

Shirley Whittington



Young writers are frequently urged to seek variety in expression, lest their readers drop off to sleep, lulled by constant repetition. Thus, some schoolboys (schoolpersons?) create compositions like the following:

"I can't quit," she related.
"If you don't cease," he uttered, "I will refrain from loving you."
"Oh, desist!" she averred. "I'll arrest."
"Ah," he narrated. "I could not restrain from loving you."

Read something like that, and right away you know that your young Hemingway has discovered the Thesaurus.

Roget's Thesaurus is a semantic candy store. It is a quiver of arrows to propel thought. It is a box of baubles with which to adorn sentiment. No home should be without one.

Words are power, and a kid who calls his sister adipose cancels sauciness with scholarly research.

A generation ago, parents used French as code language when discussing classified matters in front of the sprogs. Nowadays most kids speak better French than their parents so Mummy and Daddy must mine synonyms from Roget if they want to keep a secret.

Harry — the one with all the hair — may have discovered that his girl friend is

pregnant. After a quick trip through Roget, that translates to "Hirsute Harry's paramour is gravid." The kids won't know what you're talking about.

The use of the Thesaurus can soften a blow. I was once gently fired by a man who inquired if I wanted a hiatus. I thought he was offering me a Japanese poem.

John Robert Columbo, a Canadian poet and word collector once wrote a poem called "Roget's Girl." "Let me peer into your eyes, orbs, blinkers, corneas, oculars, irises, peepers etc . . ." it goes. "Let me take a gander at your lets, limbs, stems, shanks, thighs, claws, gams, etc . . ."

The Roget of Columbo's title was a man of wide and remarkable talents. Born in 1779 in Soho to Swiss and Huguenot parents, Peter Mark Roget was by all accounts a precise and orderly child. His own mother observed that he showed promise. (I can't imagine how she did this. Did she say, to visitors, "This is Peter, our youngest. He shows no literary promise.")

Peter Mark Roget grew up and just to spite his mum went round to people asking them if they knew another word for fat and so on. He kept doing this until he'd compiled his Thesaurus, and he did it just after he'd graduated from medical school, at 19 years of age.

Toward a sexless lexicon

After becoming a doctor and a Thesaurus maker, Roget didn't just sit around thinking up new ways to make his mother look like a monkey. He wrote articles for the Encyclopedia Britannica, perfected the newly invented kaleidoscope, figured out the log scale still used on slide rules, invented the pocket chess board, helped found London University and devised an effective method of sand filtration for the stinking waters of the Thames.

One day when he wasn't doing anything else, he watched the carriage wheels spinning past the blinds on his basement kitchen windows, and gave birth to a thought that eventually produced motion pictures.

Peter Mark Roget lived for ninety years, through the French Revolution, the Romantic movement, and half the Victorian period. This is the kind of colourful life span that makes the invention of the motion picture seem redundant, but you just can't keep a good Renaissance man down.

Roget's first Thesaurus was a 100 paged hand written penny scribbler which bore the following memorable title. "The Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases, Classified and Arranged so as to Facilitate the Expression of Ideas and Assist in Literary Composition." You can see why they didn't make a movie out of it right away.

Today the Thesaurus has sold more than 30

million copies and it's available in many different forms.

Just last week came word of the latest edition. The Thesaurus has been neutered. A British editor, Susan Lloyd, has reclassified and rearranged things. Words which are sexist, biased, prejudiced, warped, illiberal (Lloyd's word, not mine. Or Roget's) or narrow minded have been eliminated. Thus "mankind" becomes "humankind" or "personkind".

What Mr. Roget would have to say about this is hard to imagine but he did tell his grouchy sister once to "bear adversity cheerfully." He'd probably give the same advice to those of us who hate to see his verbal cookie jar tampered with.

I always keep a Thesaurus at my elbow, although in my youth I spurned it. I once handed in a poem for an English assignment and the professor's judgement was quick and acid. "This is stilted. Cliche ridden. Plitudinous. Why didn't you use a Thesaurus?"

I replied stiffly that I considered the Thesaurus a crutch for intellectual cripples. "Some people," he snarled, "need all the help they can get."

He's right. As far as I'm concerned, Roget's Thesaurus is a mandatory reference book.

Or as Susan Lloyd would say, "personary."

Bill Smiley



AS I mentioned, my daughter is correlating a questionnaire sent to retired teachers and teachers about to retire. It was anonymous, and most of the answers were sealed. But quite a few weren't. My wife and I, after a brief struggle with my ethics (women have none when it comes to reading letters) perused with fascination the answers.

Some of the data proved only that teachers, on the whole, are not exactly the kind of people who go off looking for the North-West passage, and stumble across Cuba, as Chris Columbus did. Basically, they are people who yearned to be something else: surgeon, famous writer, engineer. And have moved from one job, or one town to another, once in their lives. I thought as much.

If one went on the data alone, one would conclude that teachers are a pretty dull lot. Narrow, insular, petty. And one would be right, if one went to a staff meeting.

We had one the other day, and we chewed the same old cabbage over and over again. Kids are loitering in the halls. Kids are late for class. Kids are rude to teachers. Girls smoke in the girls' washroom, and make more mess than boys.

Many students are not "motivated." In

plain English that means they are either dumb, or lazy, or the teacher is no good, or the subject doesn't appeal to them. "Why do we hafta take Shakespeare? Why didden he write so we could unnerstan?"

Students don't eat a proper breakfast. That's one answer, usually from the Home Ec. (I refuse to call them Family Studies) people. So what? I never ate a "proper" breakfast in my life, and as a student, often didn't have time for any breakfast.

Students are lecherous. They try to find a secluded spot in the school (caught a couple coming out the firedoors of the library the other day, grinding away.) They weren't coming out, I was. And they were grinding, not I. Suggested that they go to a public park, preferably after dark. They weren't rude. They thought it was a great idea, but pointed out that it was late March. I agreed that it was a trifle chilly for what they were doing.

They think they're lecherous? They do not. But we do. I was so lecherous, and unrequited, at their age, that when I was finally married, I kept looking over my shoulder for a vice-principal every time my wife and I went into a perfectly legal clutch.

Students have no respect for teachers

The good and bad of it all

anymore. Another cliché as old as the educational system. Students will always respect teachers who are, not respectable, but capable of respect. I did, and my students do. And I, and they, have nothing but contempt for the teacher who demands respect because he/she is a "teacher."

Students are spending too much time getting a drink at the water fountain. Another perennial. How ridiculous. A girl who has just come from biology merely wants to rinse her mouth out, like a bird. A six-foot three-inch boy who has just come from gruelling Phys. Ed. class can go on and on like a ruddy camel.

I could go on and on about the terrible failures of students. One principal I knew spent one hour of a teachers' meeting copping with, and getting nowhere with, the chewing of gum. And about 60 per cent of the staff took it seriously.

Another principal thought girls should wear skirts, never pants, regardless of the weather, and including the fact that some of them travelled by snowmobile 10 miles before catching a drafty bus to school. A show of civil disobedience, when 200 girls showed up in jeans, put an end to that.

Enough about students. They have changed little over 50 years, except that they feel, but aren't, more sophisticated.

My daughter also asked in her question-

naire, "How have teachers changed during your career?"

I hated to tell her, but she knew anyway, so I spilled the beans. Drastically. They do so many things now they didn't do when I was a student, that I blush to relate them.

They no longer drive 30 miles to the next town to buy a mickey of rye. They walk in and fill a basket with wine, liquor, and such. At the local store.

They no longer keep their prurience secret. They talk about sex as well as knitting and sports. They get separations and divorces just like real people.

They let their hair grow, chafe against ties (the men), and girdles and bras (the women). They grow beards (the men, that is) instead of the moustaches the ladies used to grow.

There are few arid spinsters any more, taking out their frustrations on the kids and knee-jerking to the school board. Most women teachers are married, and the spinsters are no longer arid.

The sadists and bullies have pretty well disappeared from the scene. There are still incompetents and potential psychological breakdowns, but that goes with the territory.

On the whole, teachers are much more human than they used to be, or were forced to be. And they are just as dedicated, not so desiccated.

Investor's Inquiry



by Charles Colling

Further to last weeks' column on portfolios, the following table could be useful in selecting securities for a portfolio:

SAFETY	INCOME	APPREC
Bonds-short term	Best steady	very limited
Bonds-long term		

Second best	steady	limited
Preferred stocks	Good steady	variable
Common stocks	Least variable	better

There are of course exceptions in each of the above categories, as an example, retractable preferred shares for steady in-

come and better than average appreciation, also special takeover situations which arise from time to time.

Another requirement of successful portfolio building and management is knowing what securities are available, what the yield on the money invested will be and when the dividends or interest is paid.

Some people find it rather difficult and confusing to have a fairly large amount come in one month and find themselves the next month with little more than their regular pension cheques in their pocket.

You and your portfolios

Some people have their portfolios set up so that their income is fairly constant each month, others prefer more money coming in during the winter months when their living expenses are higher and still others have some income paid in American funds and deposited in their American bank accounts.

It is so simple with a little time and a little thought for the investor to arrange his income for his or her convenience, not the convenience of the person arranging the portfolio.

Most people enjoy following their investments and take an interest in the development of other companies. Further to what is published in the regular media, additional reports and information is always

available through any investment dealer, either in their offices or can be procured on very short notice.

Charles Colling is the resident manager of Yorkton Securities Inc. in Midland. In sending in questions to be answered, please remember Securities Commission Regulations will not permit opinions or recommendations on any specific securities through this column.

All other signed inquiries will be answered as soon as possible. In all answers only the inquirer's initials will be used. Address all questions to "Investor's Inquiry" c/o The Midland Times, Box 609, Midland, Ontario.

You and Your Credit



by Paul Mattar, Credit Bureau of Midland, Penetanguishene, Collingwood

I had a telephone call from a friend recently with the question "Who's investigating me?" He had learned from an acquaintance and a couple of his business associates that a person claiming to be a credit investigator was making inquiries about him and his family's activities and wanted to know if I could tell him "What's going on?"

I explained that there were probably three possibilities assuming that he hadn't done anything criminal and that he didn't owe somebody some money that he was trying to avoid paying.

The first possibility was an investigative agency. This kind of company deals in lifestyle information, or personal information other than credit information about an individual's character, reputation, health, physical or personal characteristics or mode of living. They generally do not maintain regular running files on individuals or businesses.

Rather, each request for a report is prepared on an individual and tailored basis at the client's direction. This information is obtained mainly by street investigation from talking to neighbours, employers, fellow employees or business contacts. Their

clientele is made up primarily of insurance companies.

The next possibility was a mercantile agency who operates for the purpose of collecting, analyzing and disseminating credit information on businesses. These companies produce various types of rating information on the financial strengths and composite appraisals of business organizations.

Their clientele is usually made up of companies dealing with commercial organizations and not the general public. This possibility could be eliminated by my friend since he did not own a company nor was he a corporate officer of a company.

The probable final possibility was a consumer and commercial reporting agency. Credit Bureaus are in this category.

Just getting the facts

They gather, store, update and report on individuals and businesses in a given geographical area. The information contains such factual information as name, age, occupation, address current and previous, marital status, spouse's name and age, dependants, employment current and previous, income, paying habits, debt obligations and assets.

Information is contributed by subscribing users to be available on a central file basis when they are required to make a credit decision based on a consumer's request for a credit accommodation.

If you have specific topics or questions you would like to have discussed, just write to "You and Your Credit," P.O. Box 176, Midland, Ont., or call Paul Mattar at 526-5468.