

The assignment for five-page paper 1, due September 7

In the 1950s, the New York poet Marianne Moore (1887-1972) rebranded herself as a cute, lovable eccentric. Wearing a cape and a funny hat, she allowed herself to be reported on throwing out the first ball for a Yankees season, and *Life* magazine, one of the escapist cultural icons of the era, dispatched the photographer Esther Bubley to take her to the Bronx Zoo. At the same time, her poetry became clear and simple and, well, cute.



But in the 19-teens, when the animal poem at the end of this assignment was written, Moore was quite a different kind of poet. Say the poem out loud, listen to the cat's hissing polysyllables and the hammering noise the waves make at the end when they pound fools to death

-- and then tell yourself and me about the different word-sounds that Moore and a man from the Ford Motor Company emit as they politely communicate past each other from different planets: one occupied by a male resembling an elephant with "fog-colored skin / and strictly practical appendages," the other occupied by, well, Marianne Moore. The transcript is on the web page, along with a picture of the Ford car that Moore wound up not naming – one of the greatest failures in American business history.

Obviously there's no single correct way to write this paper. But if you've been able to hear two or three differences between the two writers' languages (vocabulary? syntax? rhythms generated by vocabulary and syntax?), you may be on your way to reading interestingly.

The Monkeys

winked too much and were afraid of snakes. The zebras, supreme in their abnormality; the elephants with their fog-colored skin and strictly practical appendages were there, the small cats; and the parakeet—trivial and humdrum on examination, destroying bark and portions of the food it could not eat.

I recall their magnificence, now not more magnificent than it is dim. It is difficult to recall the ornament, speech, and precise manner of what one might call the minor acquaintances twenty years back; but I shall not forget him—that Gilgamesh among the hairy carnivora—that cat with the

wedge-shaped, slate-gray marks on its forelegs and the resolute tail, astringently remarking, “They have imposed on us with their pale half-fledged protestations, trembling about in inarticulate frenzy, saying it is not for us to understand art; finding it all so difficult, examining the thing

as if it were inconceivably arcanic, as symmetrically frigid as if it had been carved out of chrysoprase or marble—strict with tension, malignant in its power over us and deeper than the sea when it proffers flattery in exchange for hemp, rye, flax, horses, platinum, timber, and fur.”