



## October Discussion- Dialogue.

Last month, we had a broad discussion on ‘Character Building’ and in thinking to myself, ‘What comes after you have the character mapped out in your mind and started the process of building said character? Simple answer, the character has to talk. No use having him (say) kick an empty coke can along a deserted beach without him muttering something to himself, which in turn, reveals a vital part to your story. Or your character, sitting at a table in the yacht club with a couple of mates, all staring out to sea and you describe what they see as narrative when the scene can be brought alive through lively conversation.

So, in research on the subject, so many opinions are gathered, only so much of the information can be taken, and then sort the grain from chaff.

What is dialogue? Here’s a quick and simple definition: Dialogue is the exchange of spoken words between two or more characters in a book, play, or other written work. In prose writing, lines of dialogue are typically identified by the use of quotation marks and a dialogue tag, such as "she said." In plays writing, lines of dialogue are preceded by the name of the person speaking.

**Dialogue** is defined in contrast to monologue, when only one person is speaking.

**Dialogue** is often critical for moving the plot of a story forward, and can be a great way of conveying key information about characters and the plot.

**Dialogue** is also a specific genre of writing, which takes the form of a conversation between two or more people and is critical in moving the story forward rather than a lengthy often boring narrative. ‘Show, not tell.’

If your writing bores you, it will put your reader to sleep. Your job is to make every word count—the only way to keep your reader riveted until the end, which is no small task. Riveting dialogue is your friend because it can accomplish so many things:

- It breaks up narrative summary and sometimes monotony..
- It differentiates characters, through dialect and/or word choice.
- It moves the story, showing without telling. Everybody’s good advice, “Show, don’t tell.” And as discussed last month, “Cut the information dump.”

But writing good dialogue is not easy. If your dialogue is bloated or obvious or telling, readers won’t stay with you long.

Personally, I have always been interested in observing people. Since I left home and began my wanderings, I have been unconsciously gathering characters unintentionally, not knowing one day I would use them.

**Opinion anyone?**

An example of gradually adding in back story via dialogue helps keep your reader engaged.

Hinting at some incident introduces a setup that demands a explanation and it can be far more intriguing than just lines of narrative. Your character adds colour.

*As they headed toward the house, Janet whispered, “Can we not bring up the Gold Coast and Jamie, please?”*

*Maggie shot her a double take. “Believe me, I don’t want that any more than you do.”*

*“Good,” Janet said. “I mean—”*

*“Can we not talk about it, please? I don’t want to be reminded,” said Maggie.*

What normal reader wouldn’t assume they *will* talk about it and stay with the story until they do?

As the story progresses, such a snippet of dialogue reveal more and more about your protagonist’s past.

In many cases, we are told to ‘read aloud’ your dialogue. Now-a-days (and I have mentioned this before) MS 365 Word has a ‘read aloud function. There is also a free download called Balabolka, but the disadvantage with that programme is, you only get American voices, well, so far as I have so far found.

I subscribe to a Blog by K. M. Weiland. Coincidentally, as I was writing this discussion, a post came from her about the very subject.

She warns about slang dialogue. Quote, *‘It’s important for authors to get the nuances of slang in dialogue right. All research into dialectal idiosyncrasies is time well spent if it means nailing the way a particular character speaks. Smart readers will always recognize phony speech patterns. As with so many techniques in fiction, moderation is vital in dialect. This goes not just for slang—especially unfamiliar slang—but also for strange grammatical constructions and perhaps most importantly words purposely misspelled to reflect a character’s accent.*

### **Discuss?**

Not wanting to make this discussion sound like a ‘Me, me, me’ exercise, I have included a conversation between a couple of English university lecturers and a couple of country ‘bumpkins.’ The piece is taken from a well-received story posted on the internet. I am open to criticism. I didn’t want to give an in-depth description of the two characters but rather let the dialogue build the picture. Is there to much slang?

### **‘And the music Played’**

*It wasn’t long before Tobias struck up a conversation with a couple of elderly locals. Tobias chanced a question,*

*“Tell me, the old abandoned estate ‘Coxes’ Folly’, what do you happen to know about it?”*

*“Wot you mean, lad, know ‘bout it?” replied the old local, somewhat suspiciously.*

*“Well, do you know of its history? Who owns it?”*

*“Why you int’rested, lad? Ol’ mother Flipper Flopper, that’s what we calls ‘er, she own it but she way with fairies now days. Why you asking, ‘bout Coxes’ Folly?”*

*“Aye, Clem’s right,” piped up his mate, “Her way with fairies. Her boy, he lives in France, me thinks, eh, Clem?”*

*“Aye, lazy lout. He don’t care nuffink for his auld mother. Oi, you ain’t tinkin o’ movin’ in, is yar? Why you so int’rested in said Coxes’ Folly?” said Clem looking over the top of his spectacles.*

*“Ooooo, I woonee be doin’ that, lad. Place got ill omen; you know. It’s the music, i’nit Clem?” chipped in Clem’s mate.*

*“Aye, music plays an’ nobody knows where comes from. Said it get cold and spooky when music plays, aye,” said Clem.*

*“Aye, cold an’ spooky orrite, aye Clem. He’s right, Clem is,” concluded his mate, addressing Edith.*

*“Music? What kind of music?” Edith asked.*

*“Me, I knows nothing ‘bout music, lady, buy folks say kinda like harp or fiddle or like an’ very mournful, like,” replied Clem.*

*“Yer, like harp or fiddle like as Clem says and mournful like folks tell,” echoed Clem’s mate nodding his head in agreement.*

*When Tobias and Edith’s meals arrived, Tobias excused themselves, saying,*

*“Well, if you will excuse us and thank you, gentlemen. Most interesting what you have told us. At least we did not travel all the way up here for nothing.”*

*As Tobias and Edith walked to the table away from the bar, they heard Clem’s mate say,*

*“Int’restin! int’restin? He says it int’restin. You woonee catch me out there with that there music, eh, Clem?”*

*‘Aye, not me neither, not for all the tea in China,” replied Clem.*

*“Eh? Tea? What tea, Clem?”*

*And Clem just shook his head, saying, “Daft ‘ol coot.”*