



The A-Z of writing

Y-z

Ending on endings. The final chapter in the series revisiting John Simmons' book *The Invisible Grail*. Take a look through our [weekly editions](#) for a workout in writing agility that will influence and improve your words for work.

You have been with me on this point-to-point exploration for something like 25 steps now. So you know that we're nearing the end. And you've probably guessed that there's only one subject to end with: endings.

Each piece of writing needs its own properly considered ending. Endings are probably even more important than openings because they really are the last word, and you won't have a next sentence to come to your rescue if you get it wrong. What I have discovered by writing this series of pieces with fixed constraints – e.g. start with a word beginning with 'y' and finish with a word ending with 'z' – is that such discipline forces you to see each piece of writing as complete in itself. Think of everything you write as needing to have that same sense of completeness: you need to craft it, chisel it, shape it until it feels naturally complete. Because writing is thinking, it is a thought rather than just a technique that provides the completeness.

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Good endings need a resonant thought. That thought can be underscored by technical detail: end with 'z', use alliteration, use balancing clauses. The rhyming couplet to close a scene in a play is a formal example:

*Cheerly to sea; the signs of war advance.
No king of England, if not king of France*

William Shakespeare, *Henry V*

Perhaps all good endings have a feeling of inevitability about them too, which the rhyme provides in an obvious way. Although we're unlikely to find a writing situation that cries out for a rhyming couplet in our writing today. But we do need to build that sense of inevitability through the progression of thought captured in arresting language. We might not have known exactly where we were heading but it feels right once we are there.

Each day provides us with a new journey; so does each new piece of writing. We need to approach each journey as a voyage of discovery every bit as personally momentous as when Columbus embarked on a tiny ship and set sail for a part of the world previously unexplored by Europeans. What is waiting there for us? Think how the world was about to change, for good or bad, when Columbus headed westwards from Cadiz.

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