

Brian Culhane

Problems of Usage

i. Disinterested / Uninterested

Best disinterested like a judge,
Not arrested by dislike
Or its converse, not molested
By the tug of a mind
Out on some hike
Laboring behind
With unspoken grudge,
But rather wholly free
As one who, past the chasm,
Peers into infinity
Without spasm:
Quizzical, perhaps,
That Death came so near
(Only to disappear, running laps
With his companion, Fear).
But you're uninterested,
Dear, already gone to bed.

ii. Imply / Infer

Regarding last night's shove:
I must infer your love,
As from such gestures made,
Whose meanings (lie, lay, laid?)
Under cover of night,
I extrapolate delight

When muscles tense.
Just as this sentence
Makes its implication felt
Rather than openly spelt,
So your touch may turn
Out to be a hint
The one shoved must learn.
Take color and tint:
A difference of heft,
Like leaving and left.
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iii. Cite / Sight / Site

Every affair
Has a site
Where
Two met:

A first set
Of coordinates,
With dates
And times.

The lines
Crossed there!
Lovers can cite
Each stair,

Each stone,
Or how near
Their sight
Once alone.

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iv. Ensure / Insure

Uncertain means unsure,
But ensure not insure.
Does dirty mean impure?
And when's a fly a lure?
Or some trip a tour?
Or wall in, immure?
Our thesaurus holds no cure:
The last may not endure.
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v. To / Two / Too

Too true
That two
Who diverge
May yet merge,
Come to
Their senses,
Make amends,
Mend fences,
Again become
A sum
Beyond friends.

vi. Weather / Whether

Love's natural weather
Is where you are.

Love's a romp in heather
If you're there.

Love's never a tether,
Ever.

And this is so, whether
You love me or no.

vii. Number / Amount

Mistakes which weigh
On grammarians may
Be of little account.
So number and amount.

Who cares if pins, coins,
Stamps, foes, kisses, loins
Come to a goodly number,
Or that standing lumber,
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Sheer terror, heart's delight,
However solid or slight,
Can never be added up
Like chips from a broken cup?

The number of headaches,
Amount of trips to lakes:
Aren't arbitrary rules
Fit for pedantic fools?

Aren't such truly made
To be lost or mislaid?
Three centuries from now

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Will any strike a brow
On encountering such?
Dear, we love so much,
No solecism mars
The meaning that is ours;

Indeed no usage book
Helps parse a narrow look
Or insures happiness,
Or makes joy any less.

Weather teachers agree
Or site our impropriety,
We'll lay together long,
Content in being wrong.