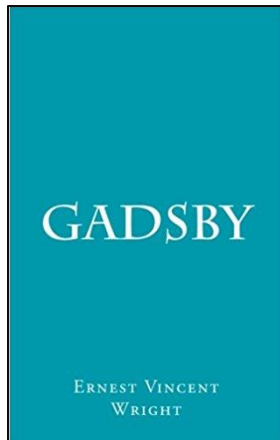


Spotlight on Books



As those of you participating in NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month) can attest, writing a novel is no easy task. So why someone like Ernest Vincent Wright would throw in a seemingly impossible challenge on top of that (i.e., to not use the letter *e* even once), is not easy to understand.

However, as the Oulipo, a group of eccentric writers from France, came to discover, sometimes these self-imposed and arbitrary constraints had the opposite effect: rather than stalling one's creative output, they actually triggered ideas.

Wright's *Gadbsy*, published in 1939, has over 50,000 words, all *e*-less. I cannot imagine how much work this must have been. (It comes in a 157 pages, if you're wondering.) It's also surprisingly readable. You may come to pick up on certain tricks that he used (he relied heavily on lists, for example) and the story of a growing town does become a little tedious as the book progresses. Nonetheless, it might just be the kind of writing exercise that aspiring authors need.

It doesn't have to be a whole novel, but if the words just won't flow, try writing a paragraph without the letter *e*. Or *i*. Try only using words that contain *t*. Make each sentence one word longer than the last. The constraints are up to you, but it's quite likely you'll find your brain waking up. If so, you may even be brave enough and inspired to tackle NaNoWriMo.

John Mutford, Library Manager

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