

## ENDNOTE: PET PEEVES

# What's Not to Like?

NANCY LARSON SHAPIRO

A recent lunchtime conversation at Teachers & Writers centered on the many quirks and downright errors we hear in the language today. I railed on about my irritation with the nearly ubiquitous use of the word *like*, which pops up in almost every sentence uttered by the teenagers (and, yes, many adults). I think of the human voice as an instrument, and the “likes” become extra notes, throwing off the rhythm and melody of the language. This is true whether a person is speaking “standard” American English or dialect. “Like” is not a grace note: it’s a clunker.

My fulminating was echoed some days later when my friend Russell Connor sent me the following poem or, as he calls it, “song lyric.” In it, Russell not only takes on the intemperate use of *like*, but goes after the curious use of *go* to replace *say*. As a group of us shared a laugh over the poem, it occurred to me that it might be a constructive twist to turn our vexations into writing exercises based on them.

### Like, I Love You

Professors quite rightly are professing  
To be anxious and annoyed,  
At the increasing expression  
Of expressions we should avoid.  
If I said “like,” in “I like you, Harrison,”  
It meant I’m fond of dear old Harrison.  
Another meaning meant comparison,  
As in, “*You’re* not at all like dear old Harrison.”  
But now, a *new* like is, like, everywhere,  
Interjected, unexpected,  
All our speech is now infected,  
While good old words are just rejected.  
Who decided “go” should replace good old “say?”

This is the hole in the dike that  
needs round-the-clock fingering.  
—David McCord on the usage of *like*

"I go, 'Hello,' he goes, 'Have a nice day.'"  
I wonder how old love songs would rate,  
If, like, they were brought, like, up to date....

Love me or, like, leave me,  
And let me be, like, lonely.  
I'd rather be, like, lonely,  
Than, like, happy with, like, somebody else.

They go, how I knew  
My true love was, like, true.  
I, of course, go,  
"Something, like, here inside  
Cannot be, like, denied."

If I, like, loved you,  
Time and again I would try to go  
All I'd, like, want you to know.  
If I, like, loved you,  
Words, like, wouldn't come, or "go,"  
Like, in an easy way—  
Round in circles I'd go!  
Longing to go, "I love you,"  
But afraid and, like, shy  
I'd let my golden chances pass me, like, by.

—Russell Connor