

# **Language Inventor**

Discovering Your Writing Matters



On the post-it note, write one sentence that describes this picture. Try to include as much information about what you see as you can in **one sentence**.

Richard Ohmann, professor at Wesleyan University, placed a cartoon, much like this cartoon, in front of 25 people and asked them to write a one-sentence description.

None of the 25 sentences were identical.

Then Professor Ohmann used a computer to determine how many grammatically correct sentences in English could be formed using only the words written down by these 25 people.

How many would you guess?

1000?

1,000,000?

Professor Ohmann's computer  
created ...

19.8 **BILLION** sentences.

**That's a lot.**

It would take

**40 human lifetimes**

to read each of those sentences  
aloud.

Other computer studies have shown that it would take **ten trillion years...**

-- **2000** X the estimated age of the earth –

to speak all the possible sentences in the English language that use at least 20 words.

Therefore...

it is highly unlikely that any 20-word sentence that you create or will create in this class **has ever been written or spoken in human history.**

That's right, **human history.**

The history of humans.

Thomas Jefferson,

Tom Hanks,

Tom Brady. **None of them.**

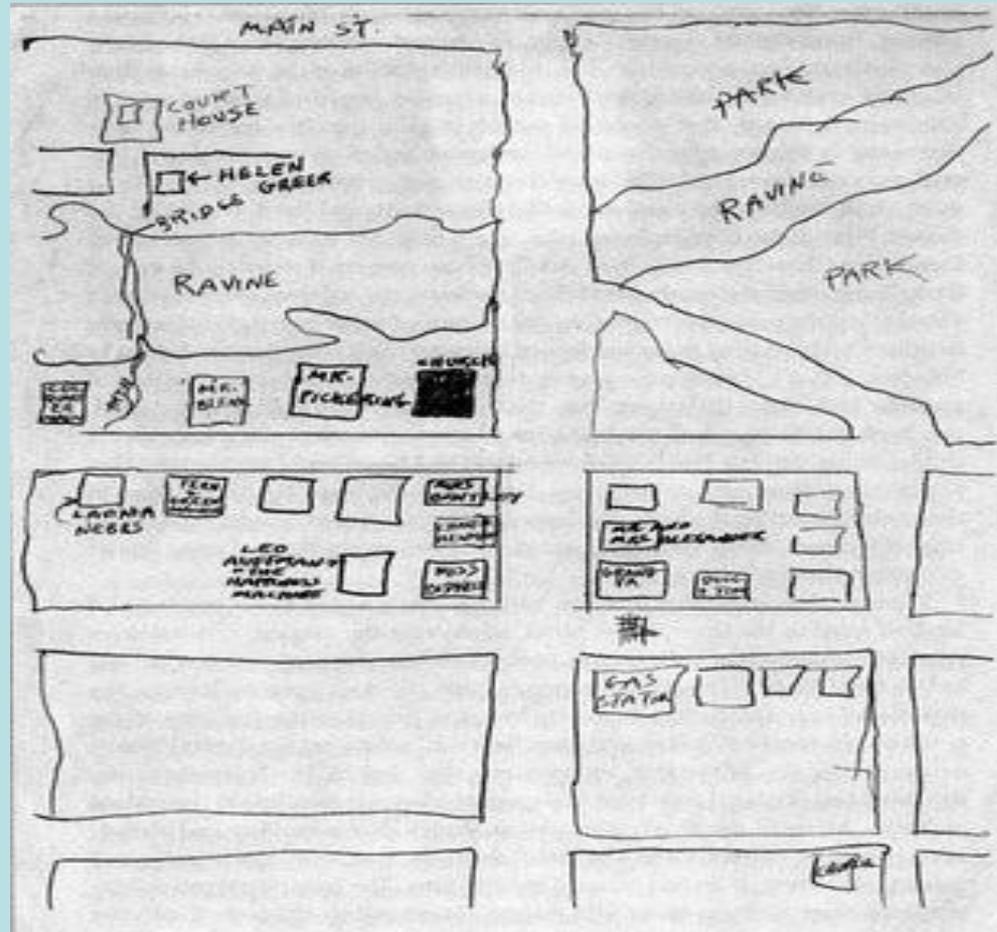
“When we study language, we are approaching what some might call the ‘**human essence**,’ the distinct qualities of mind that are unique to man.”

Noam Chomsky

**Language** plays a key role in the shaping and refining of **your identity**

- how you see yourself
- and how others see you.

# 1<sup>st</sup> Writing Activity: Neighborhood Map



# The Three Foundations for Your Success This Year:

- **You are a language inventor.**
- **You are an expert of inquiry.**
- **You are an accomplished storyteller.**

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