



American Expression E1194 Wax poetic

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The phrase "wax poetic" is an idiomatic expression used to describe the act of speaking or writing in an eloquent, expressive, and often romanticized manner. When someone is said to "wax poetic," it means they are using language that is highly descriptive, flowery, and emotionally evocative, typically to convey deep feelings, vivid imagery, or profound thoughts.

The origin of this phrase can be traced back to the ancient practice of using wax tablets or surfaces to inscribe poetry and literary works. In ancient Greece and Rome, poets and scholars would use a stylus to write on wax-coated tablets, and the malleable nature of the wax allowed for easy erasing and rewriting. This method allowed for the creation of intricate and detailed compositions, and poets would often spend a great deal of time crafting their verses on these wax tablets.

Over time, the act of composing poetry on wax tablets came to be associated with the meticulous and artistic expression of thoughts and emotions. Thus, the phrase "wax poetic" emerged to describe not only the act of writing poetry itself but also the manner in which individuals speak or write with similar artistic and emotional intensity.

When someone "waxes poetic," they often employ a rich and figurative language that goes beyond mere factual communication. This style of expression is characterized by the use of metaphors, similes, vivid descriptions, and emotional depth. It is often used to convey deep emotions, capture the beauty of nature, or evoke nostalgia.

For example, if a person describes a breathtaking sunset as "the fiery sun sinking into the horizon, painting the sky with hues of crimson and gold, casting long, dramatic shadows," they are said to be "waxing poetic" about the sunset. This description goes beyond a simple acknowledgment of the sun setting; it paints a vivid picture and conveys the speaker's emotional response to the scene.

"Waxing poetic" is not limited to poetry itself; it can be applied to various forms of communication, including speeches, essays, and storytelling. It is a style of expression often associated with literary or artistic endeavors where the goal is to engage the reader or listener on a deeper emotional level.

The use of this phrase can also carry connotations of romanticism or idealism. When someone "waxes poetic" about a person or relationship, they may emphasize the beauty, passion, or enchantment of the connection. In such cases, the speaker is conveying their emotions in a highly expressive and often idealized manner.

In contemporary language, "wax poetic" is used to describe not only artistic expressions but also any form of impassioned or expressive communication. It can be employed both positively, to commend someone for their eloquence and passion, and negatively, to suggest that someone may be overly sentimental or impractical in their expression.

In conclusion, "wax poetic" is an idiomatic expression that signifies speaking or writing in an eloquent, emotionally charged, and expressive manner. It is rooted in the historical association of composing poetry on wax tablets and is now applied to any form of communication characterized by vivid descriptions, metaphors, and emotional depth. This style of expression is often used to convey deep feelings, vivid imagery, or profound thoughts and is a hallmark of artistic and emotional communication.

Questions for Discussion

1. Can you think of a specific moment in literature, film, or art where a character or creator "waxed poetic"? How did this expressive language contribute to the overall impact and meaning of the work?
2. When people "wax poetic" in everyday conversations, do you find that they are more effective at conveying their emotions or ideas? How does the use of vivid language and figurative expressions enhance communication?
3. In what situations or contexts do you think it is most appropriate or effective to "wax poetic"? Are there instances where a more straightforward and factual style of communication is preferred?
4. Do you believe that "waxing poetic" is primarily a form of embellishment or can it be a genuine and authentic expression of one's emotions and thoughts? How can you discern when someone is sincerely moved and when they may be using poetic language for effect?
5. How has the digital age and social media platforms influenced the way people "wax poetic" in modern communication? Are there advantages or disadvantages to the brevity and immediacy of online expression compared to traditional forms of eloquent and emotional communication?