Power Of Words Essay, Research Paper

We use words every single day of our lives. It’s the easiest way for humans to communicate. Without words, we would be left with only grunts, and gestures. This demonstrates how important, and powerful, words are.

But just how powerful are words? Words have been known to cause wars, or create peace. In fact, the words one chooses can mean the difference between anger and peace. Take for instance, the synonyms of “shut-up” and “be quiet.” Though they both mean the same thing, “shut-up” has a much greater amount of hostility than “be quiet.”

Word choice is certainly an important factor in the English language. The choice of words can make people perceive situations differently. An example would be Melville’s Captain Ahab. In truth, Captain Ahab was just a poor, disabled old man. But Melville’s choice of words make us see the Ahab as an insane, vengeful sea captain, crippled by his nemesis, Moby Dick, The Great White Whale. The differences between the two possible perceptions are opposite extremes. The obvious difference that word choice has made a difference is tremendous.

Another power that words hold is the power to clarify a situation. A certain word can clear up any misunderstandings that one might have easily. There is such a thing as over-clarification, demonstrated by (in my opinion) Thomas Hardy. To go to such lengths to describe a countryside, or a man’s pants does seem like redundancy. But rest assured that at least his readers know exactly the message Hardy wishes to convey.

Even words that aren’t adjectives can describe a situation. Dialect is the way that one pronounces and uses a language. Comparing different dialects can be shown by the examples of British English and Canadian English. Take Holden Caulfield of Catcher in the Rye and compare him to Elizabeth Bennett of Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice. A play is completely dependent on dialect, because so few plays have narration. Dialects establish, to the audience, a character’s class, or rank, as well as the time and place of the play. The use of dialect in plays seems more obvious when we compare plays, such as A Streetcar Named Desire, and The Importance of Being Ernest.

Words are the building blocks or our language, besides letters. When words are strung together into sentences, and into stories, wonderful things occur. We wouldn’t have Shakespeare, Dickens, Austen, and others. Without words, we would still be back with the cavemen, trying to communicate by grunts and movements. Language certainly is Man’s greatest development.