

Diction

Consider:

“Ahhh,” the crowd went, “Ahhh,” as at the most beautiful of fireworks, for the sky was alive now, one instant a **pond** and at the next a **womb** of new turns: “Ahhh,” went the crowd, “Ahhh!”

— Norman Mailer, “Of a Fire on the Moon”

Discuss:

1. This quote is from a description of the Apollo-Saturn launching. The Saturn was a huge rocket that launched the Apollo space capsule, a three-man ship headed for the moon. Why is the sky described as a *pond* then a *womb*? Contrast the two words. What happens that changes the sky from a *pond* to a *womb*?
2. What does Mailer’s use of the word *womb* tell the reader about his attitude toward the launch?

Apply:

Think of a concert you have attended. Write one sentence which expresses a transformation of the concert stage. Using Mailer’s description as a model, call the stage first a _____ then a _____. Do not explain the transformation or your attitude toward it. Instead, let your diction alone communicate both the transformation and your attitude. Share your sentence with a partner.