

The Word Cellar

Emulation Exercise Example

Original

“The way the sun shimmers in the long Nebraska grass just off the highway can make you feel hope again, like there's still time for lovelier, finer things. It hovers in every reed and dust mote, rippling out into the tiny eyes of grain that burn with winter's fire, an ember so small and subtle you know something is burning inside you, too. It's a destination that breaks the spell, that teeters into dread. Dusk can make the fields remote, haunted, the patchwork of all your silent prayers. I drive because I have to. I drive to get where I am going, making the fifty-mile commute between Omaha and Lincoln three days a week. But what about those fields, those grasses? I'm just another pilgrim in his crude bark boat, making his way across the waters; I'm just another commuter fiddling with the dial. But more and more, I wonder what it is to arrive; more and more arrival becomes the thing bequeathed, but not desired.” (by [Robert Vivian](#), from the essay “Hereafter in Fields,” from the collection [Cold Snap as Yearning](#))

Emulation

The way the salt-scrubbed air smells along the coast can make you feel new again, like all of the mistakes and embarrassments of your past can be washed away, forgiven and forgotten. It hangs on every pebble and wooden dock, seeping into the pores on your body and the grain of the wood, a balm so pervasive and invisible you know you're made of water, too. It's a destination that wakes you up, that wobbles into hope. The ocean can make the rest of the land remote, dry, the burning timber of all your scary dreams. I visit the seashore because I have to. I visit it to get back to myself, driving or flying for hours to reach the edge of the land. But what about those pebbles, those wooden docks? I'm just another pirate in a white-and-black sailed ship, making her way through the waves. I'm just another tourist checking in and out of hotels. But more and more, I wonder what it is to stay in one place; more and more putting down roots becomes the thing imposed, but not accepted.

Remember: This is an exercise to help you get a better feel for how to write well and to understand what another author is doing in a particular piece. You should never emulate, imitate, or copy another author's work and then pass it off as your own.

Example by Jennifer McGuigan
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www.thewordcellar.com