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February, by Margaret Attwood

This poem by Margaret Atwood is available to read via this link: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47787/february-56d2288025b1e

February, BY MARGARET ATWOOD

Winter. Time to eat fat and watch hockey. In the pewter mornings, the cat, a black fur sausage with yellow Houdini eyes, jumps up on the bed and tries to get onto my head. It's his way of telling whether or not I'm dead. If I'm not, he wants to be scratched; if I am He'll think of something. He settles on my chest, breathing his breath of burped-up meat and musty sofas, purring like a washboard. Some other tomcat, not yet a capon, has been spraying our front door, declaring war. It's all about sex and territory, which are what will finish us off in the long run. Some cat owners around here should snip a few testicles. If we wise hominids were sensible, we'd do that too, or eat our young, like sharks. But it's love that does us in. Over and over again, He shoots, he scores! and famine crouches in the bedsheets, ambushing the pulsing eiderdown, and the windchill factor hits thirty below, and pollution pours out of our chimneys to keep us warm. February, month of despair, with a skewered heart in the centre. I think dire thoughts, and lust for French fries with a splash of vinegar. Cat, enough of your greedy whining and your small pink bumhole. Off my face! You're the life principle, more or less, so get going on a little optimism around here. Get rid of death. Celebrate increase. Make it be spring.



Brilliant Literary Quiz Questions

Round 5:

Literary Quiz, from: https://brokebybooks.com/an-epic-list-of-50-literature-trivia-quiz-questions/

41 - Which two poets co-wrote the Lyrical Ballads?

- a) T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound
- b) William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge
- c) Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton
- d) Robert Lowell and Elizabeth Bishop
- 42 When was Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" first published?
- a) 1838
- b) 1840
- c) 1845
- d) 1850

43 – Name That Poet: Which poet associated with Romanticism wrote Songs of Innocence and Experience?

- a) William Blake
- b) John Keats
- c) William Wordsworth
- d) Percy Bysshe Shelley

44 – Who wrote I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings?

- a) Audre Lorde
- b) Maya Angelou
- c) Adrienne Rich
- d) Gwendolyn Brooks

45 – How many acts are in Romeo and Juliet?

- a) Two
- b) Three
- c) Four
- d) Five

46 – The character of Hamlet was the ruler of which country?

- a) Denmark
- b) Scotland
- c) Sweden
- d) England

47 – Who is the youngest daughter of King Lear?

a) Ophelia

b) Cordelia c) Regan d) Goneril

48 – Which of these ingredients does NOT appear in the Witches's "Double, double toil and trouble" speech from Macbeth?

a) Eye of newt

- b) Lizard's leg
- c) Wing of bat
- d) Tongue of dog

49 – William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury takes its title from which Shakespeare play?

a) Hamlet b) King Lear c) Romeo and Juliet d) Much Ado About Nothing

50 – Which of these plays is NOT considered to be one of Shakespeare's comedies?

- a) Two Gentlemen of Veronab) Merchant of Venicec) Cymbeline
- d) Winter's Tale



Book Review – Jackie Parsons: The Salt Path, by Raynor Winn

A couple in their 50s lose home, farm and livelihood due to a legal technicality. In the same week the husband receives a diagnosis of terminal illness.

In response they decide to walk the entire south west coastal path. Wild camping is all they can afford. They are penniless, ill equipped and naive.

The story of their progress is by turns hilarious, pitiful, entertaining and frustrating, with interesting asides on the plight of homeless people.

They meet a cross section of humanity and experience a full range of reactions to their endeavours from scarcely concealed shock and disapproval to wild enthusiasm.

The author writes in what I might call a 'spare' style. Not a single word is wasted. Phrases which stay in my memory, like this description of one remote location: 'They camped with only a thin sheet of nylon between us and Canada.'

And this, describing the relentlessness of their existence:

<complex-block>

RAYNOR WINN

'Tent up, noodles, sleep, noodles, tent down, squat in the bracken, walk. Green, blue, up down, down, green.'

I loved this book. I thoroughly recommend it.

The Fish, by Marianne Moore and reviewed by Sandra Gordon

I read a very interesting poem in the Saturday papers over the weekend. Never read a poem written like this one and it was the layout that caught my eye! I've decided to buy her book, see below (the author's name is Marianne Moore). Her first book, which was first published in 1921 – and against her wishes as you will read in the review. She sounds quite a character and I've also attached a photo of her in her tricorn hat!! She was known for her precise and condensed poems!! It's quite incredible - if you read The Fish out loud - and how she keeps to the strict pattern of syllables per line – 1,3,9,6,8. Poetry is not something I've ever attempted but I do enjoy reading! There is a book just out including her Fish poem called New Collected Poems by Faber, but rather expensive at £30 – but which I managed to get for £12.50 second-hand!!!

The Fish

wade through black jade. Of the crow-blue mussel-shells, one keeps adjusting the ash-heaps; opening and shutting itself like

an

injured fan.

The barnacles which encrust the side of the wave, cannot hide there for the submerged shafts of the

sun,

split like spun

glass, move themselves with spotlight swiftness into the crevices – in and out illuminating

the

turquoise sea of bodies. The water drives a wedge of iron through the iron edge of the cliff; whereupon the stars,

pink

rice-grains, link bespattered jelly fish, crabs like green lilies, and submarine toadstools, slide each on the other.

All

external marks of abuse are present on this defiant edifice – all the physical features of

ac-

cident – lack of cornice, dynamite grooves, burns and hatchet strokes, these things stand out on it; the chasm-side is

dead.

Repeated evidence has proved that it can live on what can not revive its youth. The sea grows old in it.



This review of our poem of the month: Marianne Moore's poem, The Fish was submitted by Sandra Gordon

POEM OF THE WEEK

Marianne Moore



Marianne Moore's first book came out in 1921, and she was furious about it: it was printed by admirers, without her consent. It was only after years of pleading from the likes of TS Eliot. Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams that she published another. A perfectionist from her boots to the tip of her tricorn hat, Moore ruthlessly revised and edited her work, cutting her most famous poem, Poetry (which begins "I, too, dislike it"), from 29 lines to just three. But that same steely perfectionism created crystalline wonders like this week's poem. The underwater world it depicts is beautiful - a shoal of fish "wade" through the sea's "black jade"; a mussel opens and closes like an "injured fan" - but also a battle-ground: a rough cliff scarred by "hatchet-strokes" is at war with the water eroding it. There's a similar battle between smooth and jagged going in the poem's unforgiving form. Those cliff-edge line-breaks are no "ac-/ cident", but rather the result of a rigid pattern of syllables per line (1, 3, 9, 6, 8; tweaked from an earlier version with six lines in each stanza). It's a fiendishly difficult way to construct a poem, but Moore pulls it off with a limpid grace. Tristram Fane Saunders

Brilliant Literary Quiz Answers

Round 5:

Literary Quiz, from: <u>https://brokebybooks.com/an-epic-list-of-50-literature-trivia-quiz-questions/</u>
41 – b
42 – c
43 - a
44 – b
45 – d
46 – a
47 – b
48 – c
49 – a

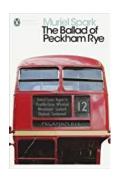
50 – c



February Birthdays and Author's Books

If you're looking for new authors, or to challenge your reading, then why not pick one of our Birthday authors each month.

Dame Muriel Spark was born 1 February 1918, and died 13 April 2006, was a Scottish novelist, short story



writer, poet and essayist. Her father was Jewish, born in Edinburgh of Lithuanian immigrant parents, and her English mother had been raised Anglican. In 1934–35 she took a course in "commercial correspondence and précis writing" at <u>Heriot-Watt</u> <u>College</u>. She taught English for a brief time, and then worked as a secretary in a department store. In 1937 she became engaged to Sidney Oswald Spark, thirteen years her senior, whom she had met in Edinburgh. In August of that year, she followed him out to <u>Southern Rhodesia</u> (now <u>Zimbabwe</u>), and they were married on 3 September 1937 in <u>Salisbury</u>.^[4]

Spark began writing seriously, under her married name, after <u>World War II</u>, beginning with poetry and <u>literary criticism</u>. In 1947 she became editor of the <u>Poetry Review</u>.

This position made Spark one of the only female editors of the time.

Bob Marley, was born 6 February 1945, and died 11 May 1981, **Robert Nesta Marley** <u>OM</u> (6 February 1945 – 11 May 1981) was a Jamaican singer, songwriter, and musician.

Considered one of the pioneers of <u>reggae</u>, his musical career was marked by fusing elements of reggae, <u>ska</u>, and <u>rocksteady</u>, as well as his distinctive vocal and songwriting style.^{[2][3]} Marley's contributions to music increased the visibility of <u>Jamaican music</u> worldwide, and made him a global figure in <u>popular</u> <u>culture</u> for over a decade.^{[4][5]} Over the course of his career, Marley became known as a <u>Rastafari</u> icon, and he infused his music with a sense of spirituality.



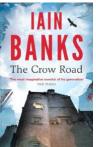
Judy Blume, born 12 February 1938, is an <u>American</u> writer of <u>children's</u>, <u>young</u> adult and adult fiction.^[1] Blume began writing in 1959 and has published more



than 25 novels.^[2] Among her best-known works are <u>Are You There God? It's Me</u>, <u>Margaret</u> (1970), <u>Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing</u> (1972), <u>Deenie</u> (1973), and <u>Blubber</u> (1974). Blume's books have significantly contributed to children's and young adult literature.^[3] Blume was one of the first young adult authors to write some of her novels focused on teenagers about the controversial topics of <u>masturbation</u>, <u>menstruation</u>, <u>teen sex</u>, <u>birth control</u>, and <u>death</u>.^{[6][7]} Blume's novels are popular and widely admired.^[10] They are praised for teaching children and young adults about their bodies.^[10] However, the mature topics in Blume's books have generated criticism and controversy.^[10] The ALA has named Blume as one of the most frequently challenged authors of the 21st century.

Iain Banks was born 16 February 1954 and died 9 June 2013, Banks took up writing at the age of 11. He completed a first novel, *The Hungarian Lift-Jet*, at 16 and a second, *TTR* (also entitled *The Tashkent Rambler*) in his first year at Stirling University in 1972.^{[8][14]} Though he saw himself mainly as a science fiction author, his publishing problems led him to pursue mainstream fiction. His first published novel <u>The Wasp Factory</u>, appeared in 1984, when he was thirty.^[15] After the success of *The Wasp Factory*, Banks began to write full time.

His second novel <u>Walking on Glass</u> followed in 1985, then <u>The Bridge</u> in 1986, and in 1987 <u>Espedair Street</u>, which was later broadcast as a series on BBC Radio 4.^[13] His first published science fiction book, <u>Consider Phlebas</u>, emerged in 1987 and as the first of several in the acclaimed <u>Culture series</u> <u>The Crow Road</u>, published in 1992, was adapted



as a BBC television series.^[17] Banks continued to write both science fiction and mainstream. His final novel *The Quarry* appeared in June 2013, the month of his death.

Ruth Rendell was born 17 February 1930 and died 2 May 2015, Baroness Rendell of



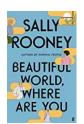
Babergh, CBE (née Grasemann; 17 February 1930 – 2 May 2015) Rendell is best known for creating Chief Inspector Wexford.^[2] A second string of works was a series of unrelated crime novels that explored the psychological background of criminals and their victims. This theme was developed further in a third series of novels, published under the pseudonym Barbara Vine. Rendell wrote two unpublished novels before the 1964 publication of From Doon with Death, which was purchased for £75 by John Long; it was the first mystery to feature Chief Inspector Reginald Wexford. Rendell said that the character of Wexford was based on herself. In Introducing Chief Inspector Wexford by Daniel Mallory he says (based on a 1990 interview with Rendell by Marilyn Stasio) that Rendell refers to the hated Agatha (Christie)

and that awful Marple woman; and says of St. Mary Mead that she can hardly bear to say the name of that village where one finds a lot of normal, law-abiding people living ordinary, blameless lives, who suddenly decide to murder their aunt. Well, I don't believe that.

Helen Fielding, born 19 February 1958, is an English novelist and screenwriter, best known as the creator of the fictional character **Bridget Jones**, and a sequence of novels and films beginning with the life of a thirty something singleton in London trying to make sense of life and love. Bridget Jones's Diary (1996) and The Edge of Reason (1999) were published in 40 countries and sold more Helen Fielding than 15 million copies.^[2]

Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy was published in autumn 2013 with record-breaking first-day sales in the UK exceeding 46,000 copies.^[4] It occupied the number one spot on *The Sunday Times* bestseller list for six months. In her review for *The New York* Times review, Sarah Lyall called the novel "sharp and humorous" and said that Fielding had "allowed her heroine to grow up into someone funnier and more interesting than she was before".^[5]

Sally Rooney, born 20 February 1991, is an Irish author and screenwriter. She has published three novels: Conversations with Friends (2017), Normal People (2018), and Beautiful World, Where Are



You (2021). Normal People was adapted into a 2020 television series by Hulu and the BBC. Rooney's work has garnered critical acclaim and commercial success, and she is regarded as one of the foremost millennial writers. Rooney completed her first novel—which she has described as "absolute trash"—at the age of 15.^[16] She began writing "constantly" in late 2014. She completed her debut novel, *Conversations with Friends*, while studying for her master's degree in American literature. She wrote 100,000 words of the book in three months.[16]

In 2015, her essay "Even If You Beat Me", about her time as the "top competitive debater on the continent of Europe", was seen by an agent, Tracy Bohan, of the Wylie Agency, and

Bohan contacted Rooney. Rooney gave Bohan a manuscript, and Bohan circulated it to publishers, receiving seven bids. She had seen my story and wondered whether I had anything else she could read... But I didn't send her anything for ages... I don't know why. I didn't want her to see this shoddy draft.'

Chuck Palahniuk, born 21 February 1962, is an American freelance journalist and novelist who describes his work as transgressional fiction. He has published 19 novels, three nonfiction books, two graphic novels, and two adult coloring books, as well as several short stories. He is most notably the author of the novel *Fight Club*, which also was made into a film of the same name, starring Edward Norton, Helena Bonham Carter, and Brad Pitt.



The Eric C Williams Memorial Trophy - HWC Annual Short Story Competition



SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Entry to the Eric C Williams Memorial Trophy Short Story Competition is free, the competition is open to members (membership is free to all members during the duration of the pandemic) and to Honorary Members.

A maximum of two short stories can be entered per author.

The short story must be fiction, must be written in English, and be no longer than 2000 words (excluding title which can have a maximum of twelve words).

The short story must have been written within the previous six months.

The short story should not include pictures or pictograms.

The short story should be submitted as an emailed Word attachment and sent to the Competition Secretary <u>lesleyhart007@gmail.com</u>, unless an alternative arrangement has been agreed with the Competition Secretary.

Competition submissions must be sent before midnight of 31st March, the closing date.

All members who enter work for the competition must vote. Failure to vote will result in your work(s) being removed from the competition. Nobody is permitted to vote for their own work.

Please note that the Competition Secretary will send an email confirmation of all entries submitted. If you do not receive this response, please contact the Competition Secretary before the closing date, so your missing entry can be found or resubmitted.

The Competition Secretary will compile the booklet of entries and send it out to all members for judging.

Competition entries will be judged by HWC membership at the closing date.

How to punctuate dialogue in a novel, by Louise

Harnby: <u>https://www.louiseharnbyproofreader.com/blog/how-to-punctuate-dialogue-in-a-</u>novel

In this article, we'll look at the following:

- 1. How to indicate speech
- 2. Creating pauses and trail-offs
- 3. Showing interruptions
- 4. How to punctuate tagged speech
- 5. Working with broken-up dialogue
- 6. Handling vocative expressions
- 7. Dealing with faltering speech

If it's more convenient, watch this complementary webinar or download a free booklet covering each of the 7 topics.

1. Indicating speech

Quotation marks – or **speech marks** – are how authors usually indicate the spoken word. There are two choices – singles or doubles. Either are acceptable.

In US fiction publishing it's more common to use doubles; in British fiction singles dominate. That doesn't mean you must use doubles if you're an American author or singles if you're a British author. It's not about right or wrong but about style, preference and convention.

Think about what your reader will expect to see and what's standard where you live. *The Chicago Manual of Style* (CMOS) recommends doubles, but acknowledges that the convention is for singles in the UK and elsewhere.

The most important thing is to be consistent and never use two single quotation marks instead of a double.

The following passages from published works illustrate each style:

SINGLE QUOTATION MARKS	DOUBLE QUOTATION MARKS
<i>Sleeping in the Ground</i> by Peter Robinson (p. 209)	<i>The Fix</i> by David Baldacci (p. 133)

'Mother of the bride.' 'Dead?' 'Unharmed.' 'Then why make the connection?' 'I don't know,' said Banks.	"I bet she's never even been down here," noted Milligan. "No, she has." "How do you know that?" "Point your light at the steps coming down."
--	---

Nested quotation marks

Sometimes you'll need to place speech within speech (or quotes within quotes). To differentiate the speaker, use the alternate style for your internal or nested quotation marks:

SINGLE QUOTATION MARKS WITH NESTED DOUBLES	DOUBLE QUOTATION MARKS WITH NESTED SINGLES
<i>Sleeping in the Ground</i> by Peter Robinson (p. 261)	<i>The Fix</i> by David Baldacci (p. 428)
	"I had no idea why he was bringing that up
Ray studied his drink and narrowed his	now. So when I asked him he said,
eyes. 'You can be cruel sometimes, you	'Remember when the going got tough, who
know. I don't know where you got it from.	was there for you. Remember your old man
"How sharper than a serpent's tooth" Your	was right there holding your hand. Always
mother didn't have a cruel bone in her body.'	think of me trying to do the right thing, honey.
	Always. No matter what.'"

Smart vs unidirectional marks

It's conventional in mainstream publishing to use smart or curly quotation marks, not unidirectional ones. (The same applies to apostrophes, by the way.)

"blah blah" (curly)	"blah blah"	(unidirectional)
---------------------	-------------	------------------

'blah blah' (curly) blah blah' (unidirectional)

Some online fonts (like the one I use for the body text on my website) don't do a good job of differentiating smart and unidirectional quotation marks, but word-processing software like Microsoft Word does – even with sans serif fonts.

To prevent the problem occurring from the minute you begin typing:

- Go to FILE and select OPTIONS
- Select PROOFING, then click on the AUTOCORRECT OPTIONS button

- Choose the AUTOFORMAT AS YOU TYPE tab
- Make sure there's a tick in the "STRAIGHT QUOTES" WITH "SMART QUOTES" box
- Click on OK

If you've pasted material into your book from elsewhere, or you didn't check autocorrect options before you began typing, there might be some rogue unidirectional marks in your file. To change them quickly, do a global find/replace:

- Select CTRL+H on your keyboard to open FIND AND REPLACE
- Type a quotation mark into the FIND WHAT box
- Type the same quotation mark into the REPLACE WITH box
- Click on the REPLACE ALL button

Find and Replace

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Replace w <u>i</u>	th: "2					×
<u>M</u> ore :	>>		<u>R</u> eplace	3 Replace <u>A</u> ll	<u>F</u> ind Next	Cancel

?

 \times

Alternative speech-indicator marks

An alternative way of displaying speech is via the **em dash**. This method can get messy if you have more than two speakers in a conversation, so use it with care.

The em is the longest in the dash suite. In the image below (1) is a hyphen, (2) is an en dash and (3) is the em dash.



Sylvain Neuvel uses this technique in *Sleeping Giants*, the first book in the hugely enjoyable Themis Files series.

While some chapters in the novel use standard quotation marks, most are case-file chapters that are entirely composed of dialogue between a known character and an agent who plays a key part in the story but remains anonymous and elusive to us throughout.

Each speaker's turn is indicated with an em dash. The agent's speech is rendered in bold.

If Neuvel had chosen the standard route, he'd have been forced to use clunky speech tags such as 'the agent said', and even reveal the agent's gender to mix things up a little. Instead, the chapters are compelling, mysterious, but cleanly and tightly delivered.

Here's an excerpt from p. 104:



File No. 047

Interview with Vincent Couture, Graduate Student Location: Underground Complex, Denver, CO

—Dr Franklin said you had a breakthrough.

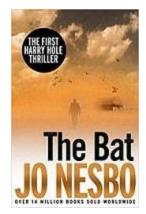
- —I did. It's not language.
- —Already you lost me.

I couldn't figure out the meaning of the symbols. The more I thought about it, the more I realized I wasn't supposed to.
Now you have really lost me. Please say something, anything, that will make sense to me.

Same speaker; new paragraph

One final word on quotation marks. If you want your dialogue to take a new paragraph while retaining the current speaker, use a quotation mark at start of the new line but omit the closing one at the end of the previous paragraph.

This example from Jo Nesbo's *The Bat* (p. 251) illustrates the convention:

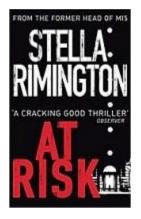


'[...] My father described the regular pom-pom-pom of the cannons and the increasingly high-pitched wails of the planes as they dived. He said he'd heard them every night since.

'The last day of the battle he was standing on the bridge when they saw a plane emerging. [...] Then he jumped overboard and was gone.'

2. Trailing-off and pauses in speech

The **ellipsis** is used to indicate a pause or speech trailing-off at the end of a sentence. Here's an excerpt from *At Risk* (p. 434) by Stella Rimington:



She shook her head, her eyes unfocused. Then, draining her pint glass, she nudged it towards him. 'Could you ...?' 'Yeah, sure.'

Notice how Rimington doesn't also tell us that the character's voice has trailed off, which would be unnecessary clutter. Here's how it might have gone if she hadn't trusted the ellipsis to do its job and her readers to understand that:

She shook her head, her eyes unfocused. Then, draining her pint glass, she nudged it towards him. 'Could you ...?' Jean said, **her voice trailing off**.

'Yeah, sure.'

Here are examples from *Sleeping Giants* (p. 204) and *At Risk* (p. 434) where an ellipsis is used to indicate a mid-sentence pause:

SLEEPING GIANTS

'We discovered it can also be used as a weapon. It took another hole – in the wall, this time – to figure that one out, but the edge of the shield is very sharp ... if you can say that about light.'

AT RISK

'Well ... He walked out on us years ago, when I was a boy, so he can't ever have really cared for us.'

The spacing of ellipses

CMOS asks for three full stops (or periods) separated by non-breaking spaces (1). Non-breaking spaces stop the elements they're positioned between from becoming separated because of a line break.

You can create one using your keyboard with the keys CTRL+SHIFT+SPACE. However, once again that's a style choice. It's perfectly acceptable to use the tighter single ellipsis character in Word (2).



The Unicode character for the ellipsis is 2026. To access it, go to the INSERT tab in Word's ribbon, select SYMBOL, then MORE SYMBOLS.

AutoSave 🖲	Off	জ - ত 🖓	▼ Dialogue punctuation and speech tagging in fiction.docx Louise Hamby											
File Hom	In	sert	Layout	References	Mailings	Review \	/iew D	eveloper	Add-ins	Help F	PerfectIt 3	𝒫 Tell me wł	hat you want to do	
불 Cover Page ▾ 🗋 Blank Page ▸⊣ Page Break	Table	Pictures	G Icons 3D Mo C SmartA		nshot -	着 Store 🎝 My Add-ins	W Wikipedi		Cross-refe	Con		Header - Footer - Page Number -	Toxt	π Equation • Ω Symbol •
Pages	Tables		Illustratio	ns		Add-in	s	Media	Links	Com	nments H	leader & Footer	Text	Symbols

Make sure the font is set to normal text (3) before you type the code into the character-code box (4).

Symbol														?		\times
<u>S</u> ymbo	ols	S <u>p</u> ecia	l Chara	octers												
Eont: (normal text) Subset: General Punctuation										~						
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From here on in, when you click on SYMBOL the ellipsis will show up in the list of recently used symbols. If you're using a professional editor, you can ask them to ensure that your ellipses are rendered correctly, though it's something most pros would check as a matter of course.

CMOS also recommends the following:

- Ellipsis occurring mid-sentence: space either side
- Ellipsis occurring at the beginning of a sentence: space after
- Ellipsis occurring at the end of a sentence: space before

Professional publishers use this style, and I recommend that self-publishers follow suit.

3. End-of-line interruptions in speech

To indicate that a speaking character has been interrupted, use an **em dash**. No matter whether you're publishing in US or UK style, this is the tool of choice.

It's a harder piece of punctuation and does a superb job of indicating emotions like impatience, curtness, disbelief, rudeness, frustration and anger on the part of the interrupting speaker.

Here's a fast-paced conversation between Louisa and Min in Mick Herron's *Dead Lions* (p. 115):

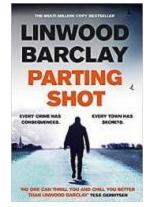


'I got the guys at the Troc to pick it up on Clerkenwell Road. They tracked—' '*You* got the guys—' 'Yeah yeah. *Catherine* got the guys at the Troc to pick them up.'

This use of the em dash keeps the dialogue moving at a fast pace.

Like Rimington, Herron doesn't tell it twice. There are no cluttering speech tags or repetitive explanations that tell us how each speaker interrupted the other. The pace cracks like a whip and we're offered an authentic back-and-forth.

Here's one more example from Linwood Barclay's *Parting Shot* (p. 380). It shows how the em dash evokes a sense of impatience from the speaker who cuts in:



"Ms. Plimpton," Duckworth said. "I don't know if you remember me, but I'm Detective Barry—" "I know exactly who you are," she said, and reached out and took his hand in hers.

4. Punctuating tagged speech

Your character's just spoken a complete sentence, and you want to follow through with a tag that tells the reader who said what (e.g. he said, she said). How does the punctuation work before the closing quotation mark at the end of the sentence?

The **comma** does the job, even when the sentence is complete, unless you're finishing with an exclamation mark or a question mark. If there's no tag following the dialogue, you can use a full stop.

Speech tag following complete sentence: comma before closing quotation mark	"Give that back," he said, putting down the burger and holding out his hand.
Speech tag following question: question mark before closing quotation mark	"You don't like him?" I asked, keeping the phone out of his reach.
Speech tag following exclamation: exclamation mark before closing quotation mark	"Hey!" he said, spewing a shred of lettuce.
No speech tag following a complete sentence: full stop before closing quotation mark	Jeremy, looking uncomfortable as he took his burger in both hands, said, "It's okay, Charlene."

Here are some examples from *Parting Shot* (p. 80) to show you how it works:

Note that when you follow up with second- or third-person speech tags (you said/he said/she said/they said) they always **take lower case**, whether the punctuation before the closing quotation mark is a comma, a question mark, or an exclamation mark.

5. Punctuating broken-up dialogue

If you want to break up your dialogue with speech tags or other stage direction, but your character hasn't finished speaking, **commas** or **dashes** will help you keep your dialogue in order. The key is to get the punctuation right in the text between the dialogue too.

Let's look at two more examples, both from *The Chosen Ones* by Howard Linskey (pp. 295, 306):



'I assume,' said Tom, 'that this is not the place.'

'Then he gets nothing,' Tom assured him, 'and he won't be able to use it, will he?'

The unbroken speech would appear as 'I assume that this is not the place.' and 'Then he gets nothing and he won't be able to use it, will he?'

Nevertheless, it is conventional within most mainstream publishing companies to add a comma **before the first closing quotation mark** and **after the speech tag.** These commas act as parentheses.

If your dialogue is broken with description rather than speech tags, dashes can offer more clarity than commas. If you're sticking to CMOS style, closed-up em dashes will be your choice. If you prefer the shorter en dash, place spaces around either side of it.

Here's an example from CMOS (6.87) using closed-up em dashes:

"Someday he's going to hit one of those long shots, and"—his voice turned huffy—"I won't be there to see it."

And here's how it would look using spaced en dashes and single quotation marks if you were following UK publishing convention:

'Someday he's going to hit one of those long shots, and' – his voice turned huffy – 'I won't be there to see it.'

6. Punctuating vocative expressions in dialogue

A vocative expression is one where the person being addressed is directly referred to in a sentence. It needn't be someone's name; it could be a form of address that relates to their job or position, one that's a term of respect (or disrespect).

Commas are required for clarity.

- If the vocative expression comes at the *beginning* of the sentence, place a comma after it.
- If the vocative expression comes at the *end* of the sentence, place a comma before it.
- If the vocative expression *interrupts* a sentence, place a comma before and after it.

Here are some examples:

- 'Dave, is that your new car over there?' Mal said.
- 'Do you know who I am, you oaf?' asked Lord Stuffy.
- 'Well, Dina, I've never heard such a load of old rubbish in all my life,' said John.
- 'Did you know, Gabriel, that your wings are wonky?' Peter said, leaning casually against the pearly gates.
- "Sir, the helicopter pilot's ready for the debrief."
- "Tea is served, Your Grace," said the bored butler.
- "I'm not done with you yet, Detective."

Punctuating vocative expressions incorrectly can lead to ambiguity. Compare the following examples of dialogue. Notice how the missing comma changes the meaning from expressions of address to instructions to carry out acts of violence!

With vocative comma	Without comma
"Let's eat, children," said a salivating Jenny.	"Let's eat children," said a salivating Jenny.
"Shoot, Sergeant Fowler!" ordered the captain.	"Shoot Sergeant Fowler!" ordered the captain.

7. Indicating faltering speech

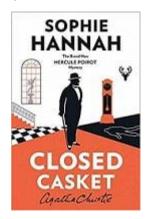
If your character is out of breath, taken aback, caught off guard, frightened, or nervous, you might want to indicate faltering speech with punctuation.

There are no absolute rules about how you do this because it depends on the effect you want to achieve.

• For softer faltering where full words are repeated, try **ellipses**. They moderate the rhythm.

- For sharper faltering where the character stumbles over syllables, try **hyphens**. They provide a more staccato rhythm.
- For elongated faltering where the speaker is struggling to start a word and then takes a breath to compose themselves, a combination of **repeated letters followed by ellipses** could work.

Here's how Sophie Hannah does it in one of her Hercule Poirot continuation novels, *Closed Casket* (p. 165):



'I wanted to believe he could love me the way I loved him. And then I heard him ask Sophie to marry him, and ... and ...' She dissolved into weeping.

And here's a made-up example showing a more staccato faltering:

'No. I-I-I mean not really. It was an accident. I just s-s-saw him standing there and I kinda flipped,' Jack said.

And here's how Sylvain Neuvel handles scientist Marina Antoniou in *Waking Gods* (p. 103). This character consistently struggles with her speech so Neuvel uses a combo of repeated letters to elongate the starting consonants, followed by ellipses to show her process of forcing out the remainder of her words.

His approach is unconventional but it imparts an authentic sense of Antoniou fighting with her voice:



-I only did what needed to be done. Someone had to, even if you didn't have the sss ... stomach for it.

Use common sense with your speech tags. If you've made it obvious from the punctuation that the

character's speech is faltering, you needn't tell the reader twice:

'No. I-I-I mean not really. It was an accident. I just s-s-saw him standing there and I kinda flipped,' Jack stammered.

If your character has a stammer, by all means use these tools to indicate it here and there but don't feel compelled to litter the dialogue with it. Readers have good memories; nudges are enough. Overdo it and you risk dulling the writing and making your reader frustrated.

That's it! Happy dialogue punctuating!

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Louise Harnby is a line editor, copyeditor and proofreader who specializes in working with crime, mystery, suspense and thriller writers.

She is an Advanced Professional Member of the Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading (CIEP), a member of ACES, a Partner Member of The Alliance of Independent Authors (ALLi), and co-hosts <u>The Editing Podcast</u>.

Visit her business website at <u>Louise Harnby | Fiction Editor & Proofreader</u>, say hello on Twitter at <u>@LouiseHarnby</u>, connect via <u>Facebook</u> and <u>LinkedIn</u>, and check out her <u>books</u> and <u>courses</u>.





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Writers Online events were shared by Sarah Nuttall.

I'm so very, very sorry. You see, I simply forgot. Anything goes.

These were:

Take one of the pieces suggested in the phrases marked in red in the text of last month's suggestions.

JANUARY TOPICS.

RELAUNCH OF OUR

SHORT FORMERS

SUGGESTIONS FOR THURSDAY 17th FEBRUARY.

IT'S A

HWC

SHORTIES

Writing podcasts - Shared by Tracey Robins

These podcasts were featured in the Guardian last November, so I thought I should share!

Longform Podcast

This is a weekly hour long interview with a nonfiction writer about their work, practice and personal philosophies. It was founded in 2012, and focused on aspects of writing such as note-taking and revision of drafts. These days the conversations are apparently warmer and wider ranging. You

can dig into the archives to listen to great nonfiction writers spill their beans.

<u>New Yorker Fiction</u>

This is a monthly podcast where a celebrated writer selects a short story from the New Yorker's archive to read and discuss with the magazine's fiction editor, Deborah Treisman. Lots to be learned about the discipline and creative craft of short story writing. Maybe one to try as we embark on our stories for the competition?!

In Writing with Hattie Crisell

Hattie Crisell, a contributing editor of Grazia, interviews writers about the how, the why and the what of their writing. Lessons for all of us who love to write, from publishing giants, comedians, critics and even songwriters.

Start With This

Every episode of this podcast discusses a challenge or an aspect of writing – for example, scene-setting, plotting, finding your voice, overcoming the desire for perfection... The listeners are then set two practical assignments relevant to the subject. The podcast presents an 'accessible, supportive step towards starting and extending a regular writing practice'.

Between The Covers

This is a two hour long (and sometimes longer) fortnightly radio show gives you discussions to expand your horizons, as the wellinformed host David Naimon will pique your interest with interviews spanning all forms of literature, from all over the world. The Guardian says, 'This podcast is like the best writer's festival talk you've ever been to, fitting in with your schedule and with no unedifying Q&A session at the end'.

Get listening!



NEW YORKER

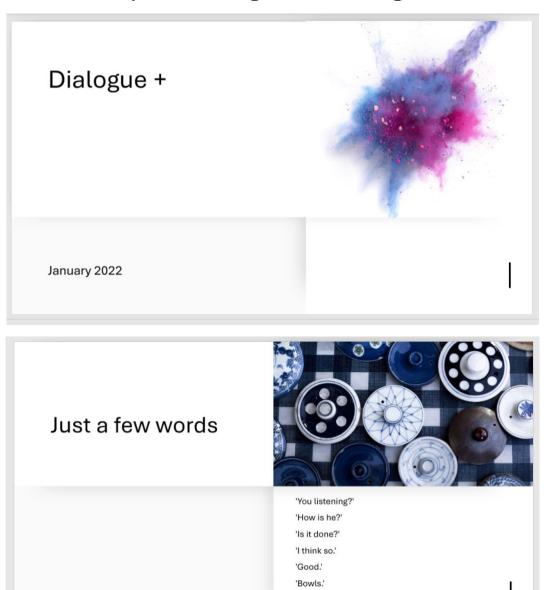
FICTION







Mathew's January Workshop, with Examples from Members

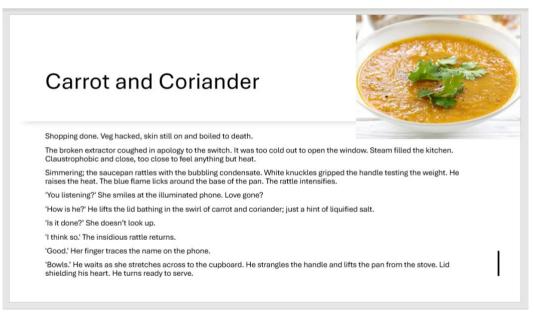




Now create the rest of it. However, the dialogue is not the **subject**, just the foreground. Show us what is happening as the conversation takes place.

300 words (ish)

Subtext



WHA'EVER, by Bryan Webster

Two boys sit in a bedroom. It's brimful of posters and a mess of shoes, unputaway clothes, old X-boxes etc., etc... The boys are bored.

One of them throws a book down onto the desk in front of him.

"I'm bleeding fed up with ..." and he pauses, hoping a word will pop up in his head.

"With what?" the other asks.

"Fed up with the whole ..." says the first boy. He can't finish the sentence. Of course he can't. His adolescent brain is bursting -- the synapsis in the changing frontal cortex, that control his emotions, are all over the place, and the signals across his developing corpus collosum that organise decision-making are dysfunctional.

"You're always saying that," says the second boy, uncertain of the first boy's temper, uncertain how he should handle this mood.

"No, I'm not!" the first boy shouts, tears forming in his eyes. "No, I don't!"

But the second boy can't go back. The second boy is lonely, too. He wants to share, but he can't, he daren't. So, he sticks to his guns. "You're a miserable sod, that's what you are," he says.

Gazoonian, by Ben Missenden

Earl smiled at me. Three hours he'd been chatting to me about dialectics, dianetics, all that crap that he loved to immerse himself in. He didn't think for one second that my degrees in astrometaphysics had any use in itself.

I'd shown him everything around the lab, explaining what I had been doing. He'd looked at the spaceship, the latest C12 model, with barely an acknowledgement. He'd had a small smirk at the three pronged derma-ring and now we stood here in front of the spade covered in gazoonian.

He stared at me. Goading me with those wild brutish eyes. I knew he was going to try and mock me. Act naive about everything I'd just explained.

"What are you doing?!" I asked as his fingers slid across the spade. He tried to suppress the smirk. We both knew what he was doing.

"Picking this up." he replied with mock-innocence. Memories flashed through my mind, as I recalled his remarks at University. His claim that my "science" was a past-time for snobbish elites.

"Why?" I tried not to rise to his mockery. The insult was clear. He didn't even believe in the science. He thought I was just a windbag.

"Look, it's got this sort of... well... fluff on it." He mumbled, with an air of absent-mindedness. We both knew what the fluff was. It was the chasm that separated us. Best friends in primary school, mutual acquaintances by the time we were in college. Bitter rivals before we hit University. Here he was talking about bloody fluff like some sheep had deposited wool on the spade!

"Yes, it's supposed to, that's why I said we need to leave it. It's called gazoonian, a sort of nanoscopic translucent film."

"If it's nanoscopic, how can I see it?"

Oi, by Lesley Hart

'Oi!'

He turned his focus from the small red illuminated bike below the traffic lights and almost fell off his own bike as a puce face bristled into his own. Putting his foot on the road's surface to create some distance, he leant the bike slightly to the right. Glancing again, distractedly and desperately at the small bike shaped light which still showed that he couldn't legally escape.

'You talking to me?' He tried to make his voice cheery, but the puce face didn't seem appeased.

'Would you move your bike tyre off my foot?'

Bryan looked down and saw the dented toe of a once smart office shoe trapped under his front wheel.

'Yikes!' He toppled slowly, grabbing onto the freshly starched shirt front of the puce-faced man who, far from helping him to balance, now seemed to move with him as if synchronised.

'Oh, for heaven's sake!' the voice was hot in Bryan's ear as his head connected with the roof of the red Mini alongside him.

A door slammed.

'Ambulance ...'

Miriam and Felicity, by Sue Davies

'Are you there' Miriam asked as she knocked on the door which moved as applied pressure to it. She had been due to go out to the theatre her neighbour with Felicity who was supposed to meet her across the road 20 minutes ago but she hadn't turned up. That wasn't unusual on its own because Felicity was always late for everything but tonight she had excelled herself by being late for her own birthday treat and the show must go on whether you are there at the start or not.

'What colour Is it' asked PC Carter who was peering at the towel sicking out from under the sofa. He was attending the scene of his first murder and the pathologist was trying to get a rug from under the body. The pathologist wanted Carter to pull the rug while he pushed the sofa but there were two to choose from.

'Ready?' The pathologist asked wanting to know if Carter was ready to pull on the rug. Carter thought he meant was he ready to view a dead body for the first time.

'Probably not' Carter replied. He was feeling quite out of his depth in this surreal scene. Just as he was trying to compose himself an old lady appeared at the door.

'Okay?' she said expecting to hear Felicity explaining why she was late with one of her spectacular stories about someone trying to kill her. Carter gesticulated to the pathologist that he should deal with the woman.

'Go on then'

2022 Writing Retreats from former Horsham Writing Circle member, author, Daisy White



Sussex Writing Retreats are nestled deep in the lush Sussex countryside. Our retreats cover a range of topics, but also focus on your wellbeing, creativity and confidence. The retreats are suitable for writers at any stage of their journey, whether you are already published with a massive readership, and just need some time out to relax and enjoy delicious food and like-minded company, or if you have a book idea, or film idea that just needs to be nurtured.

Here is a bit of info, and more can be found on our website;

https://daisywhiteauthor.co.uk/sussex-writing-retreats/

And Youtube;

https://youtu.be/jobamQCjHQc

For 2022 we are running 4 retreats;

April 1 - 3

Creative Writing Retreat with special guest speakers including authors Sue Wickstead and Casey Kelleher, plus literary Agent's Assistant, and the person who first sees your submissions, Saskia Leach (The Kate Nash Literary Agency).

Special Offer *The first 5 guests to sign up with receive a targeted 1-2-1 with Saskia, who will read your cover letter, synopsis and first page and give feedback.

15 places still available.

May 5 - 8

Writing for TV and Film with our guest speakers, and top industry experts screenwriter Hayley November, Executive Producer Steve November and screenwriter Debbie Moon.

Pitch your book to screen idea, learn how to write and edit a pitch and script for TV drama, or just explore another side to creative writing in this jam-packed retreat, which also includes homework and a follow up group Zoom call 1 week later. Our professional trio have extensive experience within the film and TV industry, a few BAFTAs between them, and the enthusiasm and know-how to get you started, or polish an existing idea!

14 places still available

July 8 - 10

The Writing Bootcamp Retreat

For those whose manuscript is nearing completion, and you need a final polish and help to get over the line! Includes advice on submission package, agents, social media MOT, PR plan and a professional author headshot. Special guest speaker is BBC News correspondent Alistair Fee, who will be giving you the chance to see how the news is created, edited and hone your interview technique.

12 places still available

September 16 - 18

The Find Your Creative Side Retreat with inspiring special guest speakers Alistair Fee and Hayley November. A gentle confidence boosting retreat. Has someone told you that you should write a book? Got an idea that won't go away? Explore your creativity in this retreat designed to get the ink flowing. Eighteen places still available

Daisy White's July 2021 Three Day Writing Retreat, Review by Jonathan Dancer

It was raining. Not in a consistent sort of a way, but raining nonetheless. The clear-sided marquee came into view round a bend in the track and I knew I had arrived.

As I drove through, there was a lovely warm welcome from Daisy, "You must be Jonathan!"

The whole back of the big tent was piled reassuringly with tea, coffee and pastries, and even some very healthylooking bright green smoothies. A promising start to the three-day retreat.

We started the session with some yoga stretches for the intrepid. These were held outside by Sam Marshall, a fitness trainer, under a giant oak tree, where heavy drops of water accompanied the downward dogs and incredibly demanding stretches. Suitably limbered-up, once the others had arrived we began our sessions at big round tables in the tent ...

The tone of the retreat was completely informal, with a mix of discussion, facilitated sessions and writing exercises. Daisy was incredibly generous in sharing her experience, and we covered a wide range of topics, ranging from the "the first line" to "the last line" and everything in between. There were sessions on: PR, Social Media, different publishing models and how to work with Amazon.

On day two, in the afternoon, we met Hayley and Steve November, who took us through the TV Pitch process with the option to get 1:1 feedback on our pitches, either away from the group or as a full pitch in the marquee.

Despite near typhoon conditions on the first day, the weather was kind when it needed to be, and we managed a few walks around Daisy's farm and even some social media shots on the carefully-placed bench by the hayfield.

We were a small group of only seven for most of the weekend, with another few authors joining on day two.

Everyone was incredibly passionate about their writing and encouraging to others as we read out our snippets. Some were very experienced authors and others had never written at all. There was a nice mix of published and unpublished writers.

I'm happy to say, I was so inspired that for my "last line" exercise, I took on the final scene of my trilogy – long planned, but not yet attempted. Whether it was the company, the preparation or the setting, I was delighted with the result, penned in the corner of the large field where the marquee had been pitched. When I read it out, it had an unexpected emotional impact, which I took as a good sign. I think those 200 words or so may even make it through to the final edit.

Wanting to be totally immersed, I spent the weekend at the Crown Inn, nearby in Dial Post, which was very comfortable and had been recently refurbished. Dinner and breakfast were very good indeed. I woke early to a lovely clear morning to practice my pitch and opened the curtains to a traditional village green. When I looked again half an hour later, there was a terrifying scarecrow standing in the bus shelter opposite my room. I had to look twice and doubted my eyes at first. It was the Shipley scarecrow festival that weekend.

I really enjoyed the retreat, and it went by in a flash. I learnt some really useful things that I don't think I could have discovered on my own and I made what I am sure are some lifelong friends. Overall, I had an unforgettable experience that I would highly recommend to anyone.

Jonathan Dancer