*This short passage from "Mirages" illustrates Dillard's characteristic*verbal style*--a sentence style based on*[*dynamic verbs*](http://grammar.about.com/od/d/g/dynamicverbterm.htm)*. As Richard Lanham points out in*Analyzing Prose*(Continuum, 2003), "The verb style wants to move fast."*

**from "Mirages"\***

**by Annie Dillard**

1 In winter there is nobody, nothing. If you see a human figure, or a boat on the water, you grab binoculars.

2 But in summer everything fills. The day itself widens and stretches almost around the clock; these are very high latitudes, higher than Labrador's. You want to run all night. Summer people move into the houses that had stood empty, unseen, and unnoticed all winter.

The gulls scream all day and smash cockles; by August they are bringing the kids. Volleyball games resume on the sand flat; someone fires up the sauna; in the long dusk, at eleven o'clock, half a dozen beach fires people the shore. The bay fills up with moored boats and the waters beyond fill with pleasure craft, hundreds of cruisers and sailboats and speedboats. The wind dies and stays dead, and these fierce waters, which in winter feel the strongest windstorms in the country, become suddenly like a resort lake, some tame dammed reservoir, the plaything of any man-jack with a motor and a hull.

Surely this is mirage. The heat is on, and the light is on, and someone is pouring drinks. On the beach we dip freshly dug clams in hot butter; we eat raw oysters from their shells. We play catch or sail a dinghy or holler; we have sand in our hair, calluses on our feet, hot brown skin on our arms. This is the life of the senses, the life of pleasures. It is mirage on the half shell. It vanishes like any fun, and the empty winds resume.

\* "Mirages" by Annie Dillard appears in her essay collection Teaching a Stone to Talk: Expeditions and Encounters (Harper & Row, 1982). A revised edition of Teaching a Stone to Talk was published by Harper Perennial in 1988.