

Nip and Tuck

Standing in front of a large LED screen showing a photo of twin sisters with drooping eyelids and oversized jaws, two gorgeous young women beamed radiantly at a shocked audience as they debuted their new faces after a series of cosmetic surgeries sponsored by a South Korean reality TV show. With their completely reconstructed faces, the twins, once serious underbite sufferers, told the audience in tears of joy how the surgeries had helped them regain their self-esteem, and that the pain throughout the whole process was far less than that of being ridiculed and called names.

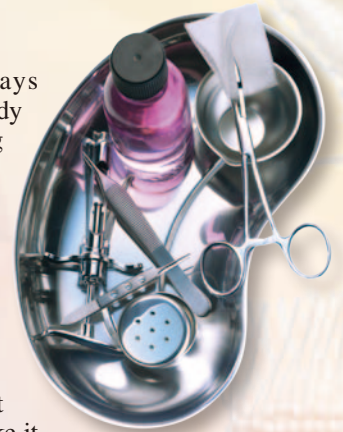
Like many people with physical birth defects, such as a cleft lip and a deformed ear, the twins had good reasons for seeking cosmetic surgery. Whether or not their beautiful faces can change their outlook on life, they may help the sisters regain self-confidence. In a world where physical beauty rules supreme, young people with facial defects, minor or serious, are often teased or bullied. Not wanting to be taunted by peers, many of them withdraw from social activities, and some may even think that as the bullies will never change, the only way out is to change themselves — through cosmetic surgery.



Beauty pleases the eyes, ensnares hearts and captures souls. However, only the lucky few have a flawless face and a perfect body. When foundation and concealer can no longer cover up the dark spots on your face, or when intensive workout cannot help you get a flat tummy, will you contemplate medical beauty treatment or plastic surgery? Nowadays, laser treatment can remove the unsightly blemishes from your face if you are willing to bear the burning sensation. For your love handles, if you have enough courage, time and money, the bulge around the waist can be eliminated with liposuction, but please take note that there are quite a number of cases in which the patients died on the operating table.

Admit it or not, most of us want to look good. It is not only out of vanity. Nor is it entirely the fault of the media which dictate a set of unreasonable standards of an idealised physical appearance. We are hardwired to appreciate physical beauty, which gives us sensory pleasure. Researches show that people with an attractive appearance enjoy significant advantages. They receive better treatment at work, get more attention from teachers, and have a higher chance of getting help when they lose their way, just to name a few. So, it is not hard to understand why some people choose to go under the knife to improve their looks, regardless of the risks involved and the pain that ensues.

Nevertheless, no one stays beautiful forever. Our face and body change as we age. After turning forties, our skin begins to sag as our muscles lose some of their tone. It is not uncommon to see drooping jowls, eye bags and fine creases along the nose extending to the corner of the mouth, which add years to our face. In a youth-obsessed culture, it is not easy at all to embrace ageing. While most of us would, rather helplessly, take it as a natural process, some are determined to regain a youthful appearance, ready to fend off ageing by all means. They dismiss the hackneyed phrase of “ageing gracefully” as only a theme in self-help books, or a placebo for the mind. Cosmetic surgeons are their only saviours.



Cosmetic surgery will not necessarily increase people's self-esteem if they are never happy with their looks. Taken to extremes, what begins as a confidence booster may develop into an addiction. We are very often stunned by the unrecognisable frozen faces of celebrities when flipping through entertainment magazines. Whether they have a real need to have a makeover, or whether they do it out of narcissistic tendencies, these pious beauty worshippers, some very good-looking indeed, are in an endless pursuit of physical perfection. They get hooked on the rush or high of being beautiful, and preoccupied with a slight defect in their appearance, which some might interpret as quirky and others perfectly acceptable. Sad to say, no matter what we do, we will never be able to keep ageing at bay, not even with a botox jab or a surgical scalpel.

In a free world where individuals have the right to choose, we should not judge others for wanting to get nipped and tucked wherever they can. But this cosmetic surgery craze sheds light on a darker side of human nature. While we adore beautiful people, we are harsh on those with an unattractive appearance. This is seen in the classroom, at workplace, and on TV. Looking unattractive is neither good nor bad. It is just a fact of life. To make this world more beautiful, the next time you see people with an unappealing appearance walking down the street, before you stare at them by instinct, ask yourself, “Who am I to judge?”





紫禁城

從天安門望過去，故宮赭紅色的圍牆在日光映照下，格外奪目，牆後的巍峨寶殿挺直地聳入灰中帶藍的天空中，樓閣飛檐的黃色琉璃瓦仿如一抹抹的彩雲。從南面午門往內進，越過寬闊廣場，太和殿前的一排朱紅色柱子收入眼簾。

太和殿金碧輝煌，畫棟雕梁，陽光穿過嵌上菱花格紋的門窗，落在御座兩側的瀝粉貼金雲龍圖案巨柱上，氣勢不凡。這裏是宮中舉行盛典的地方，站在殿內，好像穿越時空，看到明清兩代皇帝在這裏登基的盛況；走到殿前平臺，又彷彿聽到笙歌高奏，目睹皇后乘坐喜轎從午門進宮，文武百官齊集廣場，祝賀皇帝大婚之喜。

信步到外朝西路的武英殿，裏面擺放了很多珍貴書畫。據說康熙少時，經常在這裏與一羣滿洲少年玩“布庫戲”。他們身穿短打，手緊緊抓住對方，腳狠狠地蹬在地上，力圖把對手摔倒。誰又會料到在搏擊的喧鬧聲、喝彩聲背後是一場政治角力。當時，康熙真正要摔倒的是專橫跋扈的攝政大臣鰲拜。

為了剷除奸臣，他暗中調動，挑選一些摔跤手為侍衛，設計擒拿鰲拜，治以行刺之罪。倚在殿前的漢白玉欄旁，腦海中浮現一羣身穿侍衛服的少年把鰲拜壓在地上，鎮定從容的康熙展露勝利笑容的情景。



在這座雕欄玉砌的紫禁城內，不少人昧己瞞心，為了一己私慾，不惜借刀殺人，泯滅天良。心慈手軟的人要在朝廷宮中立足談何容易，即使貴為九五之尊，若只有菩薩心腸，不懂權術，恐怕也會淪為傀儡皇帝，聽命於手握實權的人。年少時的康熙早已明白此理。

由議事論政的外朝往內走，便是昔日皇室起居的內宮。這裏展出的宮中珍品琳琅滿目，有水晶、瑪瑙飾物，也有妃嬪的五彩錦袍，每件物品工藝精湛，美

不勝收。不過，華麗背後卻是無限蒼涼。後宮佳麗三千，試問能得皇恩寵幸又有多少人？如花似玉的秀女孤獨老死宮中的故事屢聽不鮮。為求長伴君王側，六宮粉黛各出奇謀，勾心鬥角。

咸豐元年，年方十六的滿洲旗人葉赫那拉氏獲選為貴人。她聰敏過人，但極富心計，愛弄權術，進宮後不久便深得皇帝愛寵。咸豐皇帝駕崩，遺詔立葉赫那拉氏所生的載淳繼承皇位，葉赫那拉氏為聖母皇太后。野心勃勃的皇太后善於籠絡人心，在其子登基後拔擢親信，培植勢力，策動政變，剷除異己，開始垂簾聽政。她就是左右晚清政局的慈禧太后。

走到寧壽宮北端的貞順門內，看到一口不起眼的小井。這裏是光緒皇心愛的珍妃香銷命殞的地方。同樣是通過選秀入宮，同樣是花容月貌，珍妃不像慈禧那麼心狠手辣，命運就坎坷得多了。珍妃秀外慧中，活潑可人，初入宮時深得慈禧喜愛，但因支持光緒推行維新變革而觸怒了慈禧。後來義和團作亂，八國聯軍攻打北京，慈禧在逃往西安前，命人強迫珍妃投井自盡。這口井不僅揭示一位美麗妃嬪的悲慘命運，也見證了後宮生活的滄桑變幻。



在深宮裏生活的還有一羣宦官。他們每天服侍帝王后妃的起居，對主子的性情、喜惡瞭如指掌。慈禧身旁的李連英嘴甜舌滑，善解人意，明白天上的風吹向哪兒，地上的草木也得向着那方折腰，天天絞盡腦汁都是為了討太后歡心。在慈禧的庇護下，這位總管太監在宮中斂財貪贓。不過，並非所有太監都像李連英般能得主子寵愛，他們大多身世可憐，命運悲慘，任人奴役大半生，老來無依無靠，出宮後孤獨而終，是封建皇權下的犧牲品。

夕陽西下，走出朱漆斑駁的宮門，回望這座經歷興衰起跌的皇城漸漸消失在暮色中。烏鴉棲歇在紅牆黃瓦上，發出斷續的鳴叫聲，好像在訴說哪個年輕帝王意氣風發，哪個白頭宮女對鏡垂淚，哪個落職朝官黯然步出宮門的段段如煙往事。

知美之惡，知惡之美，然後能知美惡矣。

《呂氏春秋·有始覽·去尤》

A Duckling and an Ogre

Do you sometimes find yourself worthless, not fitting in or belonging anywhere, being the last one to be picked, or the one who is forgotten and left behind? If yes, it is time for you to revisit *The Ugly Duckling* by Hans Christian Andersen.

The story begins in a barnyard where a mother duck gives birth to a whole brood of ducklings, all happy and playing together, except one — a different-looking duckling, which all the other animals in the farm tease. The pain caused by their contempt and mockery hurts the ugly duckling so deeply that he begins to see himself with the eyes of his tormentors as weird and useless.

One day, the ugly duckling wanders sadly from the barnyard, and embarks on a series of adventures: He lives with wild ducks and geese; he is picked up and taken home by a farmer on a chilly night; and he spends a miserable winter alone in a cave on the lake. As time goes by, little by little, an amazing thing happens. The strange-looking duckling begins to grow, taking a different shape. His neck grows longer, his feathers turn whiter, while his proud siblings who have once laughed at him feel inferior themselves and choose to hide in the bushes whenever he passes by, so as not to be outshone by his beauty.



Many fairytales feature a charming prince coming to the rescue of a beautiful princess who is sleeping in a glass coffin, or poisoned by a wicked witch. *Shrek* is not a story of this kind. Like the ugly duckling, Shrek is shunned by others because of his appearance. He complains, “People judge me before they know me, that’s why I am better off alone.” He chooses to live in a secluded swampy home. But he loses his peace of life when Lord Farquaad, the ruler of Duloc, decides to banish all

fairytale creatures from his kingdom. Forced to flee, the fairytale creatures land in the middle of Shrek’s swamp, taking up residence in his front yard and even going so far as commandeering his house.

One day, Shrek sets out, with a very loud donkey by his side, to “convince” Farquaad to give his swamp back. Farquaad accepts his request under one condition: Shrek must rescue the lovely Princess Fiona from the clutches of a fire-eating dragon, so Farquaad can marry her. As expected, after a fight with the dragon, Shrek rescues the beautiful Princess. And as expected, they fall in love with each other, though it is definitely not love at first sight. Ashamed of his appearance, Shrek does not want to take off his helmet to reveal himself, fearing that this will scare Fiona away. During their journey in the woods, they bicker constantly. This however makes them understand each other better.

If *Shrek* were a traditional fairytale, the green ogre would, like the Frog Prince, turn into a handsome prince in the end, whether with a princess’s kiss or a flick of a magic wand. But Shrek remains the same old fellow — smelly, gassy and hideous. Nor is Fiona always pretty. While she is a beautiful princess during the day, she becomes a fat and ugly ogre when the sun sets. Usually, a passionate kiss from the prince charming will break the spell. But it does not work here. Once Fiona is kissed by Shrek, the curse is lifted but she becomes an ogre permanently.

Unlike the ugly duckling, Shrek and Fiona do not become swans. The couple accept themselves as what they are, and live happily ever after. As described by Shrek, ogres are like onions and have different layers, but people only see the outer layer, not the inside. Nevertheless, he is convinced that happiness comes from within, not dependent on an attractive face. An ugly but wise ogre indeed!



The ugly duckling is actually a swan, lost from his true home, and mistakenly raised by a duck.

Accepting how the others judge him and not knowing what he really is, the poor little bird at first sees himself a strange misfit until he finds his swan friends, and with them, glides away into the blue sky to go after dreams that have once been so distant to him. It is a story about pain and rebirth. So, when you

feel rejected because of your appearance or for other reasons, do not let yourself perish in the duck’s world, for there is a swan’s world waiting for you to discover.

However, not everyone is lucky enough to turn into a swan. What if the ugly duckling remained a homely bird and could never take flight with other swans? Watch *Shrek*. This computer-animated comedy would give you a new perspective on the question.

Personal beauty is a greater recommendation than any letter of reference.

Aristotle



美文佳句

詞，優美含蓄，無論是訴衷情、懷往事、惜流光，或是相思纏綿，都能動人肺腑，啓迪心靈。

情之動人，不可言喻；情之傷人，痛徹心脾。讀到晏幾道的《思遠人》，深深明白思念之苦讓人心顫不止。“紅葉黃花秋意晚，千里念客行”，詞人在楓林徘徊，看着天邊飛雲過盡，惦記着遠方佳人，望穿秋水，奈何“歸鴻無信”，想要魚雁傳情，也不知寄往何處。“淚彈不盡臨窗滴，就硯旋研墨”，手執筆桿，寫到別後離情，潸然淚下，淚水沾濕信箋。詞人這股殷殷情意，試問又有誰能領會？詞句細膩動人，呈現迷離淒清之美。



人生長路漫漫，有悲有喜，只要細心體味，定會發現生活有無數清歡。清歡是對生活情趣的熱愛，是人間最有滋味的歡樂。在一個細雨斜風的春日，詞人蘇軾與友同遊南山，沿途看到“淡煙疏柳媚晴灘”，處處生機勃勃。“雪沫乳花浮午盞，蓼茸蒿筍試春盤”，清淡的茶香野菜，讓蘇氏頓覺奢華濃烈的歡樂不長久，就像馥郁的花香易散，反之平淡的樂趣更充滿生活詩意，讓人久久回味。文字渾然天成，平淡中見豪邁，細細咀嚼，彷彿與東坡居士同行，賞盡人間清歡。

在炎熱的夏日，朗讀周邦彥的《蘇幕遮》，讓人沉醉在浪漫的詞海裏，宛如一夢。詞人清早起來，嗅到昨夜消溽暑用的沉香餘味，聽到四周鳥聲啾啾，“侵曉窺檐語”，又看到屋外的荷花盛放，“葉上初陽乾宿雨”。清平的水面上挺立着一枝枝荷花，微風吹拂，搖曳生姿。“故鄉遙，何日去？”周氏家在江南，卻長年客居京師長安。想到當年仲夏，與家鄉的友人一起捕魚的快樂情景，輕聲低問“五月漁郎相憶否？”詞人划着小槳，乘着輕舟，在蕩漾的綠波間，“夢入芙蓉浦”，彷彿回到故鄉的荷花池去。讀這闕詞，讀到的是對昨日的追憶，讀到的是消逝歲月的美好。詞句瑰麗，引人遐思。

詞，委婉細膩，長短句交錯，變化多端，對內心的感情有深入的描繪，有的淺吟低詠，有的氣勢磅礴，有的慷慨悲歌，無論何時閱讀都有所得。順意時，朗讀雋永清新的詞令生活更顯美好；困頓時拿來細看，又足以讓人忘卻塵世的煩憂，安然渡過風雨。



南腔 北調



粵語“靚”字，基本意思是好看、漂亮，讀作[liɛŋ]，陰去聲。《漢語大詞典》和《現代漢語詞典》皆收錄這個字。廣東話“靚女”，普通話可以說“美女”、“大美人”、“漂亮的女孩子”等，“靚仔”則可叫“帥哥”或“俊小子”。

不過，在粵語中，“靚”字的詞義甚廣，用法靈活，轉換成普通話，往往不只是“好看”、“漂亮”就能對應。例如看到喜歡的東西，我們常常會說“呢件係靚嘢”，普通話該怎麼說？我們可以說“這件是上等貨”或“這件是好東西”。

在香港和其他粵語地區，“靚”字無處不在。天朗氣清、風和日麗時，我們會說“今日天氣好靚”；在街上看到穿得漂亮、時髦的人，我們又會說“嗰個人好識扮靚”。這兩句話對譯為普通話，可以說“今天天氣很好”和“這個人真會打扮”。忙了一天回到家裏，感到疲倦，很想“沖個靚涼”，普通話就要說成“痛痛快快地洗個澡”或“洗個痛快澡”。

此外，“靚”有變調，讀作陰平聲時，是形容無知、不老練的青少年，含輕蔑之意。例如“靚仔”，普通話是“毛小孩”或“小子”；“花靚”則可以說“臭小子”。



以下六個廣東話詞語都有“靚”字，大家看看能否對譯為普通話？（建議答案見本頁右下角）

1. 貪靚
2. 瞓個靚覺
3. 又平又靚
4. 平嘢唔靚
5. 靚嘢唔平
6. 靚妹

建議答案：
1. 愛美、愛漂亮
2. 舒舒服服地睡一覺、睡個舒服覺
3. 又便宜又好
4. 便宜沒好貨
5. 好貨不便宜
6. 黃毛丫頭



Size Zero

It was two months before Verona's high school graduation ball. Inside a fitting room of a department store, a short girl who is a little bit chubby was squeezing herself into a size-zero violet party dress which was so tight that it almost split down the sides. The zipper was stuck half way up her back, and she could not wiggle it up or down. Finally, with the help of a shop assistant, she managed to get out of the "sausage casing".

Later that night, while Verona was gulping tea in the kitchen, her mother, who was busy preparing dinner, peppered her with questions on the party dress and the graduation ball.

"Did you find any beautiful dress?" asked the mother while putting a marinated chicken in the oven.

"No, they're all for slim people. I'll go with Pansy next week to see if there's anything good," replied Verona.

"Don't drink too much, dear. We've roast chicken and honey-glazed ham for dinner. I've made your favourite *panna cotta* as well."

"Mom, I'm not feeling well. I've no appetite at all."

"Are you alright? What's bothering you? Is that the party dress?"

Verona did not answer her and went straight into her bedroom. She flipped open her laptop, and quickly typed into the search bar: "How to lose ten pounds in two months?" Following the advice of some authoritative websites for weight loss, she carefully worked out on her tablet the total amount of calories she should take each day. Her stomach twitched when she came to realise that there would be no chocolate, biscuits and ice-cream in the coming two months.

At the dinner table, Verona did not talk much, just idly moving slices of ham and chicken around the plate with her fork.

"Verona, you aren't eating anything," said her father.

"Dad, I don't feel like eating at all. Can I be excused?"

Verona threw herself onto the bed, pounding her bloated and flabby tummy with her fists. Another glass of water would quiet down her growling stomach, she thought. But it did not work. To relieve the discomfort, she tiptoed into the kitchen to get some grapes, but felt guilty right after eating them.

The clock struck twelve. Verona tossed and turned in bed, counting backward and forward from one to one hundred, and



clutching her belly in great pain. Hours passed. The long night finally came to an end. She scrambled out of bed, grabbed her school bag and dashed out of the door without eating anything, looking pale and tired, like a sick person. At noon, her hands started to tremble and her heart pounded. She kept wiping off sweat on the back of her neck. Her teacher asked her if she needed some rest. She rose slowly from her chair, lurched forward a bit teetering on the edge of the desk, and before she had time to make a response, she fell onto the ground.

With a small piece of gauze taped to her forehead, Verona was lying in bed in the medical room, wondering if she could hold on till the end. Still haunted by the "zipper" incident, she was certain that she was doing the right thing. At this moment, the school nurse came in. Wearing a stern face, she asked Verona in a reproachful tone if she had skipped breakfast. Mind made up, she lied to the nurse that she had come down with the flu.

In the following weeks, Verona, as commanded by Pansy, changed her diet plan. Her meals were mainly tuna or lean meat coupled with dressing-free salad and raw vegetables. She also went to a Thai boxing class with Pansy, and sweated a lot. One month on, Verona had lost six pounds and knocked inches off her midriff. Though much slimmer now, she still could not find a dress she liked, except the violet one she tried before.



After much struggling with her mind, Verona, in Pansy's company, went back to the department store six weeks after the embarrassing incident. A little bit hesitant, she picked the violet party dress from a rack of evening gowns. Pansy came forward and pushed her inside the fitting room, saying encouragingly, "This dress is so beautiful. Go try it on. I'm sure it'll look great on you."

Inside the cubicle, Verona took a deep breath before the challenge started. She sucked in her tummy, extended her trembling hands to her back, and slowly pulled up the dress. Everything went well. When the zipper reached her ribcage, she suddenly stopped. "I'm going to make it," she reassured herself. Taking another deep breath, she carefully moved the zipper up, and then, the dress just fit snugly. Seeing herself in the mirror, slim and beautiful, Verona could not hold back her emotions anymore. Pansy came in and gave her a big hug.

"Shall you pamper yourself a bit today? What about two cones of mango ice-cream topped with crunchy hazelnuts?" asked Pansy playfully.

"Why not? Please drizzle over a little strawberry sauce," replied Verona with a hearty and triumphant laugh.

The power of finding beauty in the humblest things makes home happy and life lovely.

Louisa May Alcott



Behind the Beautiful Forever

Economic success is not necessarily a promise of hope. In India, the second fastest growing economy, pockets of slums dot major cities like smudges on a rosy picture of modern prosperity. *Behind the Beautiful Forever*, a work of non-fiction by Pulitzer Prize winner Katherine Boo, puts one of them under the microscope.



implicates the Husains before drawing her last breath, leaving them at the mercy of the brutally corrupt Indian police.

Sitting beside the road to the state-of-the-art Mumbai international airport and a host of grandiose hotels, Annawadi looks totally out of place. A concrete wall is raised to hide its reeking garbage heaps and a vast sewage lake from view. Painted on the wall is a colourful ad for a floor tile bearing the upbeat tagline “Beautiful Forever”, which is seen by some Annawadians as a hope rather than a taunt.

Unfolding alongside the saga of Abdul’s harrowing ordeal are stories of his fellow slum dwellers, whose quirks and foibles, longing and desires show how people are struggling for survival in Annawadi: The shrewd Asha, the unofficial “slumlord”, has no qualms about manipulating others for personal gain and will stop at nothing to ensure that her daughter can lead a better life through education; the teenage scavenger Sunil works hard to support his younger sister and wants to eat enough to eventually grow taller than she is; the talented Kalu puts a brimming smile on everyone’s face with his mimicry acts when he is not busy plundering airport recycling bins...

Abdul Husain is a young garbage trader who believes that hope is real. With the help of his mother, a formidable haggler armed with an arsenal of amusing profanities, he buys garbage from the scavengers and sells it to the recyclers. They have been doing so well that their dream of moving to the other side of the wall seems almost within reach. Then one day, everything changes. While banging on their kitchen wall during renovation, the Husains have a heated argument with Fatima, an emotionally-disturbed woman living next door. Fatima becomes so hysterical that she sets herself on fire. Out of spite she

Behind the Beautiful Forever has all the makings of a gripping novel with arresting characters and racy dramas. But the author never milks their stories for pathos. With deep insight and an objective eye, she gives a captivating portrait of a group of people who are striving towards a better life. “It is blisteringly hard to be good” when every facet of your life conspires to bring out the worst in you, she laments, but the “astonishment is that some people are good.” And that is the kind of beauty that lasts forever.



Do They Wriggle Freely?

Adverbs, like adjectives, add information to a statement. They, however, are far more versatile than adjectives. While adjectives can modify nouns and pronouns, adverbs qualify a verb here, boosting an adjective there, and appearing in disguise to support another adverb.

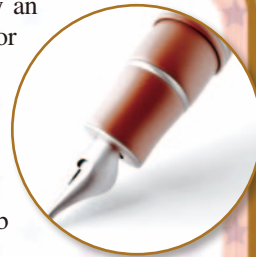
Most adverbs can wriggle freely in a sentence. Take a look at the following sentences:

Originally, the pen must have been bought in the shop.
The pen *originally* must have been bought in the shop.
The pen must have *originally* been bought in the shop.

However, not all adverbs are as flexible as *originally*. Some feel more comfortable in certain positions. For adverbs defining manner, place and time, they are normally placed at the end of a clause after the verb group. For example, *He walked rather erratically*; *He threw the stone over there*; and *I saw that movie recently*. While adverbs conveying extent work best in the middle (e.g. *This jar is almost full*), those indicating viewpoint or attitude are most effective at the beginning of a sentence: *Strictly speaking*, *I shouldn't comment*; *Wisely*, *they both decided to stay away*.

The above tips serve only to help you position adverbs for the intended effect. They are not rules for there are always exceptions. For example, *enough*, an adverb of extent or degree, is commonly placed after a verb, adjective or adverb: *Are the carrots cooked enough?* We can also use *enough* before a noun as a determiner: *There aren't enough chairs for everyone*. *Enough* can be a pronoun as well: *Enough has been said on the subject already*. So don't mix up its functions.

Adverbs, if wrongly placed, can convey an unintended meaning, or result in ambiguity. For example: *Women who sunbathe frequently run the risk of skin disease*. Are we talking about women running the risk of skin disease because they sunbathe too frequently, or saying that nearly every woman who sunbathes runs the risk of skin disease? Make sure your adverb placement conveys exactly what you mean.



One more point to note. If there are more than one adverb or adverbial modifier at the end of a sentence, the usual order is: manner, place, frequency and time. For example, *Mary strolls slowly along the promenade every morning at seven o'clock to exercise her dog*.

Have a quick test. Rewrite the following using the adverbs or adverbial phrases in brackets in their usual positions. Check the suggested answers at the end of this article:

1. The damage had been light. (*fortunately*)
2. He was imprisoned. (*in January 1964, in India*)
3. I tried to reach you. (*at home, several times*)
4. Parents always complain that their children eat. (*at meals, badly*)



1. Fortunately, the damage had been light.
2. He was imprisoned in India in January 1964.
3. I tried to reach you at home several times.
4. Parents always complain that their children eat badly at meals.

Suggested answers:



簡單的美麗

機電工程署
文書助理羅顯斌

曾幾何時，我以為複雜冗長、艱深難懂的文學創作才算名篇佳章，簡單易明的作品則平平無奇，難登大雅之堂。

中國文壇也曾奉晦澀難明的作品為主臬。魏晉南北朝，駢儷文盛行，着重文體的外在美，完全忽略文章內容，直至古文運動興起，內容充實、不尚浮華的文章才捲土重來，結出更美麗的果實。到了唐代，文學家輩出。試讀柳宗元《始得西山宴遊記》：“凡數州之土壤，皆在衽席之下。其高下之勢，岌然窪然，若垤若穴，尺寸千里，攢蹙累積，莫得遁隱。”再讀歐陽修《醉翁亭記》：“環滁皆山也。其西南諸峰，林壑尤美。望之蔚然而深秀者，琅琊也。”沒有過度的雕琢堆砌，秀蔚美景已躍現紙上，足證簡潔的文字也可寫出文情並茂的篇章。



宋代詞大放異彩。北宋詞人蘇軾《江城子·乙卯正月二十日夜記夢》：“十年生死兩茫茫，不思量，自難忘”，文句淺白，不蔓不枝，卻已將思念亡妻的深情表露無遺。可惜，詞發展到南宋中後期，詞人刻意追求高雅，用字愈來愈冷僻，意象一般朦朧迷離，詞旨深隱，雖不乏佳作，但往往失諸隱晦。

到了元代，渾樸淺明的元曲成為文學風尚。關漢卿《南呂·一枝花·不伏老》尾聲有這一句：“我是個蒸不爛煮不熟捶不匾炒不爆響瑯瑯一粒銅豌豆”，文字生動凝煉，讀來幾近白話，平易近人。

究竟深奧難明抑或淺白易懂的文章較為可取？要解答這個問題，可以參考古代文論。

劉勰在《文心雕龍》中提出文附於質、質待於文的觀點。“質”是內容，“文”指文采，文質並重，不可偏廢。韓愈提倡“文以明道”，理學家周敦頤在《通書·文辭》中解釋為“文以載道”，把文章比作車輛，而道理就是車上的貨物，透過文字傳播道理。外表華美而缺乏內涵的文章，猶如“輪轅飾而人弗庸，徒飾也，況虛車乎。”



文章最重要的是傳情達意，只要內容充實，不是空話妄語，無須雕琢修飾，也可成為上乘之作。若視文學為傳播義理的工具，就應多用淺白的文字，讓普羅大眾也能明瞭箇中意蘊，否則陽春白雪，知音幾何？

當然，不少深奧的作品也言之有物，叫人捧讀再三。這類作品詞藻華美，綽約多姿，反映作者深厚的語文素養。另外，作者欲語還休時，下筆也會刻意隱晦，讀者只能從字裏行間推敲其意，例如李商隱名作《錦瑟》：“錦瑟無端五十弦，一弦一柱思華年。莊生曉夢迷蝴蝶，望帝春心託杜鵑。滄海月明珠有淚，藍田日暖玉生煙。此情可待成追憶，只是當時已惘然。”文字柔美旖旎，用典繁富，但詩人是自傷懷才不遇，感念亡妻，抑或另有所指，千年縱逝仍未有定論。

辭章深淺，應與寫作目的配合；假如唯艱深是尚，容易忽略質樸之美。

願大家細味簡單的美麗。

至美素璞，物莫能飾也。

桓寬《鹽鐵論·殊路》

Over the years, writers, poets and playwrights have brought to life countless beautiful or hideous characters that have helped shape our ideas of beauty and ugliness. Some of these characters have a face that could stop a clock, while others can make even Aphrodite blush. How many of them can you identify based on the descriptions below?



1. A man had given all other bliss, /And all his worldly worth for this, /To waste whole heart to place a kiss, / Just once upon her perfect lips. — Lord Alfred Tennyson
2. Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships, /And burnt the topless towers of Ilium? — Christopher Marlowe
3. "See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand! O, that I were a glove upon that hand, that I might touch that cheek!" — William Shakespeare
4. "I sold flowers. I didn't sell myself. Now you've made a lady of me I'm not fit to sell anything else." — George Bernard Shaw
5. Tall, handsome, slender, but well knit; he seemed /Active, though not so sprightly as a page. — Lord Byron
6. The other statues, those of monsters and demons, had no hatred for him — he resembled them too closely for that. — Victor Hugo
7. "I am alone and miserable. Only someone as ugly as I am could love me." — Mary Shelley
8. "I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why... he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn't specify the point." — Robert Louis Stevenson

Please send your entry to the Editorial Board of *Word Power*, Official Languages Division, Civil Service Bureau, Room 2310, High Block, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong before 11 August 2014. Watch out for our coming issue to see if you get all the answers right, and better still, if you are one of the lucky five to win a prize. The Editorial Board will have the final say on the answers.

Name: Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms (delete as appropriate) _____
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第五十五期答案

1. 漏壺、漏刻
2. 歐陽修
3. 金星、星名
4. 意指春風帶點寒意
5. 形容星光閃亮
6. 黃昏
7. 滿月、圓月
8. 山水含清暉
9. 一排排的山峯
10. 天要亮的時候

以下得獎者將獲專函通知領獎：

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潘碧珊	土木工程拓展署
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Lam Hing Wai	屋宇署
Carrie Ching	土地註冊處

Issue No. 57 (September 2014) : Basic Daily Needs

二零一四年九月第五十七期主題：衣食住行

Issue No. 58 (December 2014) : Successful Career

二零一四年十二月第五十八期主題：行行出狀元

Contributions from colleagues are welcome. Please refer to Issue No. 42 for details.

歡迎同事投稿，細則請參閱第四十二期。

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