

Now, let's move from vague advice to the real deal.

INSTEAD OF



A THOUSAND WORDS...

TWO THOUSAND WORDS

How NOT to write:

"Polina went to the wormwood field to weed it." (*Boring, dry, clinical*).

How you SHOULD write:

With a defiant flash in her eyes, Polina marched into the sweltering, overgrown field. She wiped the sticky sweat from her forehead with the back of her hand, contemplating the sheer futility of her existence. Her nose itched from the pungent mix of meadow spices as the medical student

gloomily surveyed the scale of the disaster. It was a brutally hot day, but her grandmother had decided today was the day the patch must be cleared—and, naturally, delegated this "sacred duty" to her favorite granddaughter.

Gripping the scythe, Polina began to slash through the stalks, imagining herself as a 90s thriller serial killer with a massive axe. — "Watch out, weeds! For the glory of Grandma's compote and pies!" — she muttered through gritted teeth, chewing on a sour grape stem as she hunched over the wild greenery.

The Analysis:

After reading this, you can practically see the summer field: a gritty girl with a scythe and a red, itchy nose. The setting is done. We could have added a million tiny details like the exact shade of the grass or the species of an ant crawling by... **but who cares?** Overloading the text (especially if you're a beginner) is a one-way ticket to losing your reader's interest.

A quick detour: Your style depends heavily on the genre. We'll get to that in a bit.

Next, we move from the scenery to the heroine herself: why she's there, her personality, her family, etc. Remember, your character wasn't born yesterday. They have a past, dreams, goals, emotions, and maybe even a chronic allergy. She isn't just wandering through a field; she's visibly annoyed by the circumstances and, given her personality, isn't above talking to herself. Remember Bolkonsky in *War and Peace*? That guy had a full-on heart-to-heart with an oak tree.

Appearance Descriptions

Mirror, mirror on the wall... please, just stop.

Let's talk about that exhausted, overused trope: mirrors, lakes, puddles, or any shiny surface where "a fifteen-year-old boy was reflected..." This is either pure narcissism or, worse, a full-on mental breakdown. Think about it—when you look in the mirror, do you actually describe yourself? In your head? Narrating your age, build, and facial features? Probably not.



Lucy Huber
@clhubes

Men writing women characters: She was beautiful but didn't know it. She was 5'7 and 101 pounds. Her feet were size 3. Her hat size was Infant. She'd never thrown up, even once. Her periods lasted 45 minutes. Her top was see-through.

So why not try something a bit more literary? It can still be a bit "basic," but it feels real:

<...> Sitting in the train compartment, absolutely devastated, I kept wiping my hooked nose, barely holding back tears. To make matters worse, I couldn't stop scratching that damn mole on my left wrist. There's a weirdly satisfying, slightly painful sting when you scrape your nails over reddened skin before the itch finally subsides. This only happens to my skin on particularly gloomy days, when it feels like the whole world has turned its back on you, leaving you to stare at its beauty through hollow, faded eyes. <...>

The "Object-Oriented" Method

This is a classic. It's when you describe the character through the world around them. It looks like this:

<...> The dim, stuffy room was thick with the smell of tobacco smoke and something else — something lingering. Low-key background music hummed, just quiet enough not to damage the eardrums. And somewhere over by the bar, a tall, well-built man was slumped over, looking like he hadn't been sober for quite some time.

Drowning in heavy, pessimistic thoughts, he drained another elegant glass, winnowing his brow into a few deep wrinkles. He slammed the empty shot glass onto the counter and glanced around, as if he wasn't entirely sure where the hell he was anymore.

Leon's gaze slid over the slender figures of the local hostesses, who were parading around in little more than underwear, handing out drinks — and maybe something "more interesting"—to distracted patrons. But suddenly, a bearded guy crashed into the seat next to him, none too gracefully, bumping Leon's bare elbow and stealing his attention. <...>

The Analysis: Notice how the author doesn't just describe the room? They slowly focus the reader's "camera" on the protagonist, giving us his vibe through just a couple of sentences. This is a pro-level way to introduce a character without a boring list of traits.

Method Three: Dialogue and Direct Speech

<...> — "Just look at those adorable blue eyes on that cat!" — "Whoa! And that fur! It looks like pure silver!" <...>

You can (and should!) combine all three methods. This creates "breathable," effortless descriptions. Your text becomes actual art instead of looking like **a KGB case file**.

A quick warning on appearance: Don't turn your character into a walking manifestation of your deepest fantasies. Piercing every possible body part and tattooing them from head to toe is usually a one-way street to "Mary Sue" territory.



Of course, there's a time and place for everything. Maybe a tattoo helps identify a body in the morgue, or a serial killer is caught because of his neon-green boxers. **Details should matter.**

And please, **describe things AFTER the dialogue.** Don't just write: *"He looked at her, she looked at him, and she ran away in fear."* Give us the atmosphere! Avoid "naked" dialogue—it's rarely a good look.

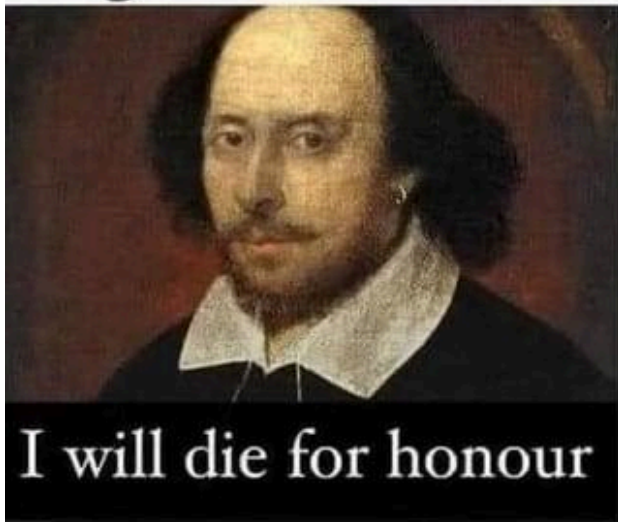
A Description is Not Just a Description

Don't overdo it. Remember, you're writing a story, not an interior design manual for a movie set. Like I said, sometimes two words are enough: "the room was warm" or "the protagonist was an old man." Most of the time, readers don't give a damn about what kind of boots the character is wearing or the exact color of the embroidery on their undershirt.

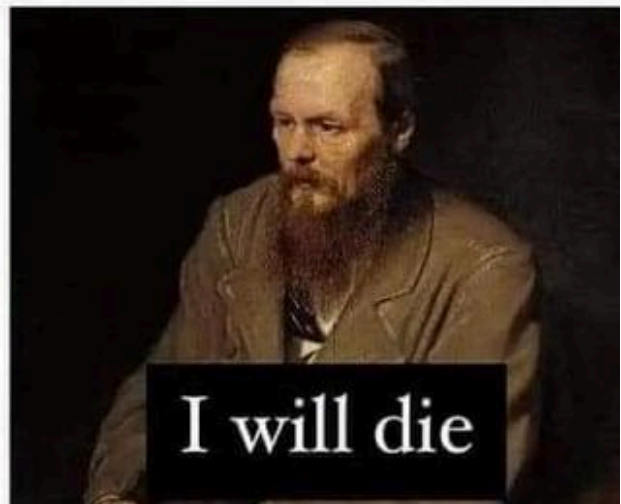
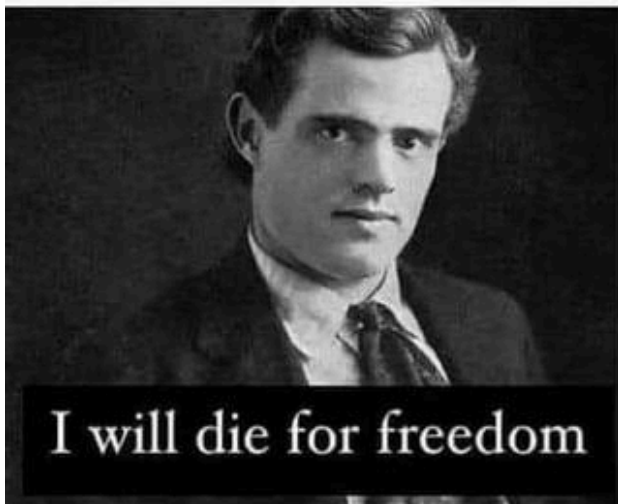
Genre Quirks

Writing is about ideas, but every genre has its own "vibe check" you need to pass.

English literature: French literature:



American literature: Russian literature:



The "Romance" Genre: The focus here should be on the character's internal chaos and their actions toward others. Even in a long novel, remember: it's about the relationship. No one wants a three-page description of a slaughterhouse meat-hook unless you're using it as a very dark metaphor for their "butchered" heart. (Looking at you again, Tolstoy and your oak tree).

The Two Main Groups:

1. **The "Soul-Searchers" (Romance, Angst, POV, Hurt/Comfort, Psychology):** The focus is on the internal monologue. We care about the protagonist's suffering, thoughts, and how they interpret life. We want to see their **inner world**—that's what drives their actions. No one cares that they had leftover dumplings for breakfast yesterday unless those dumplings are a symbol of their loneliness.
2. **The "Mechanics" (Humor, Fantasy, Sci-Fi, Mystery, Horror):** Here, the focus is on the **world-building**. Readers want to know how things look, where things go, and which button they need to press to make the spaceship jump. You need vivid, colorful descriptions of the world and the action. Even in a "steamy" scene (PWP), you focus on the sensations and the physical mechanics of the moment.



Final Pro-Tip: Color Your World

You don't need a thesaurus full of fancy metaphors to make a scene pop. Just show us the **character of the place**. * Instead of wallpaper, give them a wall covered in old newspapers.

- Instead of a "pretty park," make the main attraction a rusty old car with shattered windows.
- Let your fifteen-year-old Mary Sue sit by the window with her coffee and cigarette, but instead of thinking about her "true love," let her obsess over the peeling brown paint on the windowsill that clashes horribly with the blue sky.

Let your characters trip over the furniture, glare at the dust, and poke things with their toes.

Experiment. That's what makes readers turn you into their favorite author.

And that's all for the bonus perks for my favorite readers! Use these practices to expand your writing horizons.

Good luck!