

The Ultimate Kitchen Gadget

Robert Capon

Anyone who likes to cook owns a number of kitchen gadgets. What is your favorite: a garlic press, a food processor, or a blender? In the following selection, Robert Capon, an Episcopal priest and lover of cooking, defines the ultimate kitchen gadget.

Words to Know

trice a very short time

It is the ultimate kitchen gadget. It serves as a juicer for lemons, oranges and grapefruit, and as a combination seed remover and pulp crusher for tomatoes. It functions as a bowl scraper, an egg separator and a remover of unwelcome particles—the stray bit of eggshell, the odd grain of black rice—from mixing bowl or saucepan. It is a thermometer capable of gauging temperatures up to 500 degrees Fahrenheit and, in addition, is a measuring device for dry ingredients in amounts from 1 tablespoon down to 1/8 teaspoon or less, and for whatever liquids may be called for in the cooking of grains and stocks. It can be used as tongs for removing hot cup custards from the oven, as a mixer of water into pastry dough and as a kneader of bread. Best of all, it cleans up in a trice, presents no storage problems, will not chip, rust or tarnish and, if it cannot be said to be unlosable or indestructible, it nevertheless comes with a lifetime guarantee to remain the one household convenience you will have the least desire either to lose or to destroy. It is, of course, the human hand.

Questions About the Reading

1. Temperatures above about 160 degrees will burn a person's hand. How can the hand be used to gauge temperatures up to 500 degrees?
2. What is the lifetime guarantee of the ultimate kitchen gadget?
3. At what point in the paragraph did you guess what the ultimate kitchen gadget is?

Questions About the Writer's Strategies

1. What is the predominant **mode** of **development** used to define the ultimate kitchen gadget?
2. Why doesn't the writer identify what he is defining until the very last sentence?
3. What is the **tone** of this paragraph?
4. What **connotations** does the word *gadget* have? Would you normally associate these connotations with the human hand?

5. What is the **irony** in this paragraph?

Writing Assignments

1. Write a paragraph in which you define a household appliance (such as a blender, a vacuum cleaner, or a toaster) by giving examples of its uses and the purpose it serves.
2. Write a definition of the human hand from another point of view. Instead of giving examples of what it can do in the kitchen, describe its physical anatomy—what it looks like underneath the skin. You may want to consult a biology or anatomy textbook.
3. Write a definition of the human body by giving examples of some of the things it can do.

306

"I Love You"

Robert C. Solomon

Some words and ideas are almost impossible to define. In this paragraph, however, Robert Solomon shows that a definition can express a great deal about a phrase that has no conclusive, final meaning.

Words to Know

elusive hard to grasp

precipitate cause

T

"I love you" does not always have the same meaning, and this, too, should tell us something about the elusive nature of love. The first time it is always a surprise, an invasion, an aggressive act, but once said, "I love you" can only be repeated. It is unthinkable that it should not be said again, and again, and again. When one has not said it for a while, this may itself precipitate a crisis. ("Now why haven't you said that in all of these months!") On the other hand, "I love you" can also serve as a threat ("Don't push me on this; you might lose me"), emotional blackmail ("I've said it, now you have to respond in kind"), a warning ("It's only because I love you that I'm willing to put up with this"), an apology ("I could not possibly have meant what I have said to you, *to you* of all people"). It can be an instrument—more effective than the loudest noise—to interrupt a dull or painful conversation. It

can be a cry, a plea, a verbal flag ("Pay attention to me!") or it can be an excuse ("It's only because I love you. . ."). It can be a disguise ("I love you," he whispered, looking awkwardly askance at the open door.). It can be an attack ("How can you do this to me?") or even an end ("So that's that. With regrets, good-bye."). If this single phrase has so many meanings, how varied and variable must be the emotion.

Questions About the Reading

1. What does the writer say happens the first time someone hears "I love you"? Why do you think this occurs?
2. Why must "I love you" be repeated once it has been said?
3. In what way can love be an excuse? Make up an ending for the example sentence.

Questions About the Writer's Strategies

1. Do you think the writer is qualified to tell you what "I love you" means? Why or why not?
2. Why does the writer give so many examples of what "I love you" can mean?
3. What mode of development is the writer using in the essay from which this paragraph is taken? How do you know?

Writing Assignments

1. Write a paragraph or essay defining marriage—what it is and what it should be. Use specific examples from marriages you know of to illustrate your definition.
2. Write a paragraph defining the word *emotion*. You might try using cause-and-effect development for your definition, showing that something must cause certain effects to qualify as an