

### Using a variety of nouns to create a list

Good writers usually use a mix of concrete, common, proper, and abstract nouns to create pictures in a reader's head. You as a writer can do this as well, particularly when you are trying to describe a specific scene. Read the following passages:

#### From F. Scott Fitzgerald's story "The Crack-Up"

Seen in a Junk Yard. Dogs, chickens with few claws, brass fittings, T's elbow, rust everywhere, bales of metal 1800 lbs., plumbing fixtures, bathtubs, sinks, water pumps, wheels, Fordson tractor, acetylene lamps for tractors, sewing machine, bell on dinghy, box of bolts (No. 1), van, stove, auto stuff (No. 2), army trucks, cast iron body, hot dog stand, dinky engines, sprockets like watch parts, hinge all taken apart on building side, motorcycle radiators, George on the high army truck.

#### From Norman Mailer's Ancient Evenings

Donkeys passed by with loads of straw---he looked at them from the ground, one eye open. Large-horned oxen, driven back from the market, crowded through the plaza, and walked around him. Fishermen passed with baskets of fish, and a baker with loaves, the pastry, meat, fruit, shoes, corn, sandals, onions, and wheat, the beads and perfume and oil, the honey and sleeping mats, bronze razors, pick-axes, baskets of corn and a brace of ducks, a vendor with leather bottles for wine passed him on their way to the market or back from it.

**Activity #1:** Fitzgerald uses some common nouns and some proper nouns, but all of them are concrete nouns -- objects that can be touched. Mailer also uses common and proper nouns, all of them concrete nouns. Remember as a writer that not all nouns can be touched, held, or felt. Such nouns are called abstract nouns and can still exist in places that Fitzgerald and Mailer write about. In your writing notebook, think of three abstract nouns that Fitzgerald and Mailer could have listed in the passages above. Behind each abstract noun that you list, give a justification as to why/how that abstract noun would fit in with the scene these two writers are painting.

**Activity #2:** These two authors also did not include any collective nouns -- nouns that name a group. Remember not to confuse plural nouns (that end in "s") with collective nouns, which are specific words used to name a group of people, animals, or things. Example: class, army, litter, batch. None of those words end in "s" to show more than one noun; they are all special words to name a group. What are some collective nouns that could be added to one of the above lists? (You can add plural nouns to identify what the collective noun is made up of; example: batch of burned snickerdoodle cookies.)

**Activity #3:** Think of a place where you could list some nouns to try to describe the variety of sights, sounds, smells, or objects in that place. Examples: your locker; your room; under your bed; in your car; on the floor of the commons after lunch; in your bookbag. In your writer's notebook, model a paragraph similar to the ones above; try to use a mix of common, proper, concrete, abstract, and collective nouns.