

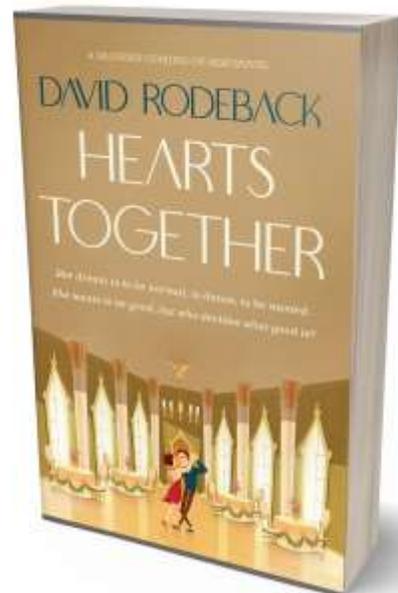
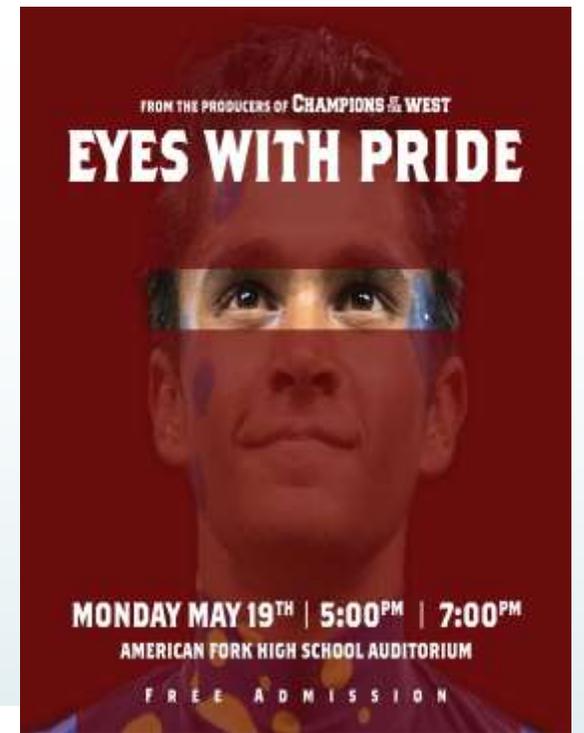
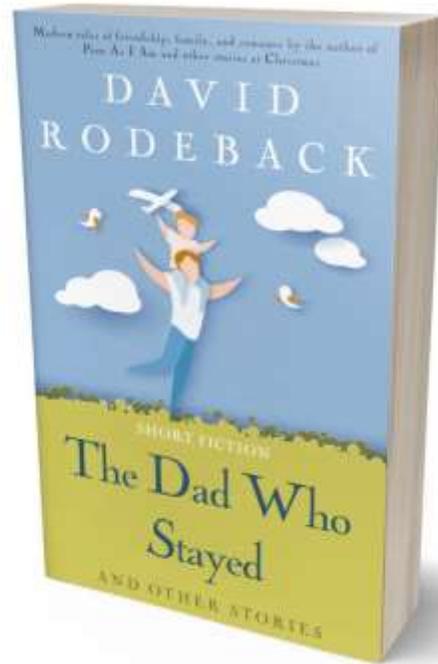
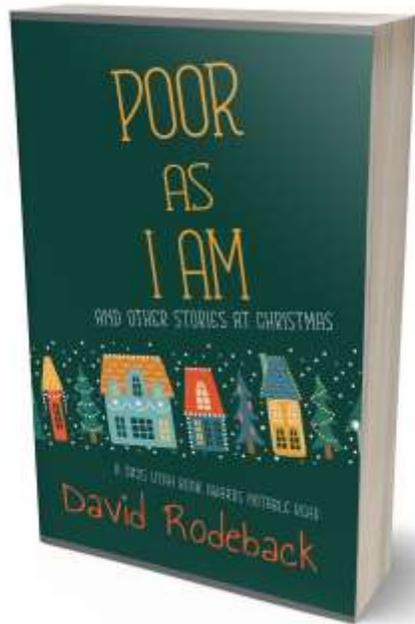


It's (Almost) All in the Voice

David Rodeback

March 2026—Wordcraft

- 
- Husband of one, parent of four, grandparent of two, uncle of 18
 - CMT0 of a West Valley City manufacturing firm, where I write stuff: C#.Net code, SQL queries, marketing copy, video scripts, company policies, etc.
 - In a former life taught writing, Russian language, and Russian literature at BYU, Cornell, and elsewhere.
 - Current major project: a (short) book-length biographical essay about a soldier
 - 2025 LUW Writer of the Year



American Fork Citizen

HOME AF CITY NEWS SPORTS SCHOOLS BUSINESS ART/CULTURE OPINION OBITUARIES SUBSCRIBE

OPINION: This writer and that marching band

Published 2 months ago on June 23, 2025
By AF Citizen

OPINION: Poke the algorithms in the eye: Read books in 2025

Published 7 months ago on January 12, 2025

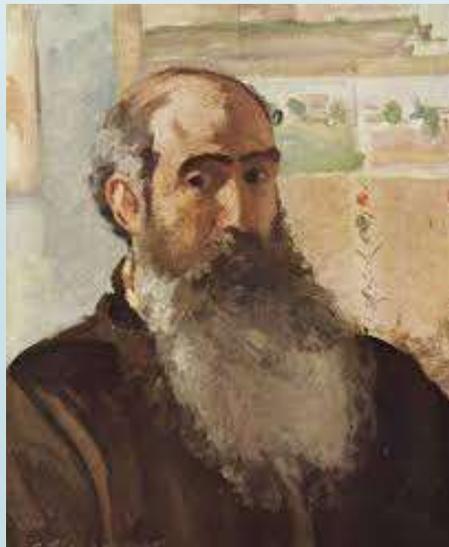
COLUMN: "The Lusty Month of May"

Published 3 months ago on May 19, 2025
By AF Citizen



“ Blessed are they
who see beautiful things in
humble places
where other people
see nothing. ”

— *Camille Pissarro*



About the League of Utah Writers

- ▶ The League has 22 chapters around the state and online (some hybrid). They're all different, tailored to meet the needs and interests of their members. You can also join the League without joining a chapter.
- ▶ League membership is only \$30 per year, and \$15 for an additional chapter.
- ▶ You don't have to be a Utah resident. The League has members all over the country and a few international members.
- ▶ Two conferences for members and non-members:
 - ▶ Pre-Quill—one day—April—\$40
 - ▶ Quills—four days—early August—member discount
- ▶ Publication opportunities in two yearly anthologies and a quarterly literary journal.
- ▶ Discounted entry to our spring writing contests—awards announced at Quills—most offer written feedback from professional writers—some offer cash prizes



leagueofutahwriters.com

7TH ANNUAL EAGLE MOUNTAIN WRITING CONFERENCE

UNLEASH YOUR VOICE

Celebrate the Joy of Your Craft

MARCH 14, 2026

EAGLE MOUNTAIN
ARTS
ALLIANCE

emaawrites.com

A dark grey arrow points to the right from the left edge of the slide. Below it, several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey sweep across the left side of the page.

Disclaimer

We're focusing on fiction here, but many of the same thoughts apply to verse and nonfiction.



What do I mean?

(when I say it's almost all in the voice)

- 
- ▶ I've heard editors and agents say **voice** is what stands out in the slush pile.
 - ▶ I've heard my readers say **voice** draws them into—and through—my stories.
 - ▶ I will read almost anything, even if I don't love the genre or the topic, if I enjoy the **voice**.
 - ▶ When I'm in a bookstore, sampling the first pages of books, **voice** is the best way to hook me.



Two screens into a Substack post (How irresistible is voice?)

Some chickens broke into my kitchen.

I mean this literally. Four chickens of varying levels of intelligence saw an open door and knew that inside, somewhere, were blueberries, and then they waited until we were at church and they broke into my kitchen. They weren't subtle, either. Since chickens have no sphincter, they left calling cards everywhere. They pecked the dining room rug for crumbs. They investigated the fridge. They watched a little TV. They didn't go upstairs because, apparently, stairs are intimidating to chickens.

Satisfied they'd taken their opportunity, they went back out the door they came in, except for Kevin, who was found still eating cat food in the sunroom.

Emily Zanotti, "Chickens in a Kitchen,"

Growing Olives in Nashville, Substack, 23 July 2024



She tweets with wit and intelligence on politics, religion, and family . . .



Emily Zanotti 
@emilyzanotti

Living la dolce vita on a backyard homestead in a mid-sized city, writing on cooking, farming, home economics, with occasional thoughts on faith, family, and feminism.




Subscribe to Growing Olives in Nashville
TODDLER PUBLIC RELATIONS, BAD CATHOLIC HOT TAKES, NECESSARY ACTIVITIES OF A FEMINIST TRADWIFE, AND THE DAILY ADVENTURES OF HEADLESS FRANK FARMS

[Upgrade to paid](#)

Growing Olives in Nashville

Home Podcast Notes **Archive** Leaderboard About

Latest Top Discussions 

How to Grocery Shop on the Cheap
Humility, thy name is Aldi.
OCT 30, 2025 • EMILY ZANOTTI



Tough as a Mother
The easiest part of having kids is, you know, *having them.*
OCT 14, 2025 • EMILY ZANOTTI



About Those Shoes...They're Birkenstocks
Notes on living on the cusp of autism.
OCT 6, 2025 • EMILY ZANOTTI



SEPTEMBER 2025

Sunday Morning Pancakes
It's never too late to create tradition.
SEP 29, 2025 • EMILY ZANOTTI

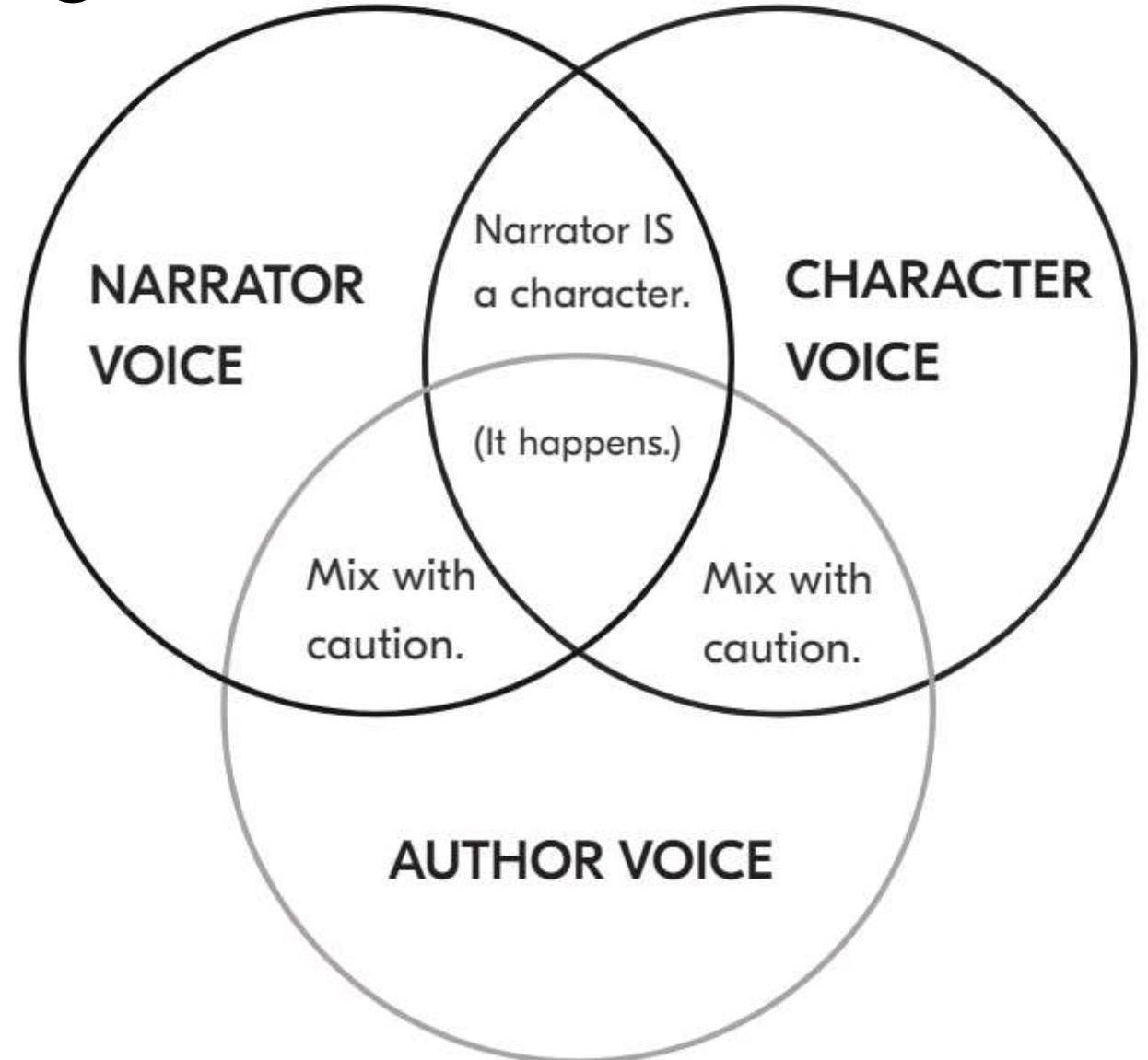


Cover Crop: Going Back to the Ground
There will be no "bean-pocalypse." It's time to fix the foundation.
SEP 18, 2025 • EMILY ZANOTTI



The overlapping voices

- ▶ **Authorial** voice
- ▶ **Narrative** voice
- ▶ **Character** voices





Authorial voice

A dark grey arrow points to the right from the left edge of the slide. Below it, several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey sweep across the left side of the page.

(Who Is Lucas James?)

“When we read, we live inside someone else’s thoughts for a while. When we write, we invite others to live inside ours.”

Lucas James

Substack

A dark grey arrow points to the right from the left edge of the slide. Below it, several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey sweep across the left side of the page.

Authorial voice

- ▶ Vladimir Nabokov said the “good, admirable reader” identifies with the author, not the boy or girl in the book.
- ▶ The books I *enjoy* most tend to be the ones where I connect with characters. The books I *admire* most tend to be the ones where I somehow connect with the author.
- ▶ You can't judge what is narrative voice and what is authorial voice in a story until you've read more than one story by the same author, with different narrators.

A dark grey arrow points to the right from the left edge of the slide. Below it, several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey sweep across the left side of the slide.

Authorial voice, cont.

- ▶ Authorial voice develops organically as you write and write and write—and revise and revise and revise.
- ▶ It's easier for others to see and analyze than for you.
- ▶ It's the voice that's left when you finally learn to write as yourself, without being imitative or derivative.
- ▶ *It's who you are*—therefore **be yourself**.
- ▶ Donald Maass: “Your voice is your self in the story.”

A dark grey arrow points to the right from the left edge of the slide. Below it, several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey sweep across the left side of the page.

Donald Maass

“I am looking for authors with a distinctive voice.” I hear that from editors over lunch. . . . I think they mean not only a unique way of putting words together, but a unique sensibility, a **distinctive way of looking at the world. . . .**

You can facilitate voice by giving yourself the freedom to say things in your own unique way. You do not talk exactly like anyone else, right? Why should you write like everyone else? . . .

. . . Your voice is your self in the story.

Writing the Breakout Novel, Chapter 8



More Lucas James

“The moment you stop trying to sound like other writers is the moment your voice begins to emerge. It won’t happen all at once. It starts quietly—an instinct here, a rhythm there. Follow that sound. It’s the only thing that will ever make your work truly yours.”

Lucas James

Substack

A dark grey arrow points to the right from the left edge of the slide. Below it, several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey sweep across the left side of the page.

Even more Lucas James

“A writer’s voice isn’t found in one brilliant line. It’s built over time, across drafts, through mistakes and revisions. Voice isn’t what you decide to have. It’s what emerges when you keep going.”

Lucas James

Substack

A dark grey arrow points to the right from the left edge of the slide. Below it, several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey sweep across the left side of the page.

The last Lucas James today

“Your writing voice doesn’t need to sound like anyone else’s to be compelling. In fact, its power lies in its particularities—the rhythm of your thoughts, the quirks of your phrasing, the truths only you can see. Lean into what makes you unmistakably you.”

“You don’t find your voice by trying to sound unique. You find it by telling the truth in a way only *you* can. Stop worrying about style—it will follow honesty. When your words are real, your voice is already there.”

Lucas James

Substack notes

A dark grey arrow points to the right from the left edge of the slide. Below it, several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey sweep across the left side of the page.

My experiment

I asked some writers who've read a lot of my fiction how they would describe my authorial voice. Here's what they said, plus a few things others have said before.

Notice how many different topics they mention *and* how similar their answers feel.

(Sorry if the next few slides seem like bragging.)



“[David’s fiction] deals with difficult subjects with grace and humor.”

Sean Jones

“In style, conversational, like you’re telling a story to your friend or family member and doing all the voices. Smart but accessible. In tone, insightful and compassionate.”

Gigi Lynn

“A lot of writers invent a fake world, maybe because the real world isn’t worthy of them. This writer focuses on the real world and allows the reader to lose herself in the beauty and breathtaking quality of real life. Because real life is beautiful, even if it has rough edges.”

Silvia O’Dwyer



About my Christmas collection: “a patchwork of relationships, emotions, and devotions.”

David Rodeback’s authorial voice is earnest, seasoned with dry humor and a touch of poignant thought. He cleverly intermixes a sense of place with character-driven stories. He excels at word choice and sentence structure, usually erring on the side of brevity. He’s at his strongest when his stories teach us about ourselves, how we interact with others, and how we change through these interactions.

Cassandra Carlson



[About *The Dad Who Stayed and Other Stories*]

“Every emotional payoff, whether flash-of-lightning funny or tearfully joyful, is earned through a rich depth of honesty that is the polar opposite of sentimentalism.”

Darrin McGraw



“I just had a rush of blood to my ego.”
— Hawkeye Pierce



Authorial voice—bottom line(s)

- ▶ Don't worry about yours.
- ▶ Don't try to develop it or make it into what you think it should be, or what you like in someone else.
- ▶ Be yourself, the most authentic version of yourself you can be (especially when you revise).
- ▶ Tell *your* best stories the best way *you* can. Your voice will be there—and that will be *your* voice. The only way to avoid it is to try too hard (or to stop writing).
- ▶ You'll grow and change, so your voice will grow and change.



AI: One more reason to be yourself

In art, including fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, and even in marketing, we're trying to make a human connection—a *human-to-human connection*.

AI can't do that. It can only pretend.

AI can produce content but not art.

In the end, the only human you can offer to other humans for connection is yourself—and you're the only one who can offer yourself.

Be yourself!



Narrative voice

A dark grey arrow points to the right from the left edge of the slide. Several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey originate from the left side and sweep across the page towards the text.

Narrative voice

Are we in the hands of a competent storyteller?

How reliable is the narrator? Is any unreliability merely a function of viewpoint or is there more?

What is the narrator's relationship to characters and events in the story?

What does the narrator think of characters, events, settings, and the story itself?

By the time the reader finishes the story, what picture does the reader have of the narrator? (appearance, personality, etc.)

A dark grey arrow points to the right from the left edge of the slide. Below it, several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey sweep across the left side of the slide.

Things to consider

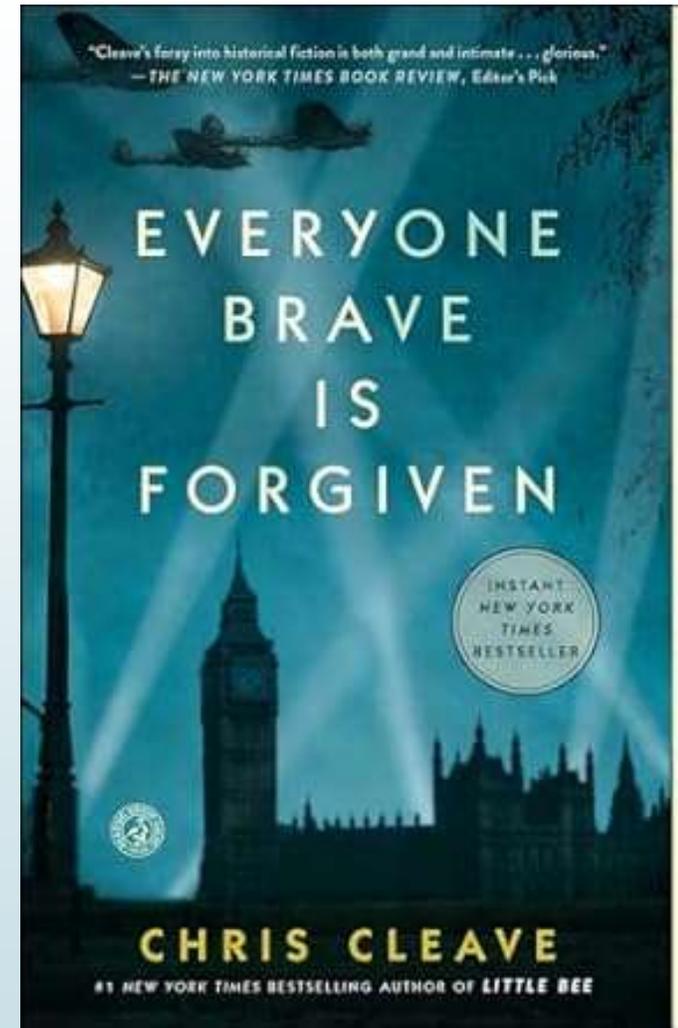
- ▶ What do you think of Mary? How would you describe her?
- ▶ What does the narrator think of Mary?
- ▶ How would you describe the narrative voice?

A beginning

War was declared at eleven-fifteen and Mary North signed up at noon. She did it at lunch, before telegrams came, in case her mother said no. She left finishing school unfinished. . . .

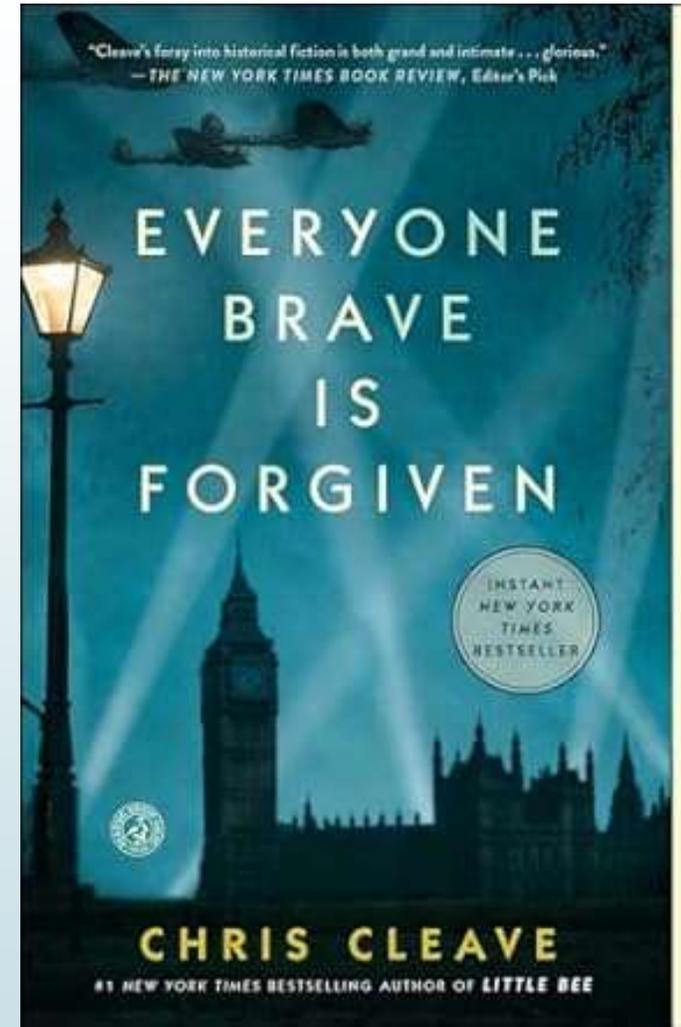
Any moment now it would start—this dreaded and wonderful thing—and could never be won without her.

What was war, after all, but morale in helmets and jeeps? And what was morale if not one hundred million little conversations, the sum of which might leave men brave enough to advance? The true heart of war was small talk, in which Mary was wonderfully expert.



... Mary gladly joined the great flow of the willing.

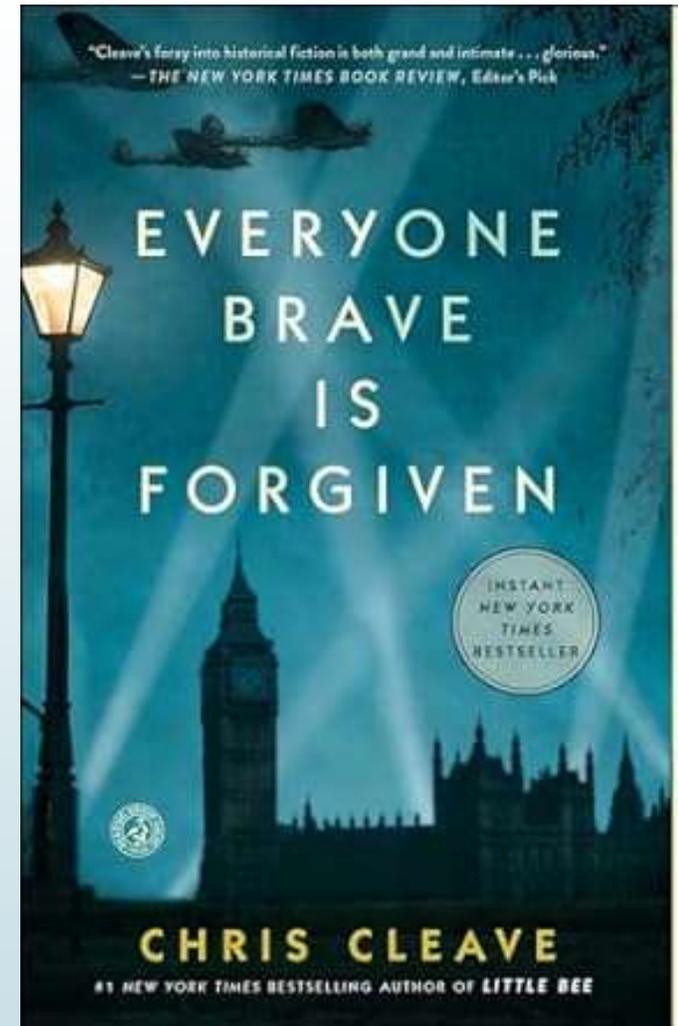
The War Office had given no further details, and this was a good sign. They would make her a liaison, or an attaché to a general's staff. All the speaking parts went to girls of good family. It was even rumored that they needed spies, which appealed most of all since one might be oneself twice over.



(They give her an address and tell her to report. She thinks she'll be a spy. When she gives the cabbie the address, he says it's a school.)

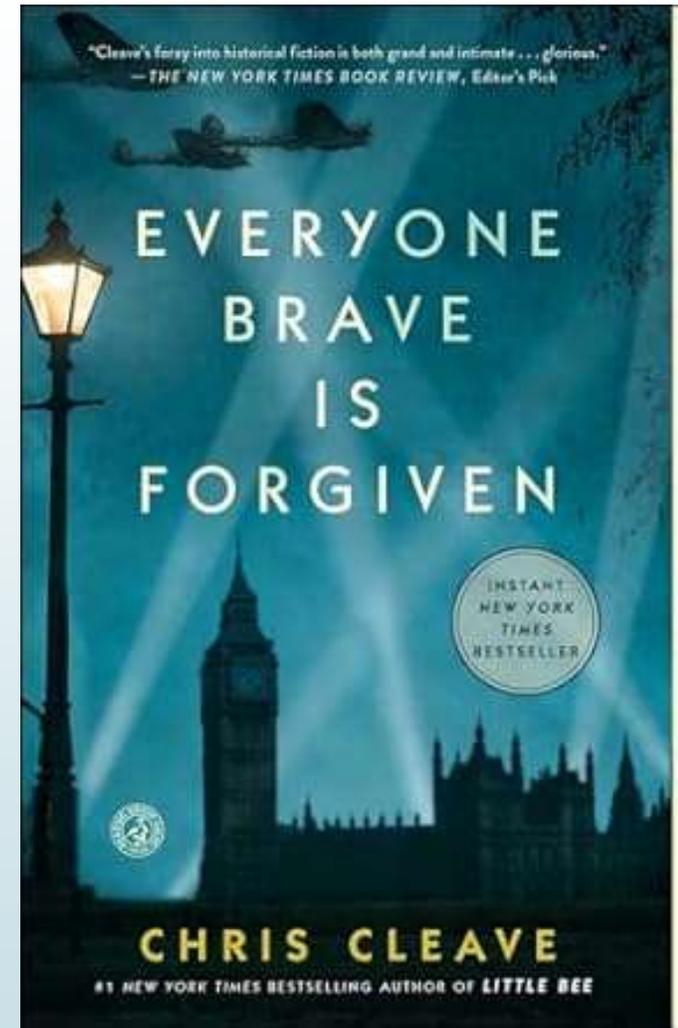
Mary opened her mouth to argue, then stopped and tugged at her gloves. Because of course they didn't have a glittering tower, just off Horse Guards, labeled MINISTRY OF WILD INTRIGUE. Naturally they would have her report somewhere innocuous.

The man drove them to Hawley Street with no more haste than the delivery of one more schoolmistress would merit. Mary was careful to adopt the expression an ordinary young woman might wear—a girl for whom the taxi ride would be an unaccustomed extravagance, and for whom the prospect of work as a schoolteacher would seem a thrill.



She made her face suggest the kind of sincere immersion in the present moment that she imagined dairy animals must also enjoy, or geese.

Arriving at the school, she felt observed. In character, she tipped the taxi driver a quarter of what she normally would have given him. This was her first test, after all. She put on the apologetic walk of an ordinary girl presenting for interview. As if the air resented being parted. As if the ground shrieked from the wound of each step.





Those things we considered

- ▶ What do you think of Mary? How would you describe her?
- ▶ What does the narrator think of Mary?
- ▶ How would you describe the narrative voice?
- ▶ Are we in the hands of a competent storyteller (or better)?

A dark grey arrow points to the right from the left edge of the slide. Below it, several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey sweep across the left side of the slide.

The narrator . . .

- ▶ Is not the author (at least in fiction), but may overlap
- ▶ Is a construct, an invention
- ▶ **Is a character**

. . . So let's talk about **character voices**.



Character voices

A dark grey arrow points to the right at the top left. Below it, several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey sweep across the left side of the slide.

1. Know your characters

Everything you already know about characterization is relevant to voice—their backgrounds, desires, challenges, attitudes, etc. You could even map their personality types and make sure they're complementary (or antagonistic).

- ▶ How do they talk—how do they sound—when happy, giddy, discouraged, angry, tired, ill, hurt, amorous, working?
- ▶ How do they sound when they disagree? Do they go quiet? Argue? Try to persuade? Look for common ground and try to make peace? Try to intimidate? Change the subject?
- ▶ How do they talk when they want something? Are they direct? Quiet and gentle? Manipulative? Demanding?
- ▶ They may have different voices with different people or in different contexts.
- ▶ Make them plausible but give them quirks.



2. Respect your characters

- ▶ Let them come to life, not just serve the plot
- ▶ Let them talk!
 - ▶ If they're heroes, show their faults and weaknesses too—in their voices.
 - ▶ If they're villains, show their strengths and virtues too—in their voices.
- ▶ Don't condescend. (Don't be Melvin Udall . . .)

Don't be Melvin Udall

(As Good As It Gets, 1997)

Receptionist: How do you write women so well?

Melvin Udall: I think of a man, and I take away reason and accountability.

- Sincere? Trying to be offensive?
- Is this any way to write women or anyone else?
- **This doesn't work for me.**



A dark grey arrow points to the right at the top left. Below it, several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey sweep across the left side of the slide.

3. Differentiate your characters' voices

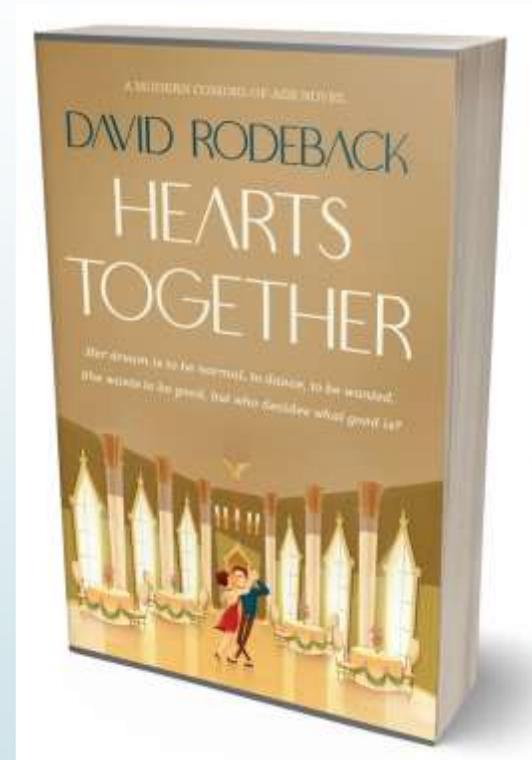
Among many possibilities:

- ▶ Distinctive words/phrases—including words they won't say
- ▶ Distinctive syntax (word order)
- ▶ Individualized approach to slang
- ▶ Big words (used correctly or not, self-consciously or not)
- ▶ Accents
- ▶ Different ways of approaching topics, figuring things out, talking things through.

I map these out in advance, sometimes—or after my first draft, before my first revision.

Troy – high school junior, raised in Texas, just moved to Utah

- Someone observes he has a very slight drawl, but I never portray it.
- Says “sir” and “ma’am” a lot when talking with adults
- Tends to drop the first person pronoun when he talks:
 - *“Came to see how you're doing.”*
 - *“Didn't ask,” he said. “Like to learn about people firsthand.”*





Jenny – high school sophomore, raised in suburban Utah

- ▶ Better English than most (parents are writer and English professor)
- ▶ Rarely drops the pronouns Troy drops
- ▶ A syntactic quirk:
 - ▶ “*When they were done, I believed them. **Which** I guess was mostly the point.*”
 - ▶ (Not: . . . I believed them, which I guess was mostly the point.)
 - ▶ “*By the end he was smiling a little. **Which** made one of us.*”
 - ▶ (Not: . . . He was smiling a little. That made one of us.)
 - ▶ “***Which** was too perfect, but at least he was a boy, and he was sitting and talking with me.*”
 - ▶ (Not: That was too perfect . . .)”



They start to rub off

People who spend a lot of time together begin to adopt some of each other's quirks (in speech and otherwise).

[Jenny:] We hadn't prepared for this one, but I thought I could handle it. "Sir," I said, sounding like Troy, "maybe you could leave that question open for a while, and decide later whether she's earned it?"

- ▶ Don't overdo it, and don't do it too soon.
- ▶ You can have some fun with it.

4. Use slang and accents like seasoning, not the pile of pastrami in your Crown Burger

- ▶ You just need the flavor, not a linguistically accurate transcription.
- ▶ Don't make it hard to read.
- ▶ Example: Russian accent

American detective and Russian émigré in NYC:

"Why did your daughter come to New York?" asked Detective Poulson.

"To be student," said Nikolai.

"To be a student where?"

"At City College of New York." He pronounced *city* like *see tee* and *New* like *Nyoo*. His *o*'s were deep and rich. "Now she missing. Is missing." It came out *eez meesing*. "You will help to find her?"

"We'll do everything we can."

"*Spasibo*," he rumbled. "Thank you."



Exercise



Put three different POV characters (separately) in the same situation. **Write just a few lines of the beginning of each conversation.** It doesn't have to be all dialogue; add some narrative if you want. Use your imagination and define your character beyond these instructions. Use a first-person or close third-person narrator, as you wish.

Situation: The character bought something at the store (you decide what), got it home and opened the box, and it was broken. The objective is to exchange it. The other person in the scene is the **clerk** at the returns counter, who begins by asking, "How may I help you?"

The POV characters:

- Conversation 1: Customer is direct and plain-spoken, sometimes to a fault, struggles to be kind/diplomatic.
- Conversation 2: Customer is timid, normally prefers not to speak at all.
- Conversation 3: Customer is friendly and loquacious, but tends to beat around the bush.

In your toolbox are:

- What the characters say (including the narrator)
- What the POV character doesn't say
- How the POV character acts
- How the POV character feels



5. Use internal and external character voices



I often write . . .

First-person POV dialogue involving **two characters**, where there are **three or more voices**.

1. What the POV character says (**external** voice)
2. What the other character says (**external** voice)
3. What the POV character thinks but does not say (**internal** voice; in first person, this is a narrative voice)

We can't report the other character's internal voice without slipping into omniscience or changing POV—but there are other ways.



From my novel *Jenny & Troy*

[Troy:] “Are there warning signs before it happens? Before a seizure?”

I shook my head. “Not that we’ve found. No triggers either, unless you count skipping my meds, which I never do.”

“What else would they be? Flashing lights or something?”

“For some people. Or stress, lack of sleep, low blood sugar, something I ate,” I **said**. That time of the month, **I didn’t say**. “It’s different for everybody, and for me we just don’t know.”



[He said he saw her at a concert and thought she was pretty.]

Question: How many internal voices/viewpoints are in this excerpt?

“You really thought I was ... ?”

“Still do.”

He still looked and sounded serious, but I tried to turn my biggest reason for doubting him into a wry joke. “It couldn’t have been my hourglass figure. I was wearing a choir robe.”

I didn’t have an hourglass figure, and Regular Jenny was beside herself that Bold Jenny would mention my figure at all.

“Saw your face and your hair,” he said. “Watched you sing. Saw you smile. . . . That was all I needed to see.”

Be bold, Jenny.

“Seeing me up close tonight hasn’t changed your mind?” Seeing me without the choir robe, **I thought but didn’t say.**

Do I need to trust my reader more here?

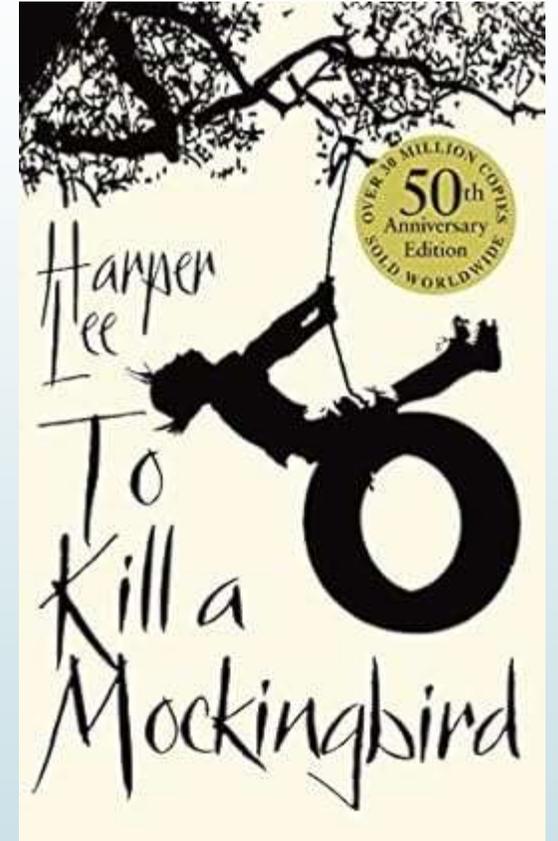


Case study from a classic:
1 character, 3 voices

(from Chapter 1)

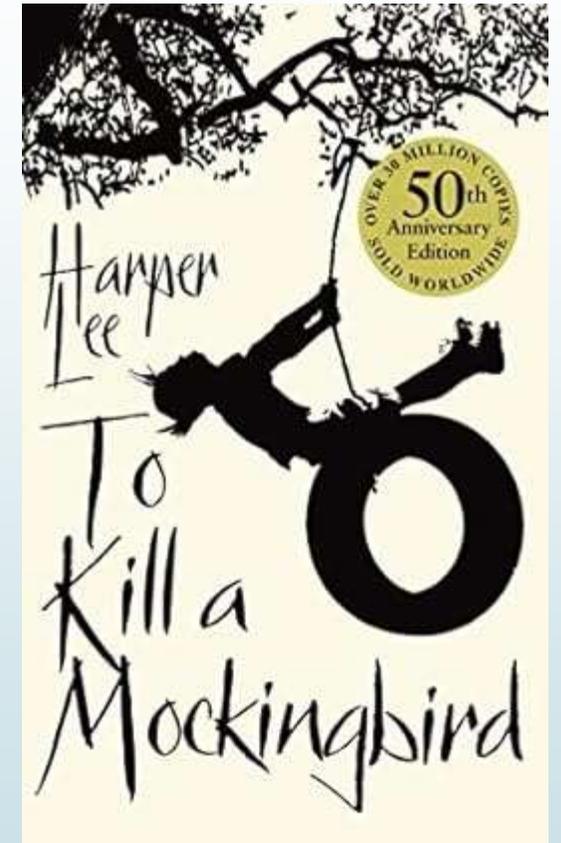
NARRATING THE BACK STORY

Atticus' office in the courthouse contained little more than a hat rack, a spittoon, a checkerboard and an unsullied Code of Alabama. His first two clients were the last two persons hanged in the Maycomb County jail. Atticus had urged them to accept the state's generosity in allowing them to plead Guilty to second-degree murder and escape with their lives, but they were Haverfords, in Maycomb County a name synonymous with jackass.



NARRATING THE MOMENT

Early one morning as we were beginning our day's play in the back yard, Jem and I heard something next door in Miss Rachel Haverford's collard patch. We went to the wire fence to see if there was a puppy—Miss Rachel's rat terrier was expecting—instead we found someone sitting looking at us. Sitting down, he wasn't much higher than the collards. We stared at him until he spoke.



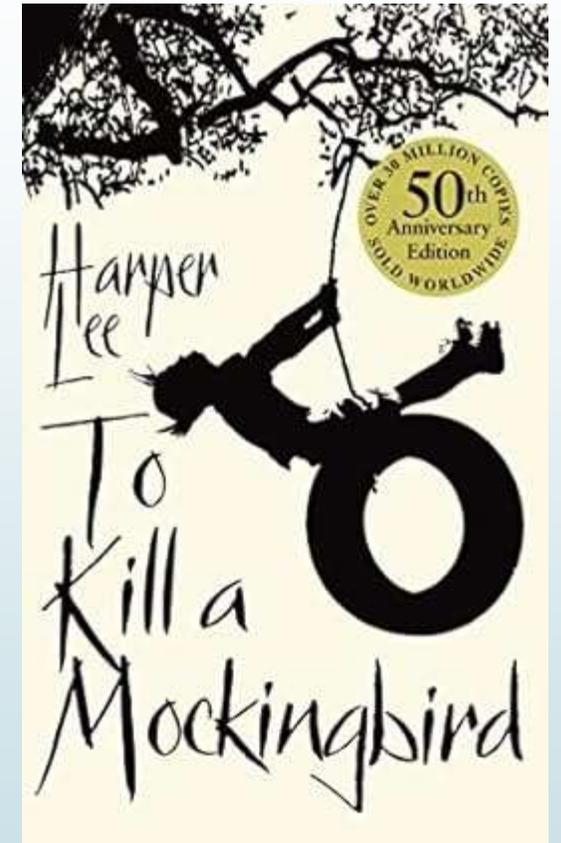
SPEECH (*Scout is almost six.*)

After making me read most of *My First Reader* and the stock-market quotations from *The Mobile Register* aloud, she discovered that I was literate and looked at me with more than faint distaste. Miss Caroline told me to tell my father not to teach me any more, it would interfere with my reading.

“Teach me?” I said in surprise. “He hasn’t taught me anything, Miss Caroline. Atticus ain’t got time to teach me anything,” I added, when Miss Caroline smiled and shook her head. “Why, he’s so tired at night he just sits in the living room and reads.”

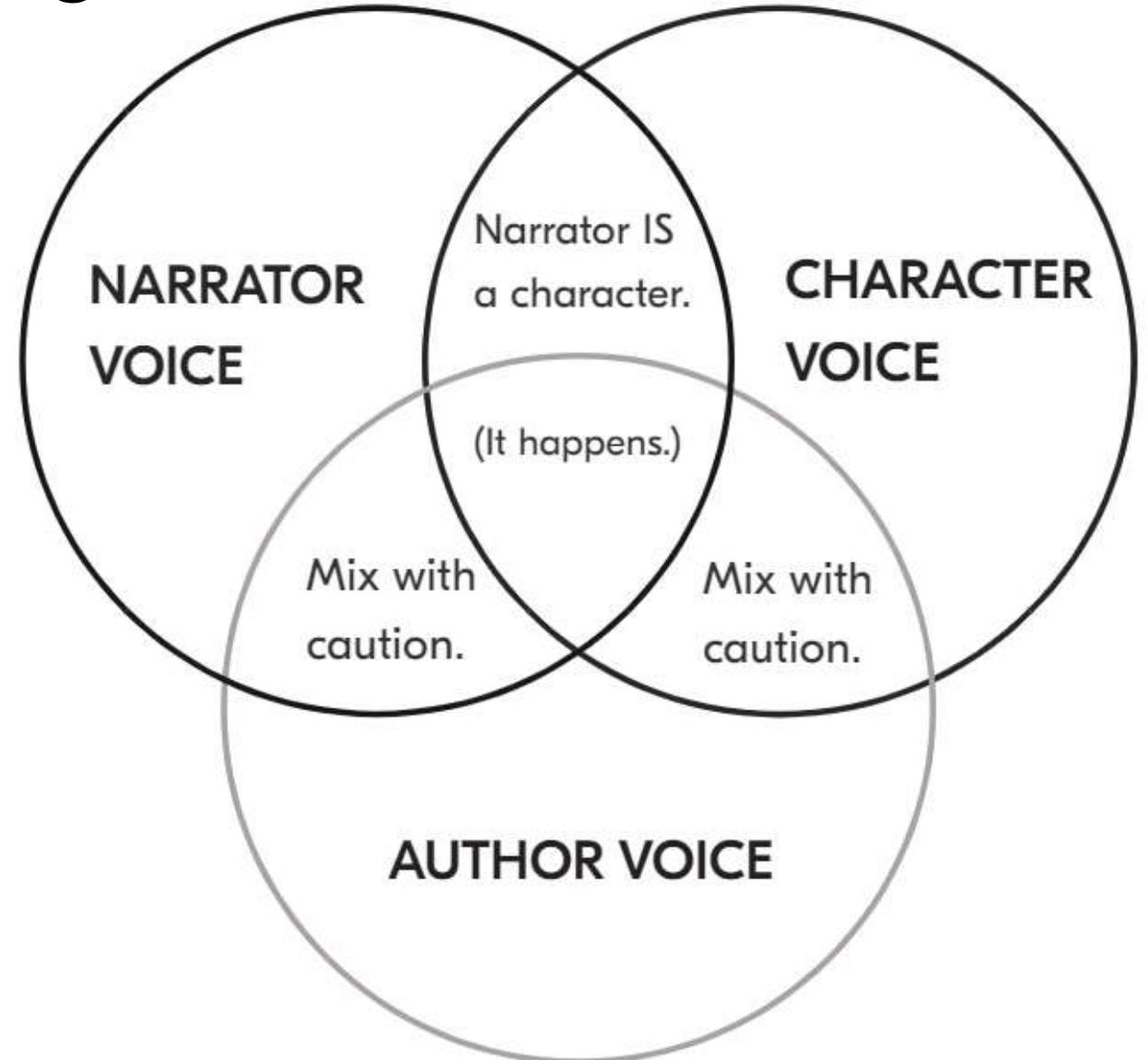
“If he didn’t teach you, who did?” Miss Caroline asked good-naturedly. “Somebody did. You weren’t born reading *The Mobile Register*.”

“Jem says I was. He read in a book where I was a Bullfinch instead of a Finch. Jem says my name’s really Jean Louise Bullfinch, that I got swapped when I was born and I’m really a—”



The overlapping voices

- ▶ **Authorial** voice
- ▶ **Narrative** voice
- ▶ **Character** voices





Sorting the voices

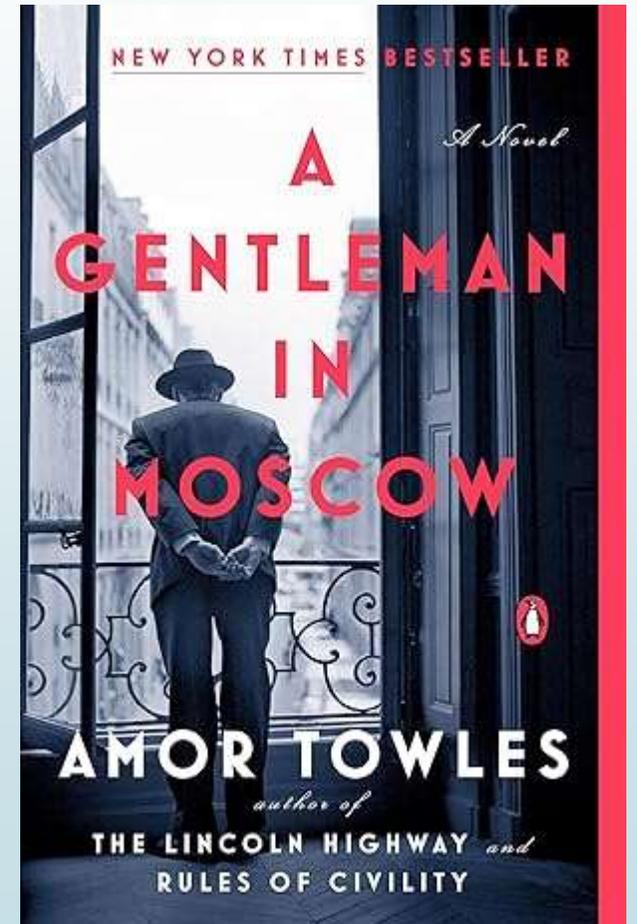
It's easier in poetry and nonfiction. We can listen for the author's voice in fiction too, but (again) it may take more than one tale to discern between author and narrator.

Intentions may help.

- What is each character's intention in this scene?
- What is the narrator's intention?
- What is the author's intention?

A scene (or two?) from *A Gentleman in Moscow*

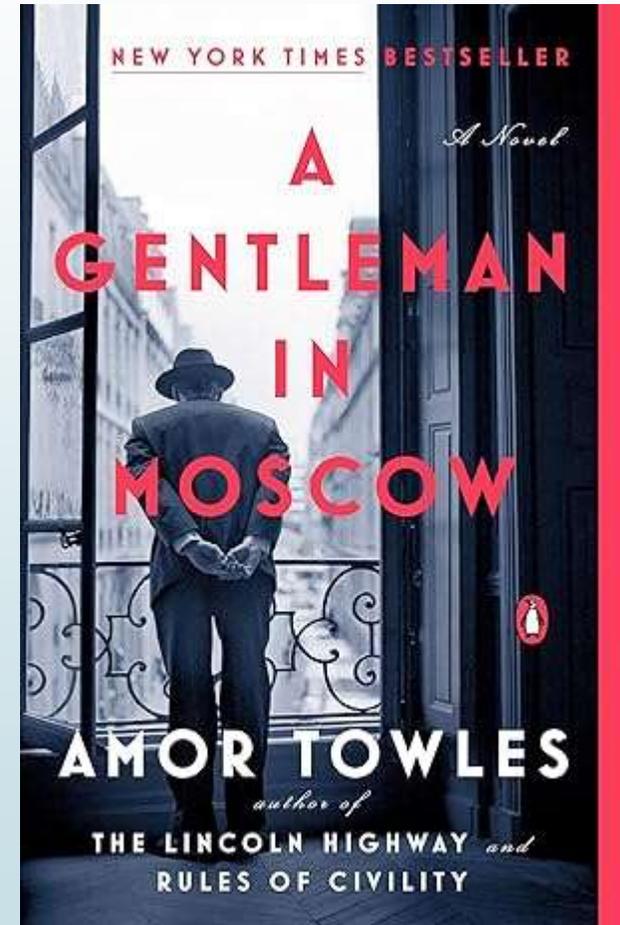
- ▶ What is each character's intention in this scene?
- ▶ What is the narrator's intention?
- ▶ What is the author's intention? What does the author intend to say? What does the author intend readers to feel?
- ▶ And how are their intentions connected to their voices?



It's 1922 in revolutionary Moscow

Characters:

- **Count Alexander Ilyich Rostov**—an aristocrat, a poet, sentenced to house arrest in the elegant Hotel Metropol instead of being executed, because he had a friend in high places in the new regime.
- **Andrey**—the excellent maître d' in the Boyarsky, the Metropol's finest restaurant, where the Count habitually dines.
- **The Bishop**—an inadequate waiter at the hotel's Piazza (decidedly less exalted than the Boyarsky), a Bolshevik and a primary antagonist of the Count. In this scene, he's been newly promoted to waiter in the Boyarsky, thanks to influential friends. The Count thinks his appearance resembles a bishop on a chess board.
- **Helena** is the Count's beloved sister, who died at age 20 of scarlet fever (before the Revolution).



A dark grey arrow points to the right at the top left. Below it, several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey sweep across the left side of the slide.

(at the Boyarsky)

“Of course,” said the Bishop. “And how will you be having the osso buco?”

The Count almost betrayed his amazement. *How will I be having it? Does he expect me to dictate the temperature of a piece of stewed meat?*

“As the chef prepares it,” replied the Count magnanimously.

“Of course. And will you be having wine?”

“Absolutely. A bottle of the San Lorenzo Barolo, 1912.”

“Will you be having the red or the white?”

“A Barolo,” the Count explained as helpfully as he could, “is a full-bodied red from northern Italy. As such, it is the perfect accompaniment to the osso buco of Milan.”

“So then, you will be having the red.”



The Count studied the Bishop for a moment. The fellow gives no evidence of being deaf, he reflected; and his accent would suggest that Russian is his native tongue. So surely, by now, he should have been on his way to the kitchen? But as the Countess Rostova liked to remark: If patience wasn't so easily tested, then it would hardly be a virtue. . . .

“Yes,” said the Count after counting to five. “The Barolo is a red.”

The Bishop continued to stand there with his pencil poised over his pad. “I apologize,” he said unapologetically, “if I am not being clear. But for your selection of a wine tonight, there are only two options: white and red.”

The two men stared at each other. “Perhaps you could ask Andrey to stop by for a moment.”

“Of course,” said the Bishop, backing away with an ecclesiastical bow.

. . .

(What is the Bishop's intention here? What intentions are in the Count's internal and external voices?)



(to the wine cellar)

If such a thing could be imagined, Andrey's expression grew even more solemn. "Perhaps you should come with me. . . ."

Having followed Andrey across the dining room, through the kitchen, and down a long, winding stair, the Count found himself in . . . the wine cellar of the Metropol.

With its archways of brick and its cool, dark climate, the Metropol's wine cellar recalled the somber beauty of a catacomb. Only, instead of sarcophagi bearing the likenesses of saints, receding into the far reaches of the chamber were rows of racks laden with bottles of wine. Here was assembled a staggering collection of Cabernets and Chardonnays, Rieslings and Syrahs, ports and Madeiras—a century of vintages from across the continent of Europe.

All told, there were almost ten thousand cases. More than a hundred thousand bottles. And every one of them without a label.

"What has happened!" gasped the Count.



Andrey nodded in grim acknowledgment.

“A complaint was filed with comrade Teodorov, the Commissar of Food, claiming that the existence of our wine list runs counter to the ideals of the Revolution. That it is a monument to the privilege of the nobility, the effeteness of the intelligentsia, and the predatory pricing of speculators.”

“But that’s preposterous.”

For the second time in an hour, the unshrugging Andrey shrugged.

“A meeting was held, a vote was taken, an order was handed down. . . . Henceforth, the Boyarsky shall sell only red and white wine with every bottle at a single price.”

With a hand that was never meant to serve such a purpose, Andrey gestured to the corner, where beside five barrels of water a confusion of labels lay on the floor. “It took ten men ten days to complete the task,” he said sadly.

...

(Can we way anything about the narrator’s intention here, in connection with the narrative voice?)

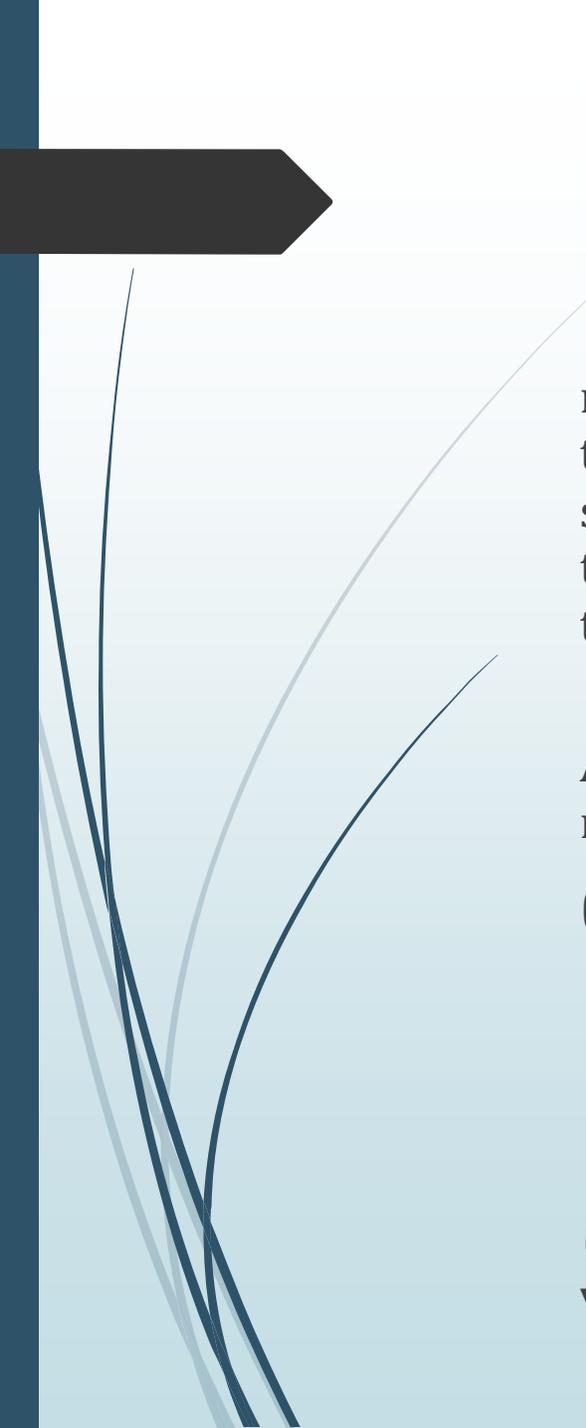


[The Count picks up a random bottle, reflects at length on the uniqueness of each vintage, “the ultimate distillation of time and place, a poetic expression of individuality itself.”]

But looking at the bottle in his hand, the Count was struck by the realization that, in fact, it was all behind him. Because the Bolsheviks, who were so intent upon recasting the future from a mold of their own making, would not rest until every last vestige of his Russia had been uprooted, shattered, or erased.

Returning the bottle to its slot, the Count went to join Andrey at the foot of the stairs. But as he passed among the shelves, it occurred to him that it was almost all behind him. For he had one last duty to attend to.

“Just a moment, Andrey.”



Starting at the end of the cellar, the Count began weaving back and forth through the rows systematically, scanning the racks from top to bottom, until Andrey must have thought he'd lost his reason. But in the sixth row he came to a stop. Reaching down to a shelf at the height of his knee, the Count carefully took a bottle from among the thousands. Holding it up with a wistful smile, he ran his thumb over the insignia of the two crossed keys that was embossed on the glass.

On the twenty-second of June 1926—the tenth anniversary of Helena's death—Count Alexander Ilyich Rostov would drink to his sister's memory. Then he would shed this mortal coil, once and for all.

(end of chapter)

(Can we say anything of the author's intentions here? What is the authorial voice saying?)



One guy's thought(s)

The Revolution has applied great force to making everyone the same, and now it has come for the wine. Thousands of unique varieties and vintages are reduced to two: red and white.

But:

- Removing the labels didn't make all the wines the same; it just made them all look the same.
- The Count knows wines so well that he's able to find a particular wine, even among the thousands of bottles of superficial sameness, by something other than the label.
- With that last vestige of individuality in a wine, he will drink to his sister on a certain date, then end his life, because everything, all that was his life, all that was Russia, is gone.
- (We're only 1/3 of the way through the novel; that's a hint.) If the uniqueness of that wine can survive the Revolution's enforced sameness (the Count isn't thinking this), maybe (thinks the reader) something of Russia can survive the comprehensive violence of the revolution, something of humanity, and the Count with it.

I think the authorial voice is speaking to us of hope on several planes.



One more example

... If there's time ...

Prologue has a narrator, then four character voices telling a story, each picking up where the other leaves off. (Amazon: can read the whole prologue as a sample, or listen to about half of it in the audio sample.)

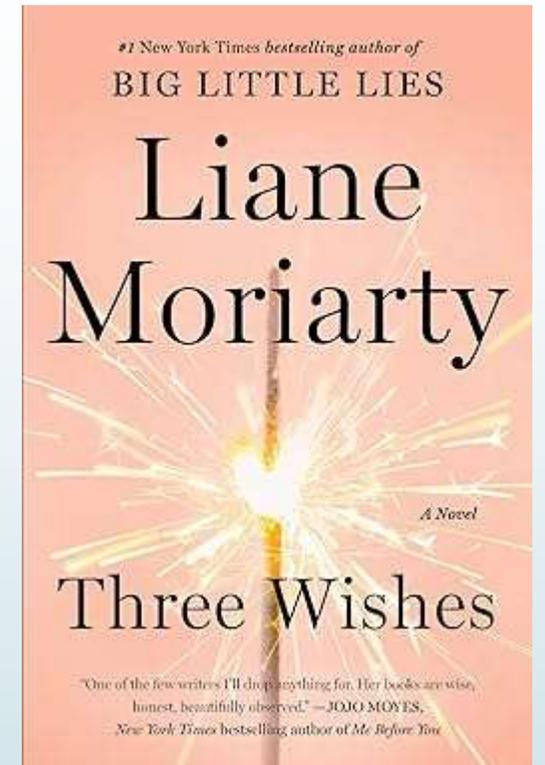
E-mail exchange in Chapter 1

(three triplets, sisters, age 33 – Lyn, Cat, and Gemma)

To: Lyn; Cat
From: Gemma
Subject: Cat

LYN! WARNING, WARNING! DANGER, DANGER! I just spoke to Cat and she is in a VERY, VERY bad mood. I would not recommend ringing her about minding Maddie for another twenty-four hours at least.

Love, Gemma



To: Gemma
From: Cat
Subject: ME

Warning, warning, if you're going to send e-mails about my bad mood at least make sure I don't get them. That could really put me in a bad mood.

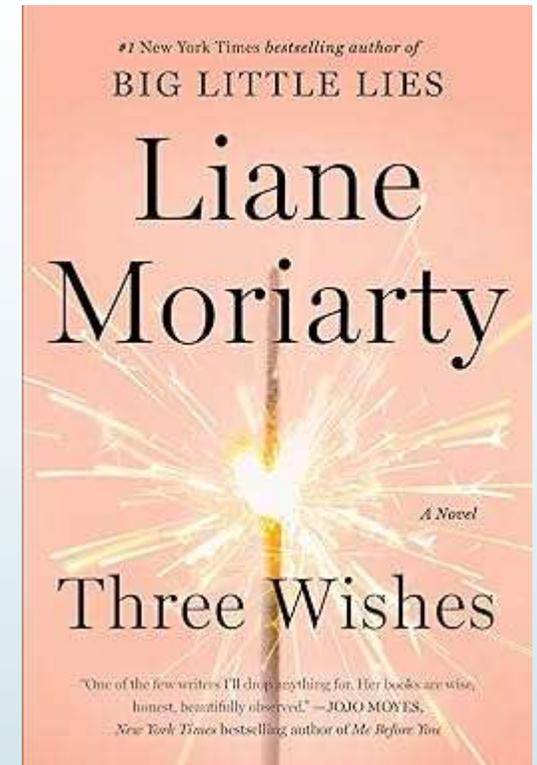
To: Gemma
From: Lyn
Subject: Cat

G. Need to be careful about hitting "reply all" instead of "reply to author" on old e-mails. Set up address book!! No doubt Cat v. impressed. Kara minding Maddie so no problem. L.

To: Lyn; Cat
From: Gemma
Subject: Kara

Dear Lyn,

I don't know how to set up an address book but thank you for the thought. I don't mean to alarm you but have you heard of SHAKING BABY SYNDROME? I think leaving Maddie with Kara could be very dangerous. Once I saw her shaking a box of corn-flakes FURIOUSLY. She is a teenager and teenagers have problems with their hormones that cause them to be just a little insane. Can't you ask Cat, once she has finished her bad mood? Or else I could cancel my date with the luscious locksmith. I am prepared to do that to save Maddie's life. Let me know. Love, Gemma





TL;DR

- ▶ Don't worry about your authorial voice. It's you in your stories. Just be yourself.
- ▶ The narrator is a character.
- ▶ Don't condescend to your characters.
- ▶ The differences between your characters' internal and external voices can do a lot of work for your plot, themes, and characterization, not to mention humor and emotion.

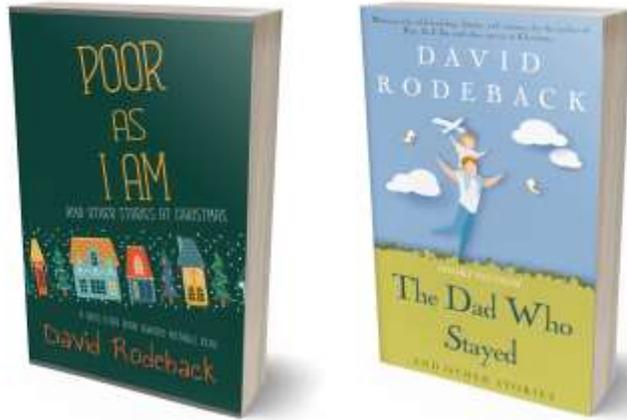


Q&A ASK ME **ANYTHING**



Thank you!

Where to find me and my books

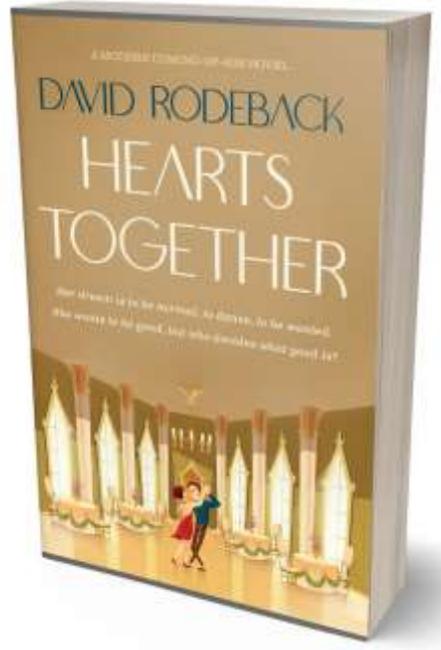


E-mail: author@davidrodeback.com

Facebook: [authorDavidRodeback](https://www.facebook.com/authorDavidRodeback)

Slides: davidrodeback.com/wordcraft

Newsletter: Sign up at davidrodeback.com



60EastPress.com
(my press imprint)

books2read.com/david-rodeback/
(all the places to buy them online)



