

The fourth entry in your progymnasmata is a proverb or maxim, which you will amplify. Amplification is a great technique for developing your writing and involves different ways of expounding upon what you have said. It is related to the *copia* that Erasmus explored by modifying the same statement many, many different ways. A proverb is some common saying familiar to most people within a specific culture. It may be attributable to someone, as in the case of many scriptural proverbs attributed to Solomon, but generally maxims don't have a specific source like the *chreia*. This kind of saying is meant to persuade or dissuade some action, such as, "People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones" or "Wake up and smell the coffee." Obviously, the book of Proverbs provides a ready source of proverbs from ancient Hebrew culture. Other good sources would be such things as Bartlett's Familiar Quotations. In the exercise known as proverb students were to amplify "a summary declarative statement, recommending or condemning something." This is similar to the "*chreia*," except, as previously mentioned, the author of the saying is unnamed. Generic "*sententiae*," or commonly known moralistic sayings, are taken as subjects to be amplified in ways nearly identical to those of the *chreia*. I would like you to follow the directions for composition on this assignment. You might think about writing one or two sentences for each of the steps below. This assignment has nothing whatsoever to do with *Maxim* magazine, which has almost nothing to do with general wisdom.

Directions for Composition

Amplify a brief account of what someone has said or done, using these steps:

1. Praise the saying itself
2. Give a paraphrase of the theme
3. Say why this was said
4. Introduce a contrast
5. Introduce a comparison
6. Give an example of the meaning
7. Support the saying/action with testimony of others
8. Conclude with a brief epilogue or conclusion

For You:

Write a 250 word paragraph in which you take a proverb, and then amplify it through various considerations, connections, and reflections in the rest of the paragraph.

Think about how you are going to make it strange and unique. Post it to your blog, and turn in a hardcopy to me.

Example

If one were to begin with this proverb from the Bible:

"It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house." —Proverbs 21: 9

One could amplify it using the steps mentioned above as follows:

Solomon, that paragon of wisdom, did indeed show his acumen when he stated in Proverbs that it would be better to live in a tiny and insignificant dwelling than to have a mansion but share it with a cantankerous wife. A man of so many wives must have known this from experience, yet he gave this proverb as a caution both to wives and their husbands and for their mutual benefit. It is indeed better to have domestic harmony than to have that discord that comes when one spouse rails against the other. Living with a nagging, brawling wife is like living with the TV forever tuned to Rush Limbaugh on a cranky day. For example, I knew of one man of great potential for public office who won over ever constituency except that at his house. There, where his wife seemed to have an inordinate power of veto, none of his legislation ever passed. He became so discouraged that he gave up his political ambitions and now sweeps floors at Taco Bell. Experts in family science have cautioned us to maintain peace in the home. We cannot hope to follow these experts or the older and wisest Solomon if we do not take the advice of the latter and so avoid the unhappy scene described by the former.