

View From the Rear Pew #95 – Brent Skinner

Our elder son and his family came to Edmonton before Christmas. It was wonderful to spend time together. Our youngest grandchild, Elise, is just two years old and is as lively and bright as they come (grandfatherly biases acknowledged). I am most impressed with her grammar and vocabulary. You see, she is way ahead of her time. She speaks exclusively in one or two syllable words with a maximum of only two words per sentence. It is amazing how well Elise communicates with an incredible degree of vocal efficiency. Examples include: 'My toy', 'Go car', 'Want cookie' and (when traveling from parkade to the terminal building at the Edmonton International Airport), 'Cold, cold.' I reckon that this is where our great and noble English language is headed. Back in mid-career as a health system bureaucrat, I was taught that any writing should be at a grade 5 level, with short sentences and simple words. Now we have Twitter which restricts the number of characters that can be used in any given message and kind of forces its millions of users to use mini words and acronyms. So, communicating in two word sentences may actually be leading edge linguistics in today's world. I can easily imagine a Canadian Prime Minister messaging 'fire senate' or an American President twittering 'nuke Syria'. It is a little more difficult to think about awarding a Nobel Prize in literature to a two-word-sentence author.

So I thought that I would give an example of how our new model English literature might work using the well known poem 'Trees' by Joyce Kilmer.

I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose lovely mouth is pressed
Against earth's sweet flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree,

So here is my new age version of this classic poem as inspired by granddaughter Elise Skinner of New Westminster, British Columbia.

Me see
pretty tree

Tree stuck
In muck

See God
No I-pod

Summer best
Birdies nest

Snow again
Big rain

Many letter
Tree better

I admit that the modern version lacks elegance but it is much easier to memorize and takes up a lot less paper. Also, it would eliminate having to worry about such complicated concepts as iambic pentameter, which has too many syllables anyway.

My next project will be to rewrite the Gettysberg Address into two word sentences.

Bye bye. Cold, cold. Stay house.