

## Recipe for Riffing Sentences

Margin Notes ~ Jen Manuel

### Ingredients:

- A passage of interiority
- A central paragraph idea
- An opening sentence that provokes in some way
- 3-5 echoing words or phrases

### Directions:

Examine the passage of interiority you chose from your novel or short story. If you don't have one to work with, you can try this recipe from scratch, but I find it easier to revise an existing passage when trying out a new style. Assuming you do have an existing passage, write down the central idea in the paragraph (like "remember" in Schofield's paragraph).

Rewrite the opening sentence of your paragraph so that this central idea word is the focus of the sentence. This should be a provoking sentence in some way. Schofield makes her sentence provoking because it is a request (that he remember). A request is a great source of drama because it presents a choice yet it implies some sense of obligation. According to Douglas Glover, provoking sentences are sentences that initiate intention, action, opposition, or conflict.

Once you've written this first sentence, create subsequent sentences by manipulating the phrases of the first sentence (rearranging the words, adding words, subtracting words), but be sure to repeat your central idea word in each of these opening sentences. Do this three or four times.

Continue rewriting the paragraph, concentrating deeply on the previous sentence in order to unpack it in new ways, making liberal use of repetition. Think of it as an interrogation. You are looking for anything in the sentence that might be cracked open and further probed. You are looking to dig and extract. Try using anadiplosis at least once (ending a sentence with one word and starting the next sentence with that same word), and at least once I want you to ramp up the repetition in the way Schofield does with "pushing through." Whatever phrase you use for this increased repetition, it should reflect an emotion that is central to the matter at hand.

Construct the final sentence so that it echoes the central idea of the first sentence.

Once you've rewritten the paragraph, highlight the repeated words like I did in the Margin Notes. Reflect on what is being echoed in the readers' ears.