

Too Many Words

On this day in 1981, the *New York Times* published what was thought to be the longest sentence ever printed in a newspaper. The 1,286-word sentence quoted a high school student when asked what he had been learning at school. One observer remarked that it seemed half the words were “you know” and “uh.”

According to past editions of *Guinness World Records*, the longest sentence in English literature was one from *Ulysses* by James Joyce and contains 4,391 words. The publication of *The Rotters Club* in 2001 surpassed the Joyce record with a sentence of 13,955 words. Author Jonathan Coe says he was inspired by a Czech novel that consists of one long sentence. Bohumil Hrabal’s novel sentence, *Dancing Lessons for the Advanced in Age*, is 128 pages long.

Such excesses certainly do not encourage the reader to dive in.

The book of Proverbs has much to say about our words. It warns against talking too much: “Too much talk leads to sin. Be sensible and keep your mouth shut” (Proverbs 10:19). Talking without restraint can lead to misunderstandings, arguments or the unintentional sharing of information meant to be confidential. Unfortunately, not many of us are in the habit of thinking before we speak. Our mouths seem to operate much faster than our brains.

We need to watch the quality, as well as the quantity, of our words. This is important in any context or environment, including Life Care, Century Park and Life Care at Home. The gift of language is too precious to waste on useless, empty words that have no purpose. Our goal should be to say the right thing at the right time in the right way. If we spend our words wisely, then we shall come close to the beautiful word picture in Proverbs 25:11: “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.”

--Beecher Hunter