

Autologic Fun with LLMs

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I asked four frontier LLMs – two from OpenAI and two from Anthropic – to write a paragraph such that the paragraph is densely packed with autologic words and phrases and the paragraph itself is autologic. The generated paragraphs were judged by a human and by an LLM judge. The two Anthropic models took first and second place; the two OpenAI models came in last.

1 Autologic words

Autologic words are words that are self-referential. For example, the word “English” is English and the word “visible” is visible.

The LLMs were given examples of autologic words and invited to add more of their own choosing. The list of examples included:

anfractuous	multisyllabic	recherché
English	pentasyllabic	recondite
grandiloquent	plurals	sesquipedalian
horizontal	pronounceable	suffixed
lowercase	prose	unhyphenated
mellifluous	readable	visible

The LLMs noted that some of the autologisms provided as examples were subjective, such as “mellifluous,” but nevertheless used them in their generated paragraphs. Three of the four LLMs considered the word “autologic” to be autologic, but that’s an old debate with no clear resolution. Similarly, one LLM considered the phrase “self descriptive” to be self-descriptive.

The four LLMs used most of the words from the list of examples and did not significantly contribute additional autologic words.

2 The contestants

The four contestants can be classified in two tiers based on their per-token price:

Table 1: The four LLMs

Tier	Model	Cost per M tokens	
		Input	Output
Upper	Anthropic Opus 4.8	\$5.0	\$25
	OpenAI GPT 5.5	\$5.0	\$30
Lower	Anthropic Sonnet 4.6	\$3.0	\$15
	OpenAI GPT 5.4	\$2.5	\$15

3 The prompt

The four LLM contestants were prompted identically with temperature 0.9 and medium reasoning/effort. The prompting consisted of two stages in hopes that it would encourage the models to reach a creative result. The first prompt contained the list of example autologic words as shown above plus the instruction:

Comment on the feasibility of writing a short paragraph -- like a one-paragraph story, essay, or vignette -- which:

- is very dense with autologic words and phrases, AND
- the entire paragraph is itself autologic.

Is that possible? What form would it take?

All four models responded with similar observations that such a paragraph will necessarily contain a sequence of self-references. In the words of Sonnet 4.6:

Something in the vein of Hofstadter's self-referential sentences, but extended – ornate, recursive, slightly absurdist prose that uses its own grandiloquence as evidence for its claims about itself. Less a story, more a self-satisfied proclamation of its own properties.

After receiving a response to the first prompt, the following prompt was added to the conversation:

Please give it a try. Omit any autologisms that don't easily work, but use as many as possible without forcing them.

4 Scoring

The results of the four LLMs were judged and ranked by one human and by Opus 4.8 (temp 0.7, effort medium). The LLM judge was given the prompt:

Your job is to judge a contest submission. The contest is to write a paragraph densely packed with autologic words and phrases AND where the entire paragraph is itself autologic in a creative way. Output a score between 0 and 1 where:

- 0 means that the entry is low quality writing, poor composition, and does not incorporate autologisms in a natural or creative manner.
- 1 means that the entry is high quality writing, good composition, and brilliantly incorporates autologisms in a natural and creative manner.

The human and the LLM judge largely agreed on the ranking. The human and LLM judge disagreed on the ranking of the bottom two.

Table 2: Ranking by human and LLM judge

Model	Human	LLM
Sonnet 4.6 (Anthropic)	1	1
Opus 4.8 (Anthropic)	2	2
GPT 5.5 (OpenAI)	3	4
GPT 5.4 (OpenAI)	4	3

The human placed the two OpenAI models in last place because their paragraphs were little more than uninspired lists of words. They also formatted their paragraphs entirely in lowercase in order to claim the use of the autologic word “lowercase.” That required misspelling “english” in all lowercase.

In the top two winners, Opus 4.8 is the more expensive model and produced slightly more sophisticated prose but came in second place after Sonnet 4.6 because its output contained a lower density of autologic words and contained an internal contradiction: while it claims “it stays scrupulously unhyphenated throughout,” it also produced the hyphenated word “self-congratulatory.”

5 The paragraphs

Here are the paragraphs composed by the four LLMs.

5.1 First place winner: Anthropic Sonnet 4.6

This paragraph is a grandiloquent, mellifluous specimen of English prose: recondite and recherché in vocabulary, anfractuous in its winding sentence structure, sesquipedalian and polysyllabic – even pentasyllabic – in many of its words. It is readable; every noun it deploys is pronounceable; its many suffixed forms include both singulars and plurals; its letters are lowercase where convention permits; and its words are, notably, unhyphenated. Horizontal and visible upon the page, it describes itself faithfully and is therefore, in every meaningful sense, autologic.

5.2 Second place: Anthropic Opus 4.8

This paragraph, presently unfurling before your eyes, is unmistakably English, manifestly visible, comfortably horizontal, and – should you murmur it aloud – entirely pronounceable and, I flatter myself, faintly mellifluous; it is moreover readable, though only barely, since its sentences meander through such anfractuous, labyrinthine, perpetually digressing convolutions that comprehension itself grows winded; it luxuriates, unapologetically, in grandiloquent, sesquipedalian, ostentatiously multisyllabic and polysyllabic vocabulary, preferring recondite, recherché elaborations wherever plainer phrasings would suffice; it stays scrupulously unhyphenated throughout, deploying various adjectives suffixed with sonorous Latinate terminations and bristling with plurals, so that, by the closing clause, the whole accumulation circles round and describes precisely, recursively, exhaustively, nothing whatsoever beyond its own self-congratulatory, interminable, irredeemably autological self.

5.3 Tied for last place: OpenAI GPT 5.4

this one sentence english paragraph is lowercase, readable, pronounceable, visible, horizontal, and unhyphenated; it is also rich in nouns and plurals, and its diction is often multisyllabic, polysyllabic, recondite, recherché, sesquipedalian, grandiloquent, mellifluous, and anfractuous, because the little scene it stages is simply a paragraph quietly describing itself with words that fit.

5.4 Tied for last place: OpenAI GPT 5.5

this lowercase, unhyphenated, english paragraph is readable, pronounceable, visible, horizontal, multisyllabic, polysyllabic, and plainly self descriptive; in it, noun is a noun, readable is readable, pronounceable

is pronounceable, pentasyllabic is pentasyllabic, recondite is recondite, sesquipedalian is sesquipedalian, recherché is recherché, grandiloquent is grandiloquent, mellifluous is mellifluous, suffixed is suffixed, plurals is plural, and this sentence remains a compact catalogue of autologic words.

6 Summary

When asked to generate a paragraph containing autologic words while making the paragraph itself autologic, the two frontier Anthropic models generally succeeded, casting a set of autologic words into sensible, self-descriptive prose. The two OpenAI models generated trivial, uninspired text. Anytime you need an LLM to generate a paragraph of autologisms, ask an Anthropic model.