March 15, 2012

Writing Showcase (2012 - #2)

Everett N K Ofori
One word a day. That’s it. Just one word a day. Can you learn one word a day? Not five, not 10, not 20. Just one word a day. Who can’t, you say? Fabulous.

Indeed, in as little as five minutes, or make it ten, fifteen or even twenty, it is possible to read the meaning of a word, review its etymology, and consider possible ways of using that word.

Periodic mental reviews in the course of the day can ensure that you retain the meaning of the word. With a bit of effort, you can, over time, incorporate each new word into your daily discourse.

For inspiration, you might want to keep in mind the words of Martinique-born French philosopher and writer, Franz Fannon, who said:

“Mastery of language affords remarkable power.” And what better way to master language than to master the building blocks: words.

If you can learn one new word every single day, it is a no-brainer that your conception of words, your understanding of them, the ways in which you bend words to your will, would expand considerably.

In fact, some of the people we most admire, both historical and contemporary, made their mark not only because of the causes they fought for, but also because of how they were able to put words in service of their ideals. Think Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Winston Churchill, and Mahatma Gandhi.

Think Barbara Jordan, Margaret Thatcher, and Hillary Clinton. Who else comes to mind for you?

A number of research studies have noted a strong link between vocabulary and success. It is with this in mind that American Success Coach Earl Nightingale, noted: "Not enough people realize that it is our ability to use our language that will determine our place on the social pyramid—and that will also control, to a great extent, the amount of money we will earn during our lives."

Though Malcolm X favored reading the dictionary as one of the ways to improve his vocabulary and thinking, there are other ways. One is to diversify your reading and to take an interest in subjects and topics that you are not naturally attracted to: Lacrosse? Coral reefs? Black holes? Expand your world... without shame.

Another way to expand your vocabulary is to sign up with www.wordsmith.org and receive a word a day in your email inbox, each complete with definition, etymology, and an example of how to use it.

Whether you are a student, an employee, a manager, an entrepreneur, or a domestic engineer, extending the boundaries of your knowledge of words, is bound to make you a more incisive communicator, a more conscious reader, and a richer person, in spirit as well as... your pocketbook?

"The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heav’n of hell and a hell of a heav’n.”

-- John Milton, poet

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I am going to Hawaii with my wife from April 15th to April 19th. It is only five days, but I am looking forward to those days, because my wife and I like Hawaii very much.

This time, we were able to get very cheap tickets from HIS (High International Standards) travel agency. HIS sells many kinds of specially priced tickets within the first week of every year. Luckily, my wife was able to get the tickets on January 5th by telephone.

We would be staying at a hotel called Beach Comber. The hotel is not expensive but it is very convenient for shopping, swimming, and eating, because it stands along the main street, near Waikiki beach. So, whenever we go to Hawaii, we stay at this hotel.

For a long time, I have wanted to go to Mt. Kilauea volcano, so I am looking forward to going to this island. At Mt. Kilauea volcano, people can walk on the lava land (hopefully it’s not too hot!). If it is too hot, people are sure to melt in a heartbeat!

Another plan is shopping, eating and going on the Honolulu Screamer Boat, which has a big power engine and is able to do 360 degree spins, zigzag runs, and go at a very high speed. It is somewhere near to Waikiki. I expect that we would see some good scenery from the boat too, for example, Diamond Head.

About eating, one of our favorite restaurants is Eggs’n things. This restaurant is famous for pancakes, omelets and waffles and it is always full. So, whenever we go to Hawaii, we get up early and go to the restaurant before 7 a.m.

Luckily, my wife and I can eat sweet meals early in the morning and we both have good stomachs so we can enjoy the American size breakfast. Usually, after we go to Hawaii, we gain weight. However, we do not mind, because enjoying ourselves is the most important thing for us.

About shopping, I do not have any plans now, but my wife seems to have a lot of plans. For example, going to Ala Moana Center, DFS Galleria, Royal Hawaiian Center, Ward Centers and Pualei Lani Atrium Shops.

Ala Moana Center is a very big shopping mall so we have to do a lot of walking. It is like doing exercise.

In the past, I did not like shopping at the big mall because I found it boring, but at present, I do not mind shopping there. Do you know why? Because I realized that walking is the easiest exercise for me. While walking I suck in my stomach. Apparently, when we do this, we can use more calories than through normal walking.

And Pualei Lani is very convenient for us, because these shops are open till 1 a.m. So, we can do shopping after dinner and spend leisure time over there.

One more thing: I would like to swim in the sea. However, we have only three days, because we would be spending the other two days on the plane! So I might not swim enough, but I am looking forward to swimming at the Waikiki Beach.

So in conclusion, just thinking about the trip, we can feel happy, relaxed and glad. So I think not only work but also taking a trip is necessary for people. The point of being on and off is important for all of us to do our work well. Likewise, being on and off is good for a man and wife to enjoy a good relationship.
I was surprised at a piece of news in January this year. It was that a state-of-the-art Shogi playing computer program, named Boncras, had defeated the greatest Shogi professional, Kunio Yonenaga.

Shogi-playing computer programs have been developed since the middle of the 1970s. One of the key indicators of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been an attempt to enable computers to consider issues and problems after the fashion of human beings.

Although it used to be that the ability of the programs was low and their level was below amateur Shogi players, the progress of technology gradually strengthened them and one engineer managed to develop the high-powered Boncras in 2011.

Boncras can examine 18 million moves of Shogi pieces per second! No Shogi-playing computer program had ever defeated male Shogi professionals before Boncras won that time. Therefore, the win was a longtime dream for the engineers engaged in designing and building Shogi-playing computer programs.

Quite apart from the world of Shogi, many engineers have had an interest in whether the intelligence of computers can overcome that of humans, and they have tried to develop various kinds of artificial intelligence (AI) programs.

In the case of chess, Deep Blue, an advanced chess-playing computer program developed by IBM, defeated a world Chess champion in 1997. Furthermore, IBM developed another computer program, “Watson,” that can answer quizzes on various fields of knowledge. In 2010, Watson participated in a popular American TV quiz show, “Jeopardy!” and defeated two of the most powerful human “Jeopardy!” champions.

The day when computers display superior ability to human beings in considering difficult questions, whether related to Shogi, inventions, or even politics, may not be so far off. After Kunio Yonenaga lost to Boncras, he was asked the following question: “What’s going to happen among Shogi professionals after computer programs overcome human beings?”

Yonenaga answered as follows: “A car can already run faster than a human being. However, people can still be moved by looking at a marathon relay race that is at a pace slower than a car. We can be moved by looking at the sweat of the human participants in the relay. I wish that Shogi professionals would appreciate that. We would like to live in a way that commands respect now and in the future.”
A few weeks ago, I went to Big Island in Hawaii, which has the highest mountain in the world measured from base to peak. This mountain is Mauna Kea. Several tour companies provide tours to the summit of Mauna Kea. We can only go to the summit on a bumpy road in a 4-wheel drive (WD). Hence many tourists join one of these tours. On this visit, I did some stargazing and enjoyed viewing some sunsets. They were so amazing and impressive!!

Mauna Kea is known for being the best site in the world for astronomy for two main factors in addition to its elevation. The first is the weather. About 80% of nights each year are clear enough for observations. In addition, Mauna Kea's peak is usually high above the clouds.

The second is the human element. In most places, streetlights or buildings often illuminate the night sky and make it difficult to see all but the brightest stars. Fortunately, because of Big Island's low population, light pollution is seldom a problem. In addition, there are local regulations that help to restrict light pollution and create the darkest skies.

For these reasons, Mauna Kea is definitely the best spot for astronomy. In fact, thirteen of the biggest and most sophisticated telescopes in the world stand near the summit of Mauna Kea. It means that I was able to experience the most beautiful sky in the world!

On this visit to Mauna Kea, I noticed that not only stars, but also the sunset was very beautiful and impressive. Clouds looked like the sea and it seemed very much as though the sun was setting into the sea! Just after sunset, bright bold sunlight, called a sun pillar, lighted the sky! I was very lucky because this is a rare phenomenon. I felt that the sun pillar was a divine light and that I was standing at the most sacred place in the world.

This experience inspired me and tempts me to want to see other amazing pieces of nature. I'm looking for my next great experience of nature!
It is possible to overcome barriers to minority success in Canada. The stance of this book is that new immigrants, refugees and international students do not have to settle for underachievement despite the cultural and structural disadvantages they face in Canada. The fact is, the unequal social structure of Canada has some cracks, and many minorities have used strategic resources to open up these cracks and achieved tremendous upward social mobility in Canadian society from the margins. These documented minority successes in Canada in the face of systemic marginalization provide lessons and hope for new immigrants, refugees and international students.

The economic, political, social and cultural problems that minorities encounter in Canadian institutions, organizations, communities and from individuals overwhelm and break many of them. However, some minorities break records in the face of the frustrations they encounter. What accounts for the success of the latter group of immigrants, refugees and international students in Canada? Individual efforts and personal ambitions are not enough to explain these success stories. This book highlights strategies and support systems that facilitate minority strategic connections with Canadian mainstream institutions, organizations and individuals to win from the margins of society.

Although the book does not get into the theories of inequality, equity and diversity, it does acknowledge the structural and cultural barriers to minority success in Canada. That is, it does not blame individual minorities for not making it in Canada. Rather, it points to strategic resources that new immigrants, refugees and international students can use to help them overcome some of the barriers to success in Canada.

Available at:  http://www.amazon.com
http://www.ccbpublishing.com
Music for the Dear Departed

One year has already passed since the big earthquake that happened on March 11, 2011. People who lived in the devastated area have made an effort to reorganize their towns and get on with their lives. But people living near the Fukushima nuclear plant cannot go back to their homes.

I have reflected a lot on the fact that so many people died in the earthquake and ensuing tsunami. The Dear Departed must feel a great sense of regret for not having had time to leave messages to their loved ones.

How will we hold a memorial service for these departed ones and pray for their spirits?

I am not a religious person, but I have often felt like praying to heal their wounded spirits.

I thought that I would like to send quiet music to the dear departed. I thought, “I would like to try to play the piano as a requiem.” To do this, I realized that I would have to change the tone of my electric piano; I chose the organ tone.

Usually the organ is played in church. And recently I had some opportunities to hear praise and gospel music. In Japan, many people do not subscribe to the Christian faith, and yet, singing praise and gospel songs is popular here. Probably these songs make us heal, and give us courage and hope.

I learned to play the piano over a period of 10 years; indeed, playing the piano is one of my hobbies. But I do not have a great deal of confidence in my piano-playing skills. So I had doubts about my performance being enough to qualify as a requiem for the dear departed.

Still, I tried. I played the piano in an organ tone. I chose a praise song and the popular song, “Amazing grace.” The words of these songs were difficult for me to understand, but the melodies were calm, and I felt they would not disturb the spirits of the dear departed.

My performance might not have been satisfactory, but while I was playing the piano, I continued to pray for their spirits to feel a sense of peace.

At 2:46 PM in Japan this year, a siren sounded and continued to sound for a while. This was the time when the big earthquake struck last year. I offered a silent prayer for the dead for a minute.

March 11 will come around again next year, and every year thereafter. I would like to continue praying for the spirits of the dear departed, using the soft melodies of my piano.
Read Assure: Guaranteed Formula for Reading Success with Phonics
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Read Assure takes advantage of the best asset all children have in abundance: tremendous brainpower hungry for challenges. Children as young as four have successfully mastered reading English through phonics using Read Assure. The ability to read raises children's confidence and leads to a love of reading and the desire to devour ever more challenging material.

Parents have recognized that starting their children on the road to mastering English gives young learners the necessary tools to become active and engaged players in an increasingly competitive world. Read Assure provides an entry point by which young learners can pick up any English book - from picture books to more challenging works - and read them with delight. Having tried and tested this volume on numerous children with great success, the author can say without hesitation that this may be just what your child needs to develop a lifelong love of and proficiency in the English language.

About the Author

Everett Ofori, MBA is a Canadian instructor with more than 20 years of experience as a teacher of English as a Second Language. Currently residing in Japan, Everett has had the privilege of teaching the whole spectrum of learners, from children as young as four to seasoned business executives. The writing of Read Assure arose out of the simple observation that many of the methods by which children are taught to speak English miss the point, especially when these children do not have the benefit of regular daily interaction with native speakers. The results obtained from the use of this book have been nothing short of spectacular and it is hoped that parents and teachers who are determined to bequeath the gift of English mastery to young learners will find in this book just what they need.

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WHO NEEDS THIS BOOK?

1) Students preparing for their high school final examinations
2) Students preparing to attend college or university where they will have to write term papers, theses, and other reports
3) English as a Foreign/Second Language (EFL/ESL) learners
4) Students planning to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), Law School Admissions Test (LSAT), Test of Written English (TWE), etc.
5) Business people, including owners, who want to get better results from their correspondence and communication
6) Administrative assistants, public relations agents, sales people, aspiring authors, etc.

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Guaranteed Formula for Public Speaking Success

Public Speaking—your shortcut to distinction

Dale Carnegie, the father of modern public speaking training, had a long list of students whose rise to prominence demonstrated that public speaking is, indeed, a shortcut to distinction. This continues to hold true. In every class, club, community, county, country, or even continent, men and women who can express themselves well in public, find themselves on the fast-track to success.

The parade of individuals who have risen from obscurity to public prominence on the strength of their public speaking abilities include the following:

• Abraham Lincoln
• Sojourner Truth
• Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
• Hillary Clinton
• Junichiro Koizumi
• Barbara Jordan
• Winston Churchill
• Nelson Mandela
• Malcolm X
• Cornel West
• Barack Obama
• Anthony Robbins

Guaranteed Formula for Public Speaking Success will allow you to:

1. Discover a variety of concrete techniques to become a versatile speaker
2. Improve your speaking skills quickly
3. Master impromptu speaking skills
4. Review the ingredients of a winning speech

Everett Ofori, MBA (Heriot-Watt University, Scotland), has extensive experience as an instructor of English as a Second Language, Writing, and Public Speaking. He has provided training in communication for consultants and staff at companies such as Goldman Sachs, Disney Japan, Mizuho Corporate Bank, JP Morgan, McKinsey, Accenture, and ExxonMobil. Everett is a longstanding member of Toastmasters International and holds the Advanced Communicator Silver designation.

Available at:
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This newsletter offers an opportunity for English learners around the world to share their thoughts and experiences and get some writing practice in the process. In many areas of life, most people would readily agree that quality is more important than quantity. This is no less true when it comes to writing. To get to the point where you can produce quality writing on a consistent basis, however, you may have to get into the habit of writing regularly knowing that much of what you produce might win no prizes for excellence. As you keep on writing and thinking, however, who knows what hidden gems might emerge? The newsletter is published on a bimonthly basis. If you are interested in contributing to it, please contact the editor, Everett Ofori.

Writing Showcase Publication Schedule

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* Please note that the maximum number of words = 300.

Guaranteed Formula for (English) Writing Success

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英語によるライティングコース

経験豊かなカナダ人の英語教師が、オンラインにて、16のレッスンからなるライティングコースを指導します。
あなたのライティング力が、すぐに飛躍的に向上します！