




DIALOGUE

- PURPOSE OF DIALOGUE
 - GENERAL DO'S AND DON'TS
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 - EFFECT OF SCENE AND CIRCUMSTANCE
 - LESS IS OFTEN MORE
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- 

PURPOSE OF DIALOGUE

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TWO (OR MORE) CHARACTERS

COMMUNICATION THAT IS NOT POSSIBLE THROUGH BODY LANGUAGE.

A SINGLE CHARACTER TALKING OUT LOUD TO THEMSELVES.

CONSIDER CONVEYING IN THOUGHT.

SOMETIMES USED TO COMMUNICATE SOMETHING LOUDER TO THE READER.

GENERALLY SHOULD BE AVOIDED.

DIALOGUES ARE OPPORTUNITIES TO INJECT:

HUMOR

INTIMATE THOUGHTS

INFORMATION

EMOTION

ETC.

CONSIDER WHEN BODY LANGUAGE, THOUGHTS, OR DESCRIPTIONS ARE A BETTER CHOICE

DIALOGUE DO'S

- 1.) CRISPER IS BETTER / LESS IS MORE.
- 2.) GET TO THE POINT.
- 3.) BREAK ENGLISH RULES. UH-HUH.
- 4.) SOUND LIKE DIFFERENT CHARACTERS IN DIALECT, VOICE, AND TONE.
- 5.) INJECT SCENERY AND BODY LANGUAGE.
- 6.) CREATE A NEW PARAGRAPH WHEN A NEW CHARACTER SPEAKS.
- 7.) READ YOUR STORY OUT LOUD. YOUR DIALOGUE WILL IMPROVE.

DIALOGUE DON'TS

1.) AVOID INFORMATION DUMPS.

A.) TRAINING INFORMATION TRANSFER IS OKAY.

B.) DUMB CHARACTER INFORMATION TRANSFER CAN GO TOO FAR.

2.) AVOID DIALOGUE THAT DOES NOT REVEAL CHARACTER TRAITS OR PUSH PLOT.

3.) UNLESS YOU WANT A WINEY, WINDY CHARACTER THAT TALKS ON AND ON AND NEVER SHUTS UP AVOID HUGE DIALOGUE PARAGRAPHS.

4.) AVOID OVERUSING TAGS, CHARACTER NAMES, OR DIALECT.

5.) AVOID INJECTING YOURSELF (THE AUTHOR) INTO THE DIALOGUE.

6.) AVOID BREAKING THE WALL BETWEEN THE AUTHOR AND READER.

7.) DON'T PULL A JOHN GALT.

EXAMPLE OF POOR DIALOGUE -1

“DID YOU GET THE ASPIRIN, BABE? I REALLY NEED IT.”

“YES, I GOT THE ASPIRIN.”

“AND THE BURGER BUNS. I HOPE YOU GOT THOSE.”

“YES, I GOT THE BURGER BUNS.”

“DID YOU REMEMBER TO STOP BY MY MOTHER’S HOUSE? SHE SAID SHE HAD SOMETHING FOR US.”

“NO, I DIDN’T REMEMBER TO STOP BY YOUR MOTHER’S HOUSE. I DIDN’T REMEMBER THAT SHE SAID SHE HAD SOMETHING FOR US.”

WHY DOES THIS STINK?

EXAMPLE OF POOR DIALOGUE - 2

“MY GUT HURTS,” HE BLURTED OUT.

“I JUST HAD TO LET IT GO,” HE EJACULATED. *{SIDE NOTE, I DIDN'T KNOW HE WAS THAT EXCITED!}*

“WE CAN'T WAIT TO JOIN THAT DEVIL WORSHIP CULT,” SHE ENTHUSED.

“POPPING AND CRACKING GUM,” SHE HISSED, “KILLED THE MOOD FOR ME.” (HISSING REQUIRES AN S SOUND OR TWO.)

“I LOVE YOU,” SHE BREATHED [SMILED, HUSKED, LAUGHED, MOANED . . .].

WHY DOES THIS STINK?

EXAMPLE OF POOR DIALOGUE - 3

“I’M LOOKING FOR A BANK,” SHE SAID WORRIEDLY.

“THERE’S ONE, MAYBE TWO, ON THE NEXT BLOCK,” HE ANSWERED ASSUREDLY.

SHE BATTED HER EYES. “WOULD YOU WALK WITH ME?” SHE ASKED IMPLORINGLY.

WHY DOES THIS STINK?

EXAMPLE OF POOR DIALOGUE - 4

“RACING AROUND THE BLOCK, I’D HATED THAT I’D BEEN SEEN.”

“HOPING FOR A BREAK, WERE YOU?” PETERSON ASKED

HEAVING SHORT BREATHS IN AND OUT, REECE SAID,” THINKING ABOUT THAT LAST ASSIGNMENT HAD ME LOOKING FORWARD TO RETIREMENT, ORDERING MY NEXT DRINK.”

“DRINKING CALM YOU?”

“DRINKING? YEAH, IT CALMS.” POINTING HIS REVOLVER AT PETERSON HE SAID, “KILLING, ON THE OTHER HAND, ALWAYS GETS ME BUZZING.”

WHY DOES THIS STINK?

EXAMPLE OF POOR DIALOGUE - 5

“HI,” I SAID.

“HI,” SHE RESPONDED.

“HOW ARE YOU?”

“I’M FINE. HOW ARE YOU?”

“GOOD.”

“ARE YOU DOING ANYTHING SPECIAL TONIGHT?”

“NO. I’M STAYING AT HOME.”

WHY DOES THIS STINK?

EXAMPLE OF POOR DIALOGUE - 6

“WE’**S** FIXIN TE BURROW DE VAGEN,” I SAID.

“DA VAGEN IS KAPOT. GA NAAR TUIN UN PIK ANODER,” SHE RESPONDED.

“YA WAN ANEE TING?”

“NAH. JUAST KOM HOM SAAF,” SHE SAID WITH A SMILE.

WHY DOES THIS STINK?

EFFECT OF SCENE AND CIRCUMSTANCE

➔ HERE'S THREE SEPARATE SCENES DISPLAYING THE SAME DIALOGUE WITH DIFFERENT SURROUNDINGS

SCENE ONE (BORING)

We talk about the same thing every day, “she said.

He replied. “Well what else is there? We know each other too well.”

“Okay. Let’s have at it then.”

EFFECT OF SCENE AND CIRCUMSTANCE

SCENE TWO (HOT)

“We talk about the same thing every day,” she said as she removed her blouse and skirt and placed them neatly into a hamper.

He winked at her. “Well what else is there?” He moved his right hand and placed a long, wet kiss on her red, perky lips before his breath escaped him. “We know each other too well.” Pinning her against the wall, he fondled her breasts as his lips searched hers.

She lost her breath in the passion of the moment. Her heart raced as she rubbed her fingers up and down his tight rib cage before dropping to her knees. “Okay.” She kissed his belly button. “Let’s have at it then,” as she unbuttoned his pants and. . .

EFFECT OF SCENE AND CIRCUMSTANCE

SCENE THREE

“We talk about the same thing every day,” she said. They both knew what she meant. The lack of food and now wood would make for a long two weeks before the next supply truck could get through the snow drifts.

He sat at the table and used his breath to warm his hands as he cupped his hands in front of his mouth. “Well what else is there?” The small cabin caused them to practically know each other’s thoughts. Thoughts sprung into each other’s head long before they were muttered. “We know each other too well,” he added.

Realizing that they had to get additional wood to survive, she grabbed their parkas, shovels, and axes and handed a set to her husband. “Okay. Let’s have at it then.”

LESS CAN BE MORE

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK SCENE BETWEEN PRINCESS LEIA AND HAN SOLO JUST BEFORE HAN IS THROWN INTO THE CARBONITE.

Earlier Draft

PRINCESS LEIA: "I love you. I couldn't tell you before, but it's true."

HAN: "Just remember that, cause I'll be back."

The final altered dialogue.

PRINCESS LEIA: "I love you."

HAN: "I know."

CONCLUSIONS

- USE DIALOGUE TO PRECISELY CONVEY INFORMATION BETWEEN CHARACTERS.
- SURROUND DIALOGUE WITH SCENES, DESCRIPTIONS, AND GESTURES.
- ALL DIALOGUE SHOULD EITHER DEFINE A CHARACTER MORE OR PUSH THE PLOT FORWARD.
- WHEN FITTING, INJECT HUMOR, EMOTIONS, AND DEEP THOUGHTS.
- AVOID OVERUSING TAGS, CHARACTER NAMES, DIALECT.
- LESS CAN BE MORE.