

Name _____

AVOIDING Clichés!

What are clichés?

Clichés are situations, plot devices, subjects, characterizations, figures of speech, or objects—namely, any sign, that has become **overly familiar and overly used**.

Why do we often rely on clichés in writing?

It makes sense that we use clichés because they are so prevalent in our everyday speech that we can be fairly certain that our audience knows their meaning. Thus, if I write that my dress made me “stick out like a sore thumb”, the reader knows that my dress didn't suit the context in which I was wearing it.

So, why should we avoid clichés?

Clichés show a certain degree of laziness on the part of the writer. Using a cliché is easy. But, it also generic, and does little to describe the details of the particular thing you are describing. **Avoiding the cliché will impart more information to your reader.**

Tips for avoiding clichés:

- Be cautious of metaphors and similes—points of comparison—in your writing. Many points of comparison are overused. You want your writing to be **original**, as Cisneros has done in her own work.
- Read your work for any phrases that sound common. Then consider a new way to explain your intended meaning.

Sample Clichés:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • so happy I could die. | • cute as a button |
| • so hungry I could eat a horse. | • peas in a pod |
| • wracked his brain. | • raining cats and dogs |
| • in a nutshell | • scared to death |
| • best foot forward | • stick out like a sore thumb |
| • better half | • leaps and bounds |
| • better late than never | • selling like hotcakes |

Example of avoiding cliché:

Instead of writing the clichéd phrase, “Her eyes were as blue as the sky,” here are some new and more interesting descriptions:

- 1) Her eyes were the color of a high-Summer sky; clear and stark.
- 2) Her eyes sparkled like sapphires on black velvet.
- 3) Her eyes were the same milky blue as the veins in the old woman's hands.

Directions: Re-write the following sentences with **original** descriptions:

1. My mother's job keeps her as busy as a bee.
2. I was so happy I could die.
3. That assignment was as easy as pie.
4. When I came home, my brother scared me to death.

