On Style and Imitation

Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal.

T. S. Eliot

Compound Sentences
The Art of Styling Sentences Handout, Pattern 1: Compound Sentence with semicolon, no conjunction.

• Example: The vicuña is a gentle animal living in the central Andes; its fleece often becomes the fabric for expensive coats.

• Example (with series): But it is illusion to think that there is anything fragile about the life of the earth; surely this is the toughest membrane imaginable in the universe, opaque to probability, impermeable to death. (Lewis Thomas, "The World's Biggest Membrane")

The Art of Styling Sentences Handout, Pattern 1b: Same as above, but with a coordinating conjunction (also a connector), such as and, or, for, but, nor, yet, so.

• Example: It was snowing outside, and in the building Harold felt safe; he dreaded leaving his shelter for the long, dangerous trip home.

Sentences with Series

• Example: Yet underlying Marlow's inclusiveness, his evasions, his arabesque meditation on his feelings and ideas, is the unrelenting course of the journey itself, which, despite all the many obstacles, is sustained through the jungle, through time, through hardship, to the heart of it all, Kurtz's ivory trading empire. (Edward Said, "Two Visions in Heart of Darkness")

The Art of Styling Sentences Handout, Pattern 6: An Introductory Series of Appositives (echoed idea or second naming), with a dash and a summarizing subject.

• Example: Foresight, humor, wit—all are evident in Omar Khayyam's Rubaiyat.

The Art of Styling Sentences Handout, Pattern 8: Dependent Clauses in a Pair or in a Series (ate beginning or end of sentences)

• Example: In Biology 50, Stella learned that a hummingbird does not really hum, that a screech owl actually whistles, and that storks prefer to wade in water than fly around carrying tiny babies.

Repetition
The Art of Styling Sentences Handout, Pattern 9a: Same word (an adjective, adverb, preposition, noun, modifying word, intensifier, or verb) repeated in parallel structure

• Example: The South Pacific island is an isolated community—isolated from the values of the West, isolated from the spiritual heritage of the East.

Short, Simple Sentences for Effect (even a "punchline" effect). This is often good following a long sentence in a paragraph centered on a complicated idea.

• Example: "Despite their European names and mannerisms, Conrad's narrators are not average unreflecting witnesses of European imperialism. They do not simply accept what goes on in the
name of the imperial idea: they think about it a lot, they worry about it, they are actually quite anxious about whether they can make it seem like a routine thing. But it never is. (Said 32)

Try these

T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919)
No poet, no artist of any sort, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not mere historical, criticism.

Lewis Thomas, "The Lives of a Cell" (1971)
But it is illusion to think that there is anything fragile about the life of the earth; surely this is the toughest membrane imaginable in the universe, opaque to probability, impermeable to death. We are the delicate part, transient and vulnerable as cilia. Nor is it a new thing for man to invent an existence that he imagines to be above the rest of life; this has been his most consistent intellectual exertion down the millennia. As illusion, it has never worked out to his satisfaction in the past, any more than it does today. Man is embedded in nature.

Joan Didion, "The White Album" (1979)
We look for the sermon in the suicide, for the social of moral lesson in the murder of five. We interpret what we see, select the most workable of the multiple choices. We live entirely, especially if we are writers, by the imposition of a narrative line upon disparate images, by the "ideas" with which we have learned to freeze the shifting phantasmagoria which is our actual experience.