



Critiques

The Heart Share Group presents  
SEASIDE SCRIBES WRITERS CONFERENCE

With Carrie Stuart Parks



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# Thank You

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- ❖ Jennifer Tirrell
- ❖ Angela D. Shelton
- ❖ Michala Woodruff
- ❖ Paula Boire
- ❖ Teresa K. Freeman



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# Making your manuscript shine!

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# EXAMPLE 1

They looked at Henry's photo with perplexed faces. “Ma'am, it's been 40 years, don't want to discourage you or nothin', but...” Another said, "yep, he shore 'nuf looks familiar. Weren't he a Tramp Miner? Like old Joe over there. Joe mined from Missoula to Nevada.” Judy's heart sank...Nevada? When she questioned Joe he said, “think I remember them blue eyes, but were a long time ago, ma'am, sorry... not sure I kin hep much.”



# EXAMPLE 1

“There, how does this look?” Elizabeth turned the sketch pad toward the computer. Sarah leaned forward.

“It’s spot-on, but add a large freckle on his hairline just left of the center of his forehead.” Elizabeth froze. She dropped the drawing pad. No. It couldn’t be him.



# EXAMPLE 1: Formatting

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“Captain,” Erick called. I looked to him to continue, “Sleep well.”

“Captain,” Erick called.

I looked to him to continue.

“Sleep well.”



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Another said, "yep, he shore 'nuf looks familiar. Weren't he a Tramp Miner? Like old Joe over there. Joe mined from Missoula to Nevada.”

Judy's heart sank...Nevada? When she questioned Joe he said, “think I ~~remember them blue eyes, but were a long time ago, ma'am, sorry... not sure I kin hep much.~~”

Awkward



## EXAMPLE 2

She hoped her mother would be late to the camp site, then reconsidered. She'd probably be hammered by then. It would be best if she arrived right after work, so her Dad could monitor her drinking.

If she was drunk or stoned her Dad would be furious. The trip would get off to a bad start. A very bad start. Not that she blamed him for being mad. Of course, she knew it was terrible to drink and drive, or be “under the influence” as they called it. He would beat her mother up about it. He wouldn't hit her, or at least he hadn't yet. The verbal beatings didn't seem to make any change. Ava hated all the yelling.



# Backstory/Info Dumps

- ❖ What shaped your character?
- ❖ Be subtle, weave through story.
- ❖ Be selective.
- ❖ Avoid in the start of your story.



# Backstory/Info Dumps

She hoped her mother would be late to the camp site, then reconsidered. It would be best if she arrived right after work, so her Dad could monitor her.

Ava hated all the yelling.



# EXAMPLE 3

A sigh escaped as she remembered the weightless feeling of dancing through the crowd in his strong arms.



As





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# Connecting Events

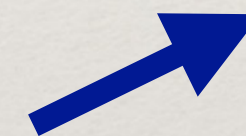
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*Event*



His monotone voice echos through the speaker as he places his thumb on the identification keyboard.

*Event*



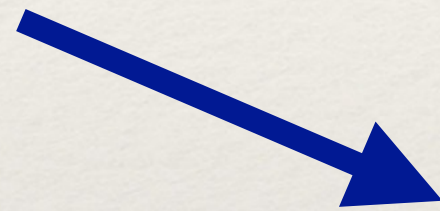


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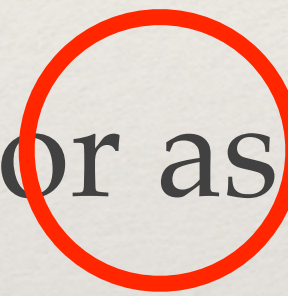
# Connecting Statements

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*Statement*



You should consider this a high honor as you are being called to serve your country.



*Statement*



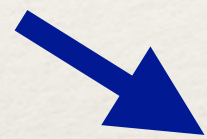


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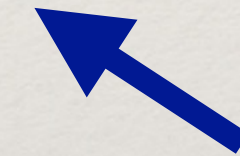
# Order

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*Reaction*



A sigh escaped as she remembered the weightless feeling of dancing through  
the crowd in his strong arms.



*Event*



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# Order

---

She remembered the weightless feeling of dancing through the crowd in his strong arms.

A sigh escaped.



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## EXAMPLE 4

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“I’ll tell you what, though,” said George, walking across the hallway to the kitchen. “It’s sad that the kitchen has been moved into the house. This room would be a great sitting room for you.”

“No, we can’t,” answered Mary.



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# Dialogue Tags

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- ❖ Exclaimed.
- ❖ Growled.
- ❖ Shouted.
- ❖ Screamed.
- ❖ Directed.

- ✿ Explained.
- ✿ Repeated.
- ✿ Sniffed.
- ✿ Interrupted.

*Generally considered  
Weak writing.  
Dialog or beat  
should provide the context.*



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# Dialogue Tags

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“Sam!” I exclaim.

“You dirty rat,” he growled.

“Get back here!” Larry shouted.

“He’s got a gun!” she screamed.

“Go sit over there,” Mr. Jones directed.

“Let me go over this again,” I repeated.

“His mother is trailer trash,” she sniffed.

“I’m sorry—“

“So am I,” he interrupted.



---

# Dialogue Tags

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- ❖ Example: He said. She whispered. She asked.
- ❖ Describes who or how someone is speaking.
- ❖ Comes before or after dialogue.
- ❖ Punctuate with a comma inside the quotation marks: “Never look a gift horse in the mouth,” Sally said.



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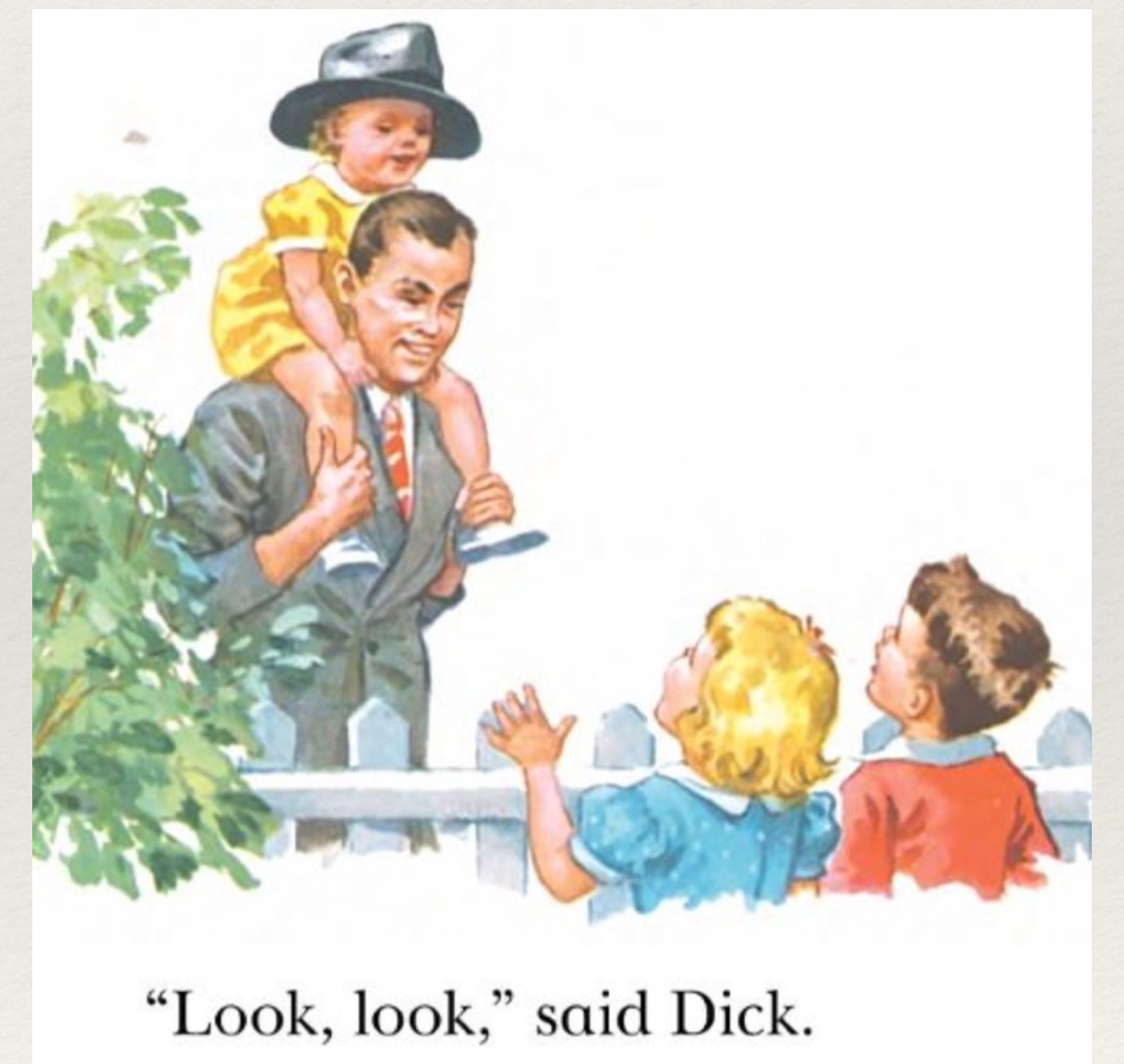
# Dialogue Tags

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“Said” comes second: Harvey said.

Not first: said Harvey.

Said and asked are not repetitive-the eye passes over them.



*Fun With Dick and Jane*  
*Penguin Young Readers*



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# Dialogue Tags

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*Don't use a tag on every line  
if there are only two people talking.*

“Okay, so let’s talk about school,” Jan’s mom says.

“Yeah, let’s talk about it,” Jan says.

“Can you bring me the reply slip?” Jan’s mom asks.

“Okay, sure, it’s right here,” Jan says.

“Oh, okay. Are you sure there’s only the one slip?” Jan’s mom asks.

“I guess,” Jan says.



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# Descriptive Beat

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- ❖ A beat is an action performed by the character before, after, or breaking up dialogue.
- ❖ Example: “Could I have a Coke?” Diane smiled at the waitress.



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# Descriptive Beat

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- ❖ Lets the reader know who's speaking.
- ❖ Enriches the scene.
- ❖ Vary the pace of the dialogue.
- ❖ Allows reader to visualize events.



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# Descriptive Beat

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Punctuate with a period inside the quotation marks: “I think this dress makes me look fat.” Dolores turned around in front of the mirror.



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# Descriptive Beat

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## **Don't overuse**

“I’m not sure.” Tom shrugged.

“You need to make up your mind.” Betty touched his arm.

“What would you do?” Tom glanced out the window.

“Go now.” Betty picked up her suitcase.



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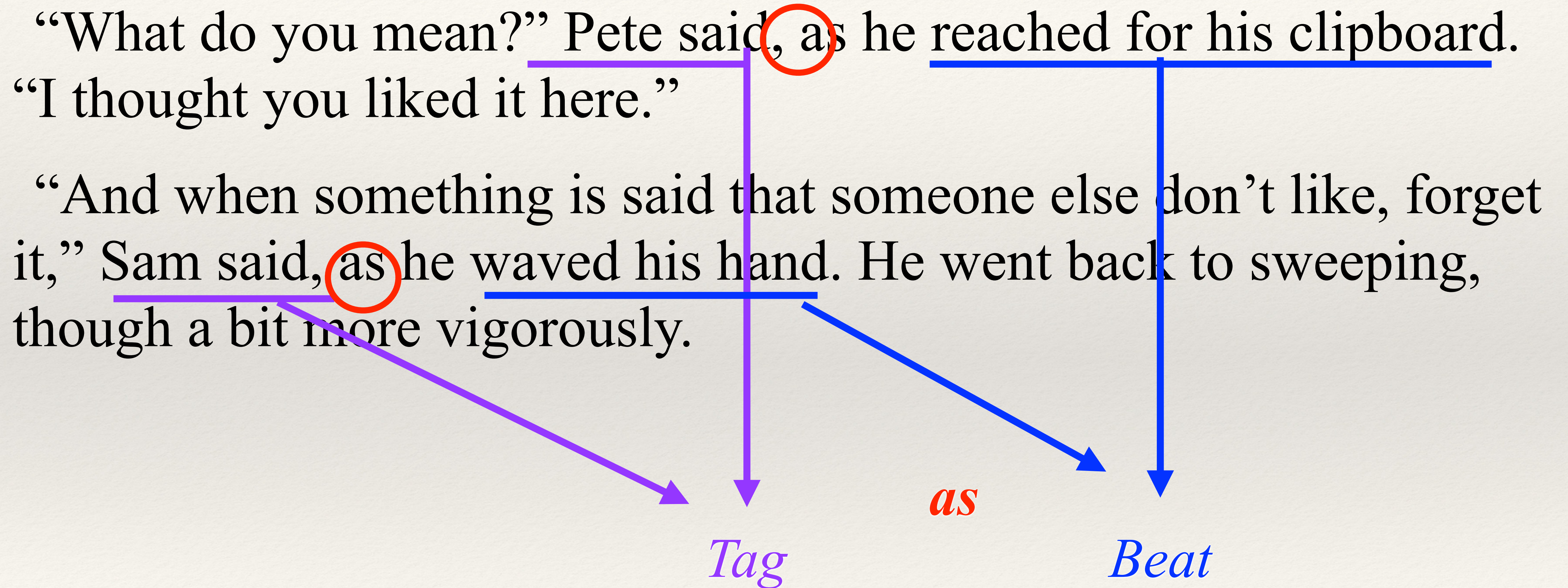
# Descriptive Beat

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Be selective.

- ❖ Should move the story.
- ❖ Add to the character.
- ❖ Offer motivation.
- ❖ Add to setting.







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## EXAMPLES 5

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I unclipped my fanny pack, took out some money, and handed both over. I watched as she buckled it around her waist. I didn't understand the why, but I knew my life might be in danger. I had to trust her.

\*\*\*\*\*

Judy saw Susan slide her arm around Dick's waist and yearned for a special love like this...with Travis.



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# The POV Character and Senses

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# The POV Character and Senses

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POV character

John saw Mrs. Jones leave the house.

Mrs. Jones left the house.



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## EXAMPLES 5

---

I unclipped my fanny pack, took out some money, and handed both over. I ~~watched as~~ she buckled it around her waist. I didn't understand the why, but I knew my life might be in danger. I had to trust her.

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Judy ~~saw~~ Susan slide her arm around Dick's waist and yearned for a special love like this...with Travis.



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## EXAMPLES 5

---

I unclipped my fanny pack, took out some money, and handed both over.

She buckled it around her waist.

I didn't understand the why, but I knew my life might be in danger. I had to trust her.

\*\*\*\*\*

Susan slid her arm around Dick's waist.

Judy yearned for a special love like this...with Travis.



# Fix For POV and Senses

Search for the words

- ✦ Saw
- ✦ Heard
- ✦ Smelled
- ✦ Any other sense word





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## EXAMPLE 6

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Lindsay's heart pulsed in her throat as her Louboutin-encased foot mashed the gas pedal into the floorboard. Her ragged breaths echoed in her ears and her sweaty palms made it that much more difficult to keep a rein on the steering wheel. The glare of headlights in her rearview mirror blinded her from seeing her pursuer. "Please, God. Help me get out of this one."

She shoved aside the mirror since it didn't help and focused on the rain-slicked road rushing toward her. The dark, moonless night hid pools of water on the edges of the blacktop. Each time she hit one, she feared she'd lose control.

For the second time since she'd taken the off-ramp from Georgia Route 85 onto Highway 27, the car behind her rammed her bumper, snapping her head back into the headrest. The rumble filled her ears and told her she was too close to the edge of the road once again. "I don't know how much more of this I can take, Lord. A little help?"



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# Tension

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- ❖ To tighten action, use short sentences.
- ❖ Eliminate extra words.



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# Tighten

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- ❖ Lindsay's heart pulsed in her throat as her Louboutin-encased foot mashed the gas pedal into the floorboard. Her ragged breaths echoed in her ears. ~~and h~~ Her sweaty palms made kept slipping off the steering wheel. ~~it that much more difficult to keep a rein on the steering wheel.~~ The glare of headlights in her rearview mirror blinded her. ~~from seeing her pursuer.~~ "Please, God. Help me get out of this one."
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- ❖ For the second time since she'd taken the off-ramp from Georgia Route 85 onto Highway 27, the car behind her rammed her bumper. Her head snapped ~~her head~~ back into the headrest. The rumble filled her ears. ~~and told her s~~ She was too close to the edge of the road once again. "I don't know how much more of this I can take, Lord. A little help?"



# Constructing Tension

“Tension is not about action, explosions and shouting.  
It’s about generating unease in the mind of the reader.”

-Donald Maass





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# Constructing Tension

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Exterior (what is happening.)

Interior (how the POV character responds / reacts / feels.)

Exterior (one paragraph.)

Interior (new paragraph.)



# MRU

## Motivational Reaction Unit





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# MRU

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- ❖ Physiological reaction
- ❖ Physical reaction
- ❖ Verbal reaction



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# MRU

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May have all three or just one or two.

Must be in the correct order.

- ❖ Physiological reaction (sweat, heart pounding)
- ❖ Physical reaction (jumped, hand flew up)
- ❖ Verbal reaction (“Wow.”)



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# Constructing Tension

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“I made your favorite cookies, Uncle Beau. Chocolate chip. I hope you like them.” She placed his hand on the cookies so he would know where to find them. He slowly grasped the cookie and brought it to his mouth to take a bite. Lyla analyzed his face, hoping to see some sign of recognition, but there was none. While he ate the cookie his gaze never moved from the spot on the wall.



---

# Constructing Tension

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Interior-her actions, words, and reactions:

“I made your favorite cookies, Uncle Beau. Chocolate chip. I hope you like them.” She placed his hand on the cookies so he would know where to find them.



---

# Constructing Tension

---

Exterior-what is going on that she can observe:

He slowly grasped the cookie and brought it to his mouth to take a bite.



---

# Constructing Tension

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“I made your favorite cookies, Uncle Beau. Chocolate chip. I hope you like them.” She placed his hand on the cookies so he would know where to find them.

He slowly grasped the cookie and brought it to his mouth to take a bite.

Lyla analyzed his face, hoping to see some sign of recognition.

His gaze never moved from the spot on the wall.



The world blurred when her car hydroplaned out of control. The bridge loomed ahead, closer with each heartbeat, but her panicked mind and desperate attempts to steer couldn't stop the chaos. Her chest tightened with terror as the bridge's parapet filled her vision, the head-on collision imminent.



Her car hydroplaned out of control.

The world blurred. Her heart thundered.

The bridge loomed ahead, closer, closer.

Her mind panicked. She desperately attempted to steer.

The bridge's parapet filled her vision. The head-on collision imminent.

Her chest tightened.



I plopped on my bed. My limbs felt dead while my back arched in pain. My eyelids grew heavy. And . . .

A knock on the door interrupted me from falling asleep. I groaned as I forced myself to go to the door.

\*\*\*

I plopped on my bed. My limbs felt dead while my back arched in pain. My eyelids grew heavy.

A knock on the door.

A jolt surged through me. I groaned, then forced myself to go to the door.



## EXAMPLE 7

Sandra spotted a cloud of dust forming behind a vehicle approaching the highway about a quarter mile away. She moved a small, semiautomatic pistol from the glove compartment to her purse as a hulking, red pickup pulling a stock trailer lurched onto the pavement, turning in her direction. The driver slowed as he approached. He stopped and lowered his window as he saw the petite woman standing by the disabled car.

“Need a hand?”

“I don’t suppose you have any antifreeze?”

“Let me get this rig out of the way.” He pulled ahead and parked on the shoulder of the road. Warily, Sandra watched the stocky, blonde cowboy climb out of the cab and stride to the car.

“Ken Stevens, ma’am,” he said, tipping his dusty ball cap. “Mind if I take a look?”



# EXAMPLE 7

Analyze line by line.



A cloud of dust formed behind a vehicle approaching the highway about a quarter mile away.

She stepped closer to the car, blocking the sun from her eyes with her hand.

A hulking, red pickup pulling a stock trailer lurched onto the pavement, turning in her direction.

Her mouth dried. She reached into the car and pulled a small, semiautomatic pistol from the glove compartment.

The driver slowed as he approached.

Her heart pounded. She stashed the pistol in her purse.

He stopped and lowered his window.



“Need a hand?”

“I don’t suppose you have any antifreeze?”

“Let me get this rig out of the way.” He pulled ahead and parked on the shoulder of the road.

She gripped her purse tighter in her sweaty hand.

The stocky, blonde cowboy climbed out of the cab and strolled to the car. “Ken Stevens, ma’am,” he tipped his dusty ball cap. “Mind if I take a look?”







# Emotions





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# Show, Don't Tell

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## Emotion

Avoid writing the word for the emotion.

Write what that emotion feels like.



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# Show, Don't Tell

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- ❖ Fear
- ❖ Pain
- ❖ Envy
- ❖ Guilt
- ❖ Love
- ❖ Scared
- ❖ Angry
- ❖ Happiness
- ❖ Disgust



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# Show, Don't Tell

---

Emotion

Disappointment rippled through her soul. She was devastated he didn't recognize her today

**Telling**



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# Show, Don't Tell

---

- ❖ Heart pounded
- ❖ Mouth dry
- ❖ Sweaty palms
- ❖ Stomach twisted



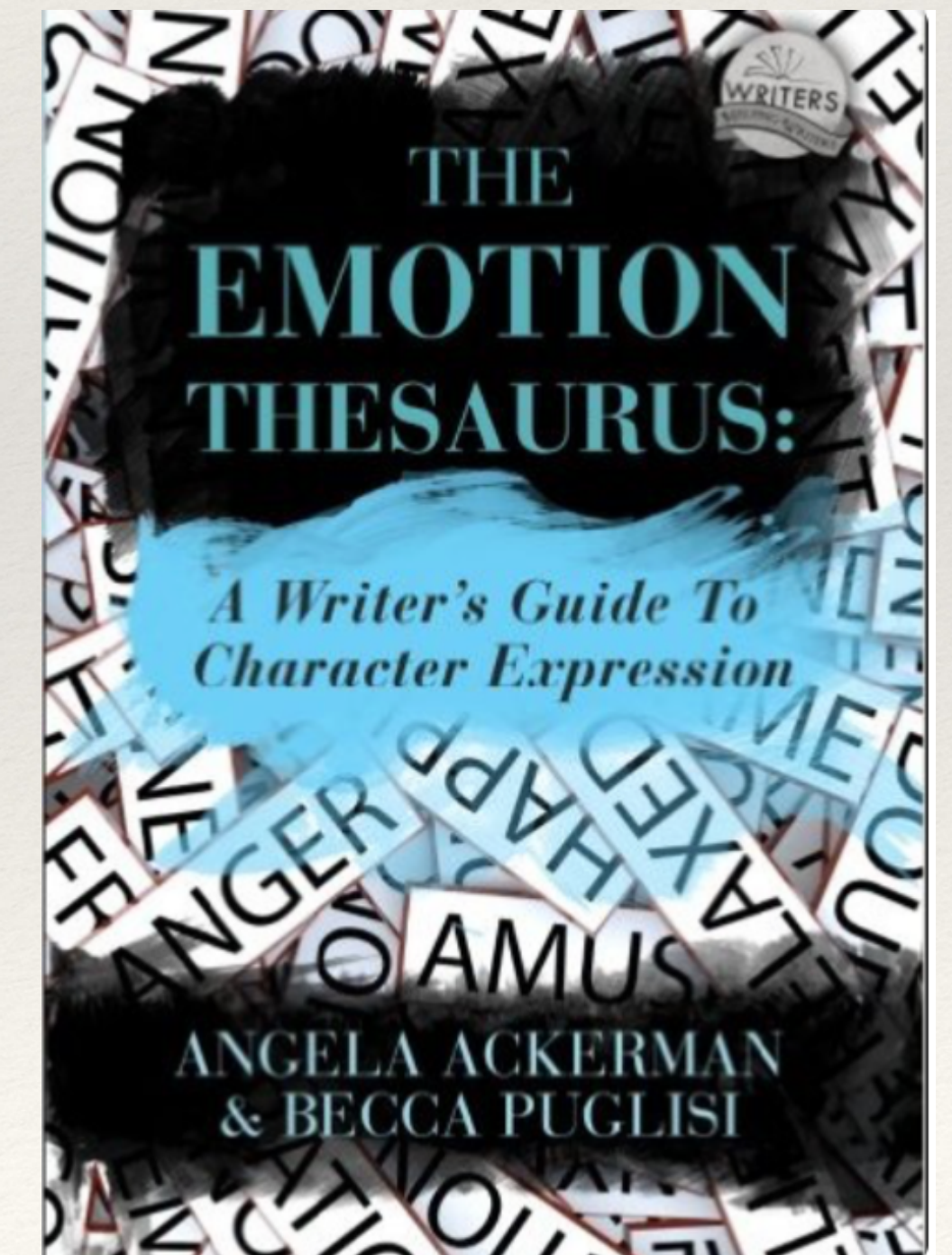
# Fix for emotions



## The Emotion Thesaurus

Angela Ackerman

and Becca Puglisi





Excellent Job!





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# Great Emotional Impact

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I gulped, burning my dried throat. “I have no doubts about our callings, but I’m more than ready for this war to be over. Good night, Erick.” I slowly walked down the stairs to the main deck.



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# Wonderful Chapter Ending Hook

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“That was fast.” She shrugged and crossed to the car, then opened the passenger side door. Her father hopped in and they were back on the road. Darkness settled over the region. Ava’s finished her homework and shoved the book into her pack, turning to heave it into the back seat.

Two bright eyes stared into her own.



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# Outstanding Opening Lines

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“If you don’t evacuate before the hurricane hits, ink your name and date of birth on your arm.” Backlit by the morning sunlight, Mayor Polaski’s grim face paled as he faced the TV camera. “Help first responders identify your body.”

\*\*\*\*

Forensic artist Elizabeth Rivera added shading around the nose on her spiral-bound pad. She shivered beneath her thick sweater. The face was as familiar as her own. The sketch couldn’t be accurate. He was dead.



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# Great Tension

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She sped through tiny hamlets, pushing twice the legal limit. The streets were eerily empty. Small-town Georgia slept soundly at this hour. Just one car. One vehicle pulling out in front of them, and it would all be over. In an instant.



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# Questions?

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