



Typography and Diversity  
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## Title: Unity in diversity can lead to dynamic layouts.

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**Abstract:** This paper will briefly discuss the opportunities diversity offers in layout, to the students of design who are used to do static layouts. The students always take references for their design and wonder how to come up with dynamic layouts. There are millions of ways to design a layout, this paper explores one way to do that. This paper attempts to peep in the past to understand the influence of postmodernism on typography.

The assignment discussed here illustrates how diversity can be used to come up with an intuitive layout. A layout which is based on what one feels how it should be without conscious reasoning. Two different layouts when combined into one will lead one to a very interesting and a different third layout. This exercise was an experiment to understand the process of arriving to an innovative layout. Also that, two very different ideas when combined can give us a solution which is not possible with rational ways of thinking.

**Key words:** *Typography, pedagogy, layout, space, diversity, unity, innovative*

### 1. Introduction

Typography is the art and craft of giving language a durable visual form. It has a dual responsibility to document knowledge or data and to create a visual experience. As a craft typography is concerned with writing and editing on one side and with graphic design on the other; yet typography itself belongs to neither. It has its own existence.

From the time Johannes Gutenberg invented movable type in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Typography did change a lot but the expressive part of it was not really touched, primarily because it was a painful process to change the layout which was already set. The first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were a time of drastic change that radically altered every aspect of human lives. This happened because of technological, scientific advancements and industrialization.

Visual art and design was also influenced by this and a series of creative revolutions that questioned its values, traditional approaches to organise space and their role in the society. Modern art movements like futurism, Dadaism, De stijl, cubism, Surrealism, Expressionism etc. influenced the graphic language of visual communication and some of them had a deep impact on Typography which changed the way people saw type they gave a whole new vision to the subject.

New Wave focused on the playfulness of type rather than the grid, the New Wave typographers opened the doors for future generations exploration in graphic design. These swiss punks and rebels created a new kind of form and function whilst including a more intuitive and emotional response to design and layout. The New Wave strived to challenge the International Style which had become so clean and simple that many believed it to lack the personality of the designer.

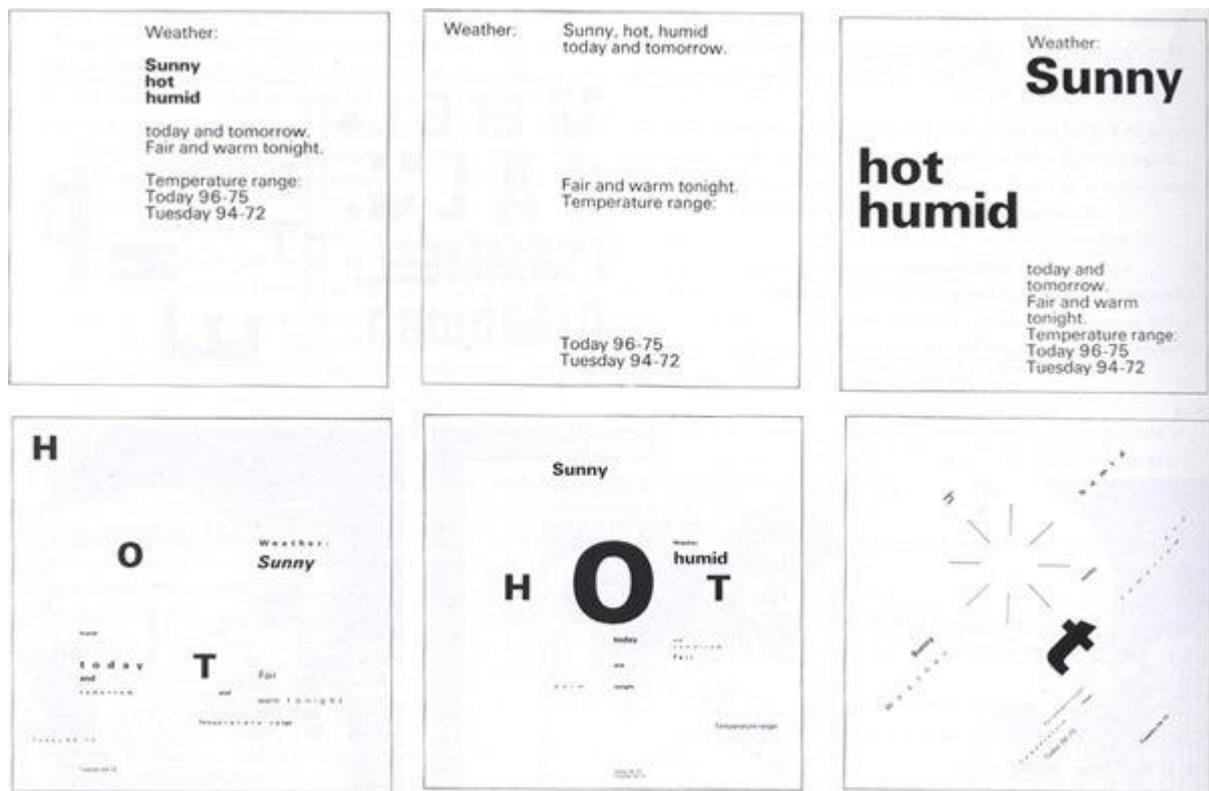


Figure 1: Dan Friedman and Rosalie Hanson 1970 Typographic Permutations (Image from Megg's History of Graphic Design, Meggs & Purvis 2012:467)

## 2.Process/ Stage I

The assignment discussed here was conducted in the Final Year B.F.A Applied Art in the year 2016 with fourteen elective typography students. Exploring new wave typography

was the key factor of this class assignment. The Assignment was carried out in two stages, which were a surprise for them. Two different short stories were used to design two layouts. These stories though simple, yet were multilayered and difficult to decipher.

#### Story No. 1:

Two monks were arguing about the temple flag waving in the wind. One said, "The flag moves." The other said, "The wind moves." They argued back and forth but could not agree. Hui-neng said: "Gentlemen! It is not the flag that moves. It is not the wind that moves. It is your mind that moves." The two monks were struck with awe.

#### Story No.2:

A man walking across a field encounters a tiger. He fled, the tiger chasing after him. Coming to a cliff, he caught hold of a wild vine and swung himself over the edge. The tiger sniffed at him from above. Terrified, the man looked down to where, far below, another tiger had come, waiting to eat him. Two mice, one white and one black, little by little began to gnaw away at the vine. The man saw a luscious strawberry near him. Grasping the vine in one hand, he plucked the strawberry with the other. How sweet it tasted!

The typesetting software is capable of distorting letters in many different ways like condensing, expanding, outlining, shadowing, sloping and so on. But this editing causes change in the character of a letter and damages the integrity of the letter spaces. It can also reduce legibility by creating a non serious effect. Digital revolution can be a typographic nightmare if one uses the software without any understanding of typography or not being sensitive enough towards letters. It shows a bad taste of typography too.

There were some constrains which were put on the students to refrain them from doing mediocre layouts.

1. They were asked to do intuitive layout which means not to take the readymade effects any software would provide.
2. They had to do pencil scribbles of the first two layouts before anything.
3. They were asked to look at letters as form.
4. Legibility was not constrained.
5. Strictly typography was to be used no lettering was allowed.

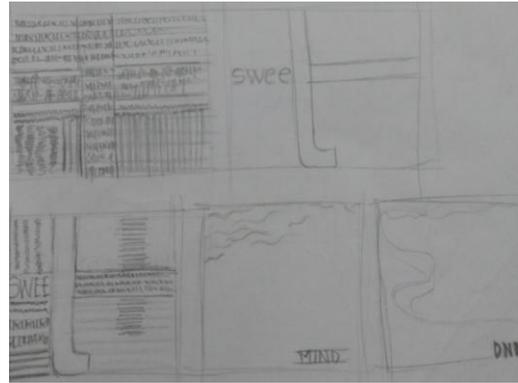
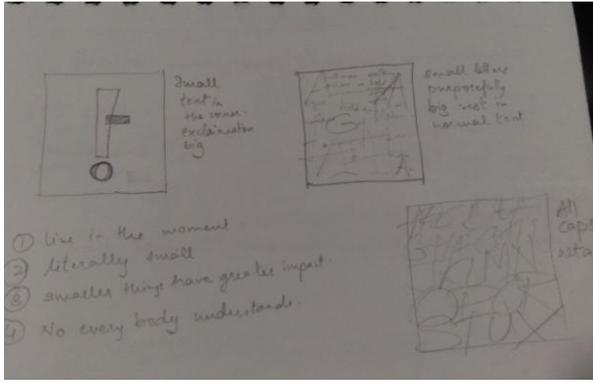


Figure.2: Scribbles

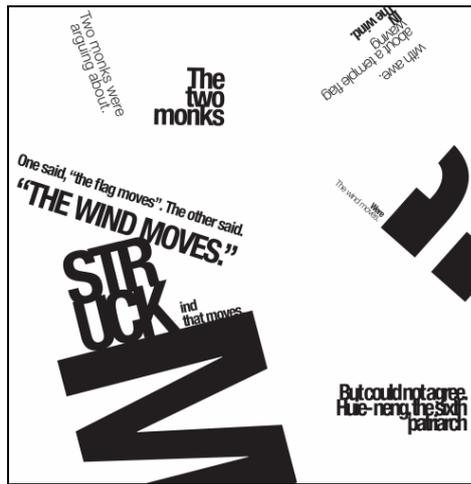
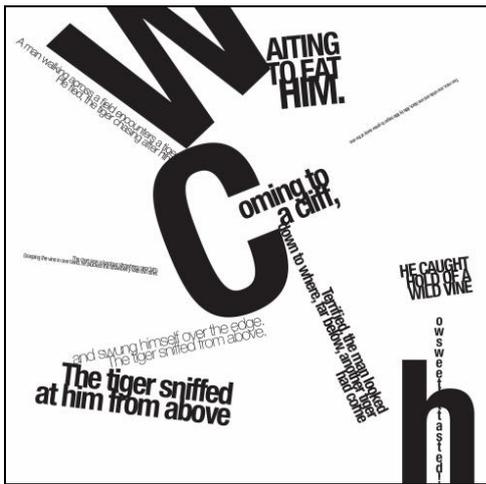


Figure.3: Example 1 Layouts for two stories

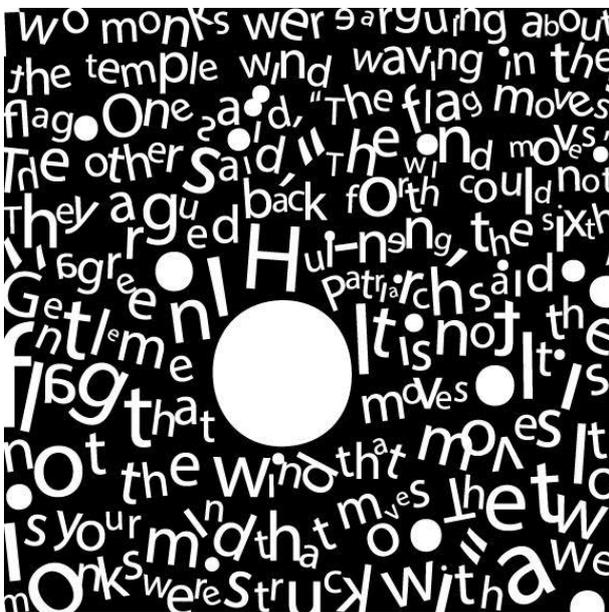


Figure.4 : Example 2 Layouts for two stories

The students came out with very dynamic and bold layouts. The letters are forms first before they have meaning. But often this reality is forgotten because one concentrates more on the meaning. Once the legibility part became unimportant the students started to look at the letters as pure form which is very beautiful and balanced. Space becomes a live participant and creates magnetism. The composition leads the reader's eyes towards various parts of the page in a harmonious journey. The negative space played a key role in this journey. The limit of fonts created a sophisticated look for the composition.

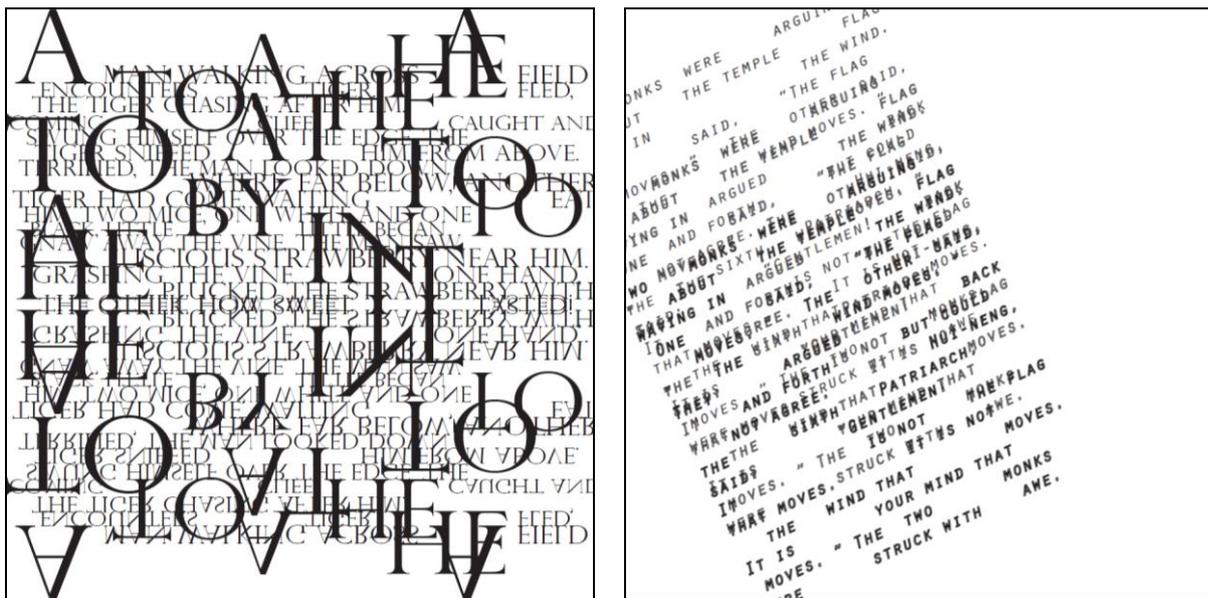


Figure.5 : Example 3 Layouts for two stories

A good understanding of typography helps the designer to choose an appropriate typeface with which he can express and communicate any message. Each typeface has its own aesthetic, expressive qualities, which makes the character of that font. A well-combined variety of typeface, other elements and space bring variations of expression and harmony to the design. Once the designer's eye is trained to identify balance in a layout he can use his ability to do dynamic layout forever. To create a bold design the designer has to wisely allot areas of contrast and should select appropriate typeface.

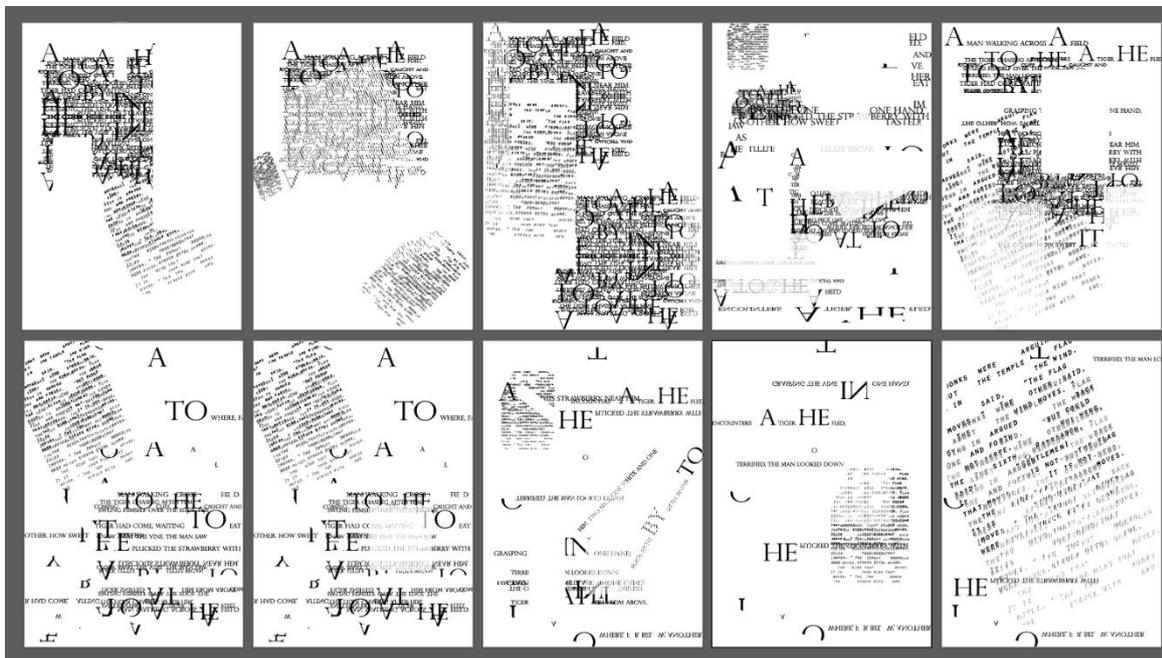
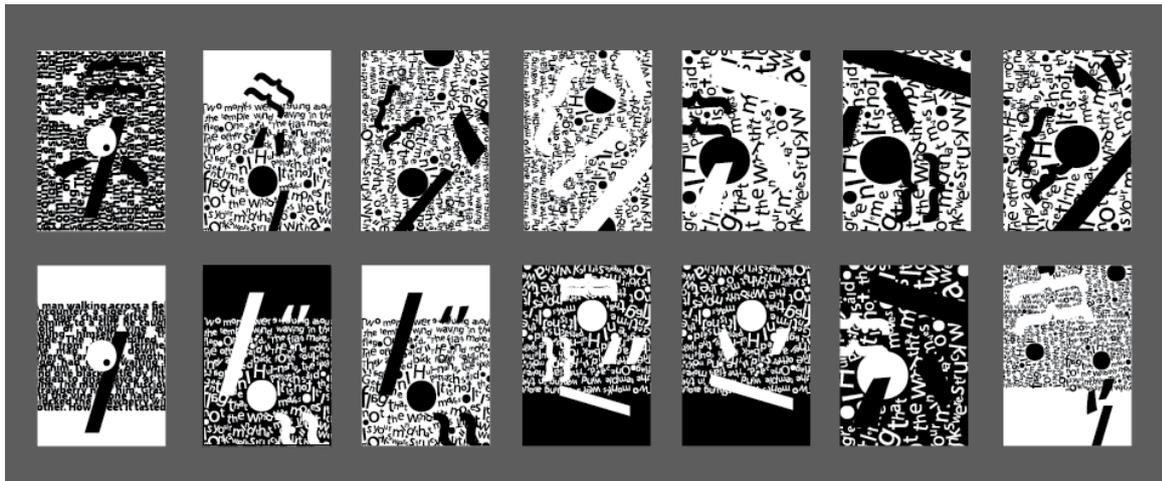
One has to make typography legible in order to make it durable and effective. Since typography is concerned with words and its content, it has to be legible. But another thing that is something more than legibility and gives space or the page its living energy, is the

gut feeling of the designer which allows him to do intuitive design. This feeling can take various forms and names like, calmness, liveliness, grace and delight.

This assignment was conceived to experiment if two layouts can be combined to produce one meaningful layout.

## 2.1 Stage II

Now they were asked to combine both the layouts and design one third one which was an independent layout and which would create a visual experience for any spectator. Since the students used computer for this exercise they were asked to do at least 10 different layouts. Following are the pictures of the stages of this assignment.



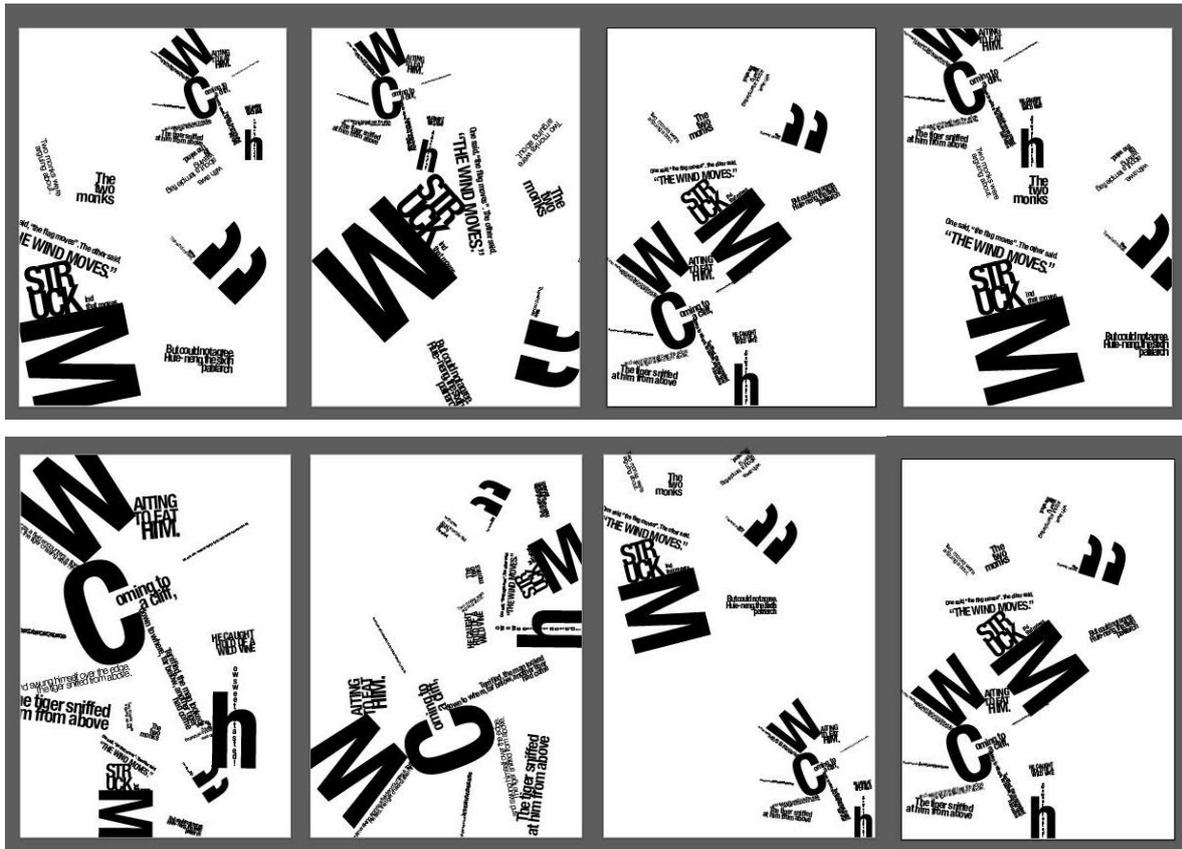


Figure.6 : Two layouts combined to make on layout



Figure.7 : Students work displayed in class for discussion.

The students learned that two diverse things when combined together will definitely give a third form which is independent of its meaning and can create an expression to influence the viewer in a positive way. Diversity is very important as it gives one a solution that is fresh. It can also open one's mind to new ideas which will in turn initiate new events of thought process. Interconnectedness in forms makes diversity more relevant than ever in design. Visual impact is the most basic requirement for getting attention, the grammar of

style is something which is always changing. Today typography is a vital element in making print or electronic communications effective and more efficient.

### **3. Conclusions**

One may keep wondering what is the purpose of breaking the grids, playing with the form aspect of the letters and distorting type rather than making it legible? While doing this exercise in class what everyone figured out was they loved being a rebel by breaking the laws. It was truly fascinating to observe that the various forms of letters combined together to make a kinetic layout. While the casual observer would see an interesting clutter of letters, the one who understands design would see balance and harmony in the layout. It is the diversity of two different layouts combined in one gives the third layout its dynamic flexibility.

Postmodernism was all about breaking the rules, because the majority of rules set by Modernism were refused. One example is the cage of the rigid grids. Grid was sacred for Modernism. The modernists believed “Working with the grid system means submitting to laws of universal validity.” It was useful to systematize, clarify, penetrate to the essentials, cultivate objectivity”. The aim was to achieve the “architectural dominion over surface and space” and simplicity. Grids do save time and energy and they almost never fail, but designers become a mere vehicle for communication. Too structured design is not necessary to build a good communication.

Aesthetics is the way we communicate through the senses, its more of emotional, there cannot be a universal “good taste”. Everyone likes or dislikes something based on their prior knowledge of things and their culture. Since we are a global culture now we must try new ways of exploring typography and layout. in order to be successful, typography has to engage, involve and entertain readers. It has to free the reader to playful aspect of type and let him enjoy the process of unfolding meaning. Form contributes to activate reader’s emotionality, and end result is a great combination of engaging the reader’s mind and emotion.

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