

### Towards a critical vocabulary

Language is organic and words resist the effort we make to lock them away into dictionary cells. In critical commentary it is your task to judge whether or not the language suits the subject evoked, whether it communicates the experience clearly and forcibly. Remember that there are several different types of prose and many different purposes served; narrative, reflective, discursive, persuasive, argumentative, descriptive and so on.

One of the following words may help describe a writer's language. Make yourself familiar with them as part of your critical vocabulary. Feel free to add your own, remember that your response should be personal!

#### **Simple language**-ideas clearly conveyed

simple	direct	unadorned	plain	clear
unembellished				

#### **Expressive language** -if an argument or idea is clearly expressed

lucid	persuasive	cogent	convincing	incisive
uncompromising				

#### **Complicated language** - if an idea or argument is not clearly explained

difficult	loose	involuted	vapid	obscure
complicated	unfathomable			

#### **Descriptive language** - if an idea or argument expressed is good

graphic	evocative	enlightening	expressive	sensuous
colourful				

#### **If language is disproportionate to the understood importance of the subject**

erudite	recondite	esoteric	elevated	embellished
sophisticated				

#### **Imagery** - when considering imagery or ideas

abstract	general	unfocused	concrete	specific
particular	focused	wavering		

#### **Subject matter**

significant	relevant	outmoded	archaic	controversial

#### **Tone**

persuasive	ambiguous	unnerving	intimidating	instructive

**Authorial stance**

omniscient	impersonal	Self-conscious	involved	

**Artistic aims**

enlightening	moralistic	pragmatic	entertaining	Satirical

**Rhythm**

cadence	flowing	pulsing	intense	Shifting
relentless	melodic	Lyrical		

**Hyperbole - exaggeration**

amplification	enlargement	overstatement	Magnification	

**Rhetorical questions**

satirical	flamboyant	hyperbolic	pretentious	verbose

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