

HW for next week:

Reading

In the past few weeks we've been reading some rather untraditional essays (and we will read some even less traditional ones before the end of the term), but for this week let's try a more traditional form. Please read the essay "The death of languages," by Rebecca Roache, on the amazing website Aeon. Before you read the essay, take a look at the "About" page for Aeon (actually, I recommend that you always read the "About" page when you are reading or doing research on the web, so that you can learn about the purpose and the audience of the website): <https://aeon.co/about>

You will see that this website is a goldmine for essay readers and writers; there are hundreds of longer essays, shorter pieces under the heading called "Ideas," and videos—and all of these could be considered "essays" for our purposes, and could provide models for how you write your own essay.

Read the essay "The death of languages": <https://aeon.co/essays/should-endangered-languages-be-preserved-and-at-what-cost>. The content of the essay is fascinating, I think, but the form is also worth noticing. In class, I would like to focus on the concept of paragraphs, and the concept of transitions. After you've read the essay, go back and re-read the first sentence of each paragraph. Notice the incredible variety of transitions—all the various ways in which the author leads us from the topic of the previous paragraph to the topic of the next paragraph. Please choose one or two sentences in the essay which you think are effective transitions, and be prepared to discuss them in class. What makes them so effective?

Writing

Please continue the writing/thinking experiment I asked you to start in class last week. In the model of Howe's "Bewilderment," write a mini-essay (no more than one page; even just one paragraph is fine) in which you focus on ONE WORD which represents what you have been thinking about or how you have been living recently. You could start just like Howe does, by writing "Lately I've been thinking about the word "coffee"..." or something like, "The word "misunderstanding" has always been important to me..." Then, try to analyze your relationship with this word and what it represents in your life. Like Howe, try to consider more than one aspect of the word, and don't only mention the obvious associations which everyone might have with this word ("I need coffee in the morning"), but try to give details of YOUR relationship with this word/idea (for example: "My morning coffee always goes in my blue mug, which my mom gave me. The mug says "BEST DAUGHTER EVER," which of course I'm not, because sometimes when I'm drinking the coffee I think about how annoying my mom is..."). See if, like Howe, you can avoid coming to a simple, easy conclusion. Let yourself be bewildered by the complexity of this word (and your life). See what comes out.