

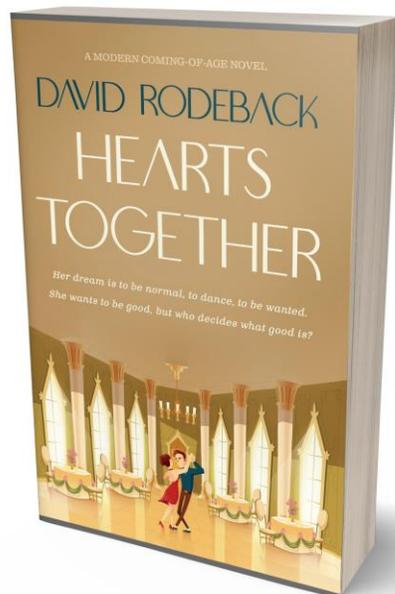
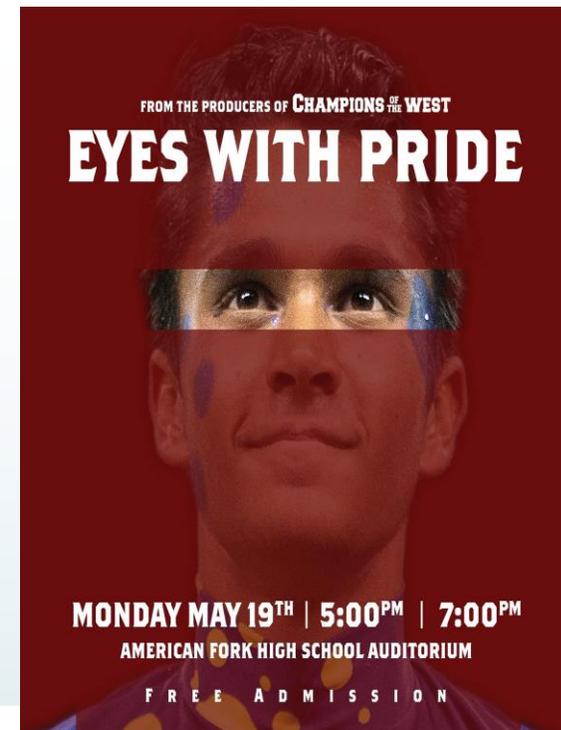
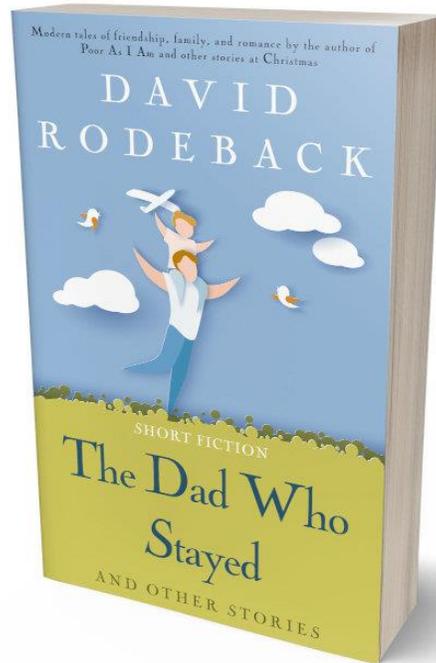
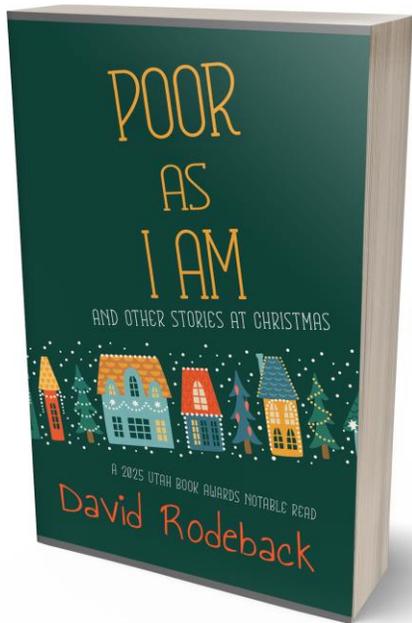


Writing Life into Your Dialogue

David Rodeback

March 2026—EMAA Writing Conference—“Unleash Your Voice”

- 
- 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



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OPINION

OPINION: This writer and that marching band



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

OPINION

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

Published 7 months ago on January 12, 2025

OPINION

COLUMN: "The Lusty Month of May"



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



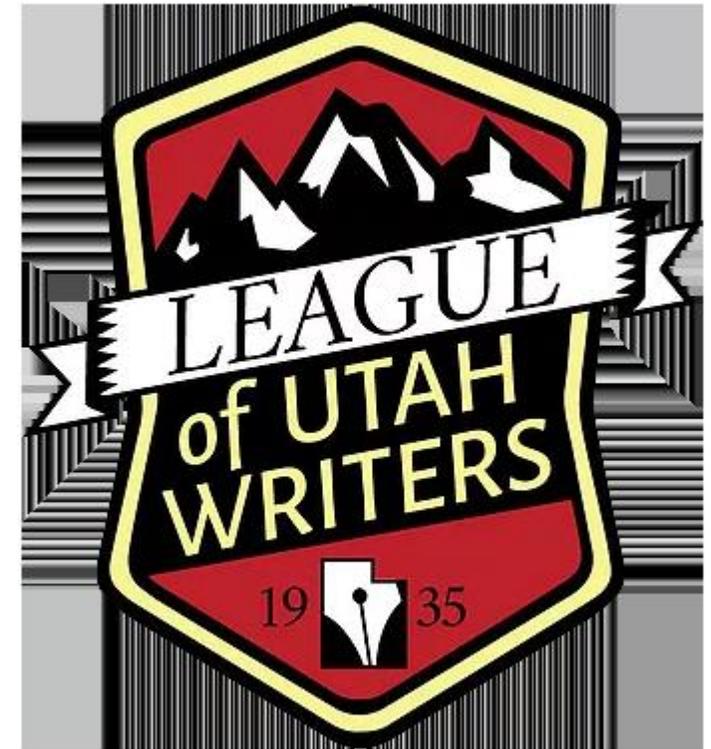
“ Blessed are they
who see beautiful things in
humble places
where other people
see nothing. ”

— *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

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We'll do this in steps, using and abusing actual published dialogue

- ▶ Punctuation
- ▶ Dialogue tags
- ▶ Fewer dialogue tags
- ▶ More punctuation
- ▶ Dialogue beats
- ▶ Disappearing dialogue tags and the other kind
- ▶ How humans actually talk
- ▶ Pacing, rhythm, or even music

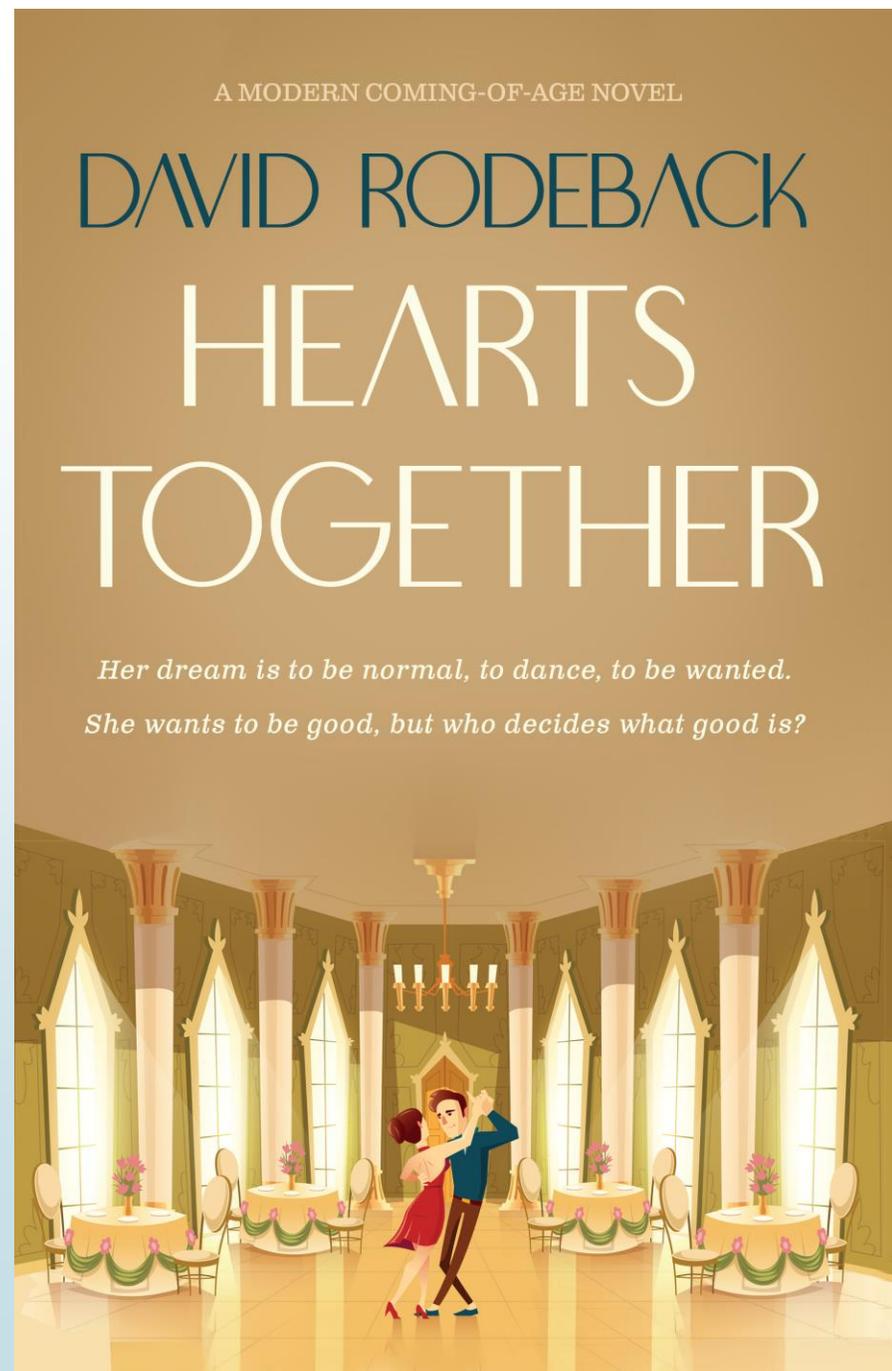


From *Hearts Together*

About the story

A MODERN COMING-OF-AGE NOVEL

Her dream is to be normal, to dance,
to be wanted. She wants to be good,
but who decides what good is?





High school sophomore Jenny Miller goes to dances but doesn't dance. Sitting is safer, in case she has a seizure. When she meets a boy who likes to sit and talk with her, an unexpected but welcome adventure begins. He even persuades her to dance with him.

It's not quite the blissful romance of her dreams. He's an athlete, and he's too popular to be interested in a girl like her—according to other girls, and she fears it might be true. Then jealousy at school turns to bullying.

Meanwhile, these two believing Latter-day Saints are breaking a few of the many dating rules they learned at church, where some are eager to judge and to assume the worst.

Amid rumors, judgments, and bullying that turns breathtakingly cruel, can they face another day? Is fitting in at school or church worth the price? Is love? And which of the many things they hear at church does God actually expect them to obey?



Does your dialogue look like this?

Chapter 45: It Seemed Like a Good Idea

The next Monday morning, Troy texted me a full hour before my alarm. I wouldn't have heard the alert, but I was half-awake for a minute from the sounds of Mom leaving early for work. Good morning, beautiful. Are you up yet? Good morning. It's too early to be up. Sorry. May I pick you up for school this morning? Early, about 7:00? <snip> We need to talk before we get there. Dad planned to drive me, but he wouldn't mind. Yes, you can. What do you want to talk about? It would be better to talk about it in person. Okay, for you I can be ready at 7:00.



Punctuation: paragraphs, quotation marks

The next Monday morning, Troy texted me a full hour before my alarm. I wouldn't have heard the alert, but I was half-awake for a minute from the sounds of Mom leaving early for work.

“Good morning, beautiful. Are you up yet?”

“Good morning. It's too early to be up.”

“I'm sorry. May I pick you up for school this morning? Early, about 7:00?
<snip> We need to talk before we get there.”

Dad planned to drive me, but he wouldn't mind. “Yes, you can. What do you want to talk about?”

“It would be better to talk about it in person.”

“Okay, for you I can be ready at 7:00.”



A full set of speech tags

“Good morning, beautiful. Are you up yet?” **Troy asked.**

“Good morning. It’s too early to be up,” **I said.**

“I’m sorry,” **he said.** “May I pick you up for school this morning? Early, about 7:00? <snip> We need to talk before we get there.”

Dad planned to drive me, but he wouldn’t mind. “Yes, you can,” **I said.** “What do you want to talk about?”

“It would be better to talk about it in person,” **I said.**

“Okay, for you I can be ready at 7:00,” **I said.**

DO WE NEED ANY OF THESE SPEECH TAGS?

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It sounds stilted, mechanical, too formal

- ▶ Humans speak in fragments.
- ▶ Our dialogue is rarely perfectly linear.
 - ▶ We jump back to repeat or amend.
 - ▶ We jump forward and leave things unsaid.
 - ▶ We leave the track entirely, only to return—or not.
 - ▶ We talk about different things at the same time.
- ▶ We speak with a natural rhythm and grace (in varying degrees).
- ▶ Pro tip: When a character must say a thing, how can she say it in an unexpected way?



De-clunk

“Good morning, beautiful. Are you up yet?”

-> “Good morning, beautiful. **Up yet?**”

“Good morning. It’s too early to be up.”

-> “Good morning. **Does it have to be morning already?**”

“I’m sorry. May I pick you up . . .”

-> “**Sorry.** May I pick you up . . .”

Dad planned to drive me, but he wouldn’t mind. “Yes, you can. What do you want to talk about?”

-> Dad planned to drive me, but he wouldn’t mind. “**Sure. What’s up?**”

“It would be better to talk about it in person.”

-> “**Better in person.**”

“Okay, for you I can be ready at 7:00.”

-> “For you I can **do** 7:00.”



What the book says

The next Monday morning, Troy texted me a full hour before my alarm. I wouldn't have heard the alert, but I was half-awake for a minute from the sounds of Mom leaving early for work.

“Good morning, beautiful. Up yet?”

“Good morning. Does it have to be morning already?”

“Sorry. May I pick you up for school this morning? Early, about 7:00? <snip> We need to talk before we get there.”

Dad planned to drive me, but he wouldn't mind. “Sure. What's up?”

“Better in person.”

“For you I can do 7:00.”



Often a dialogue beat beats a dialogue tag

<snip>

When Troy arrived, I collected a hug and kiss before he opened the car doors for Zeus and me. My week was off to an unusually good start.

I noticed Troy's frown as we backed out of the driveway. His eyes looked stricken. Had I only imagined him smiling a moment earlier? The instant he was done shifting gears, **I took his hand.** "What's wrong?"

He kept his eyes on the road. "Need to tell you what I did. You're going to hate me."

My head and stomach were instantly in turmoil. **I tried to speak calmly.** "I can't imagine hating you. What's wrong?"

I waited half an eternity, or at least a few seconds. **When he spoke, his voice was higher-pitched.** "I screwed up. Big time."

Dialogue tag vs. dialogue beat

(Punctuate them differently.)

Subject – verb – direct object

- ▶ I'm reading your book.
 - ▶ Subject: I
 - ▶ Verb: am reading
 - ▶ Direct object: your book

With a dialogue tag, **the speech is the direct object of the verb in the dialogue tag.**

She said, <direct object>.

She said, "I love you."

<Direct object>, she said.

"I love you," she said.



Dialogue tag vs. dialogue beat

(Punctuate them differently.)

If the speech is not the direct object of the verb tag, it's a beat, not a tag. Punctuate accordingly. (Also, verb is some sort of communication.)

NOT: "I know you love me," I grinned.

CORRECT: "I know you love me." I grinned.

BEAT OR TAG?

I squeezed her hand. "I know you love me."

"I know you love me," I whispered.

"I know you love me." I yawned.

"I know you love me," I yawned.



Dialogue tag vs. dialogue beat

(Punctuate them differently.)

Use dialogue tags for clarity, emotion, and pacing/rhythm/music.

Use dialogue beats for clarity, emotion, pacing/rhythm/music, action.





Pro tip: paragraph can help even when the speaker doesn't change

(Often for clarity, but here for rhythm/ pacing of conversation.)

I waited half an eternity, or at least a few seconds. When he spoke, his voice was higher-pitched. "I screwed up. Big time."

I couldn't get my head around the thought that he'd done something really bad. "What happened?"

He shook his head slowly, his eyes still on the road. I tried to imagine possible boyfriend-related horrors, but I couldn't think clearly.

"Saw Maddi in the foyer after church yesterday. . . ."



Pro tip: Use punctuation, contractions, and omissions to condense and fragment speech

BEFORE:

"I saw Maddi in the foyer after church yesterday. Her minions were not with her. She was coming out of a missionary farewell in the sacrament meeting after ours. I thought I would try to be friendly and ask her to stop being mean to you. I should have known better. That girl is messed up."

AFTER:

"Saw Maddi in the foyer after church yesterday. Without her minions. She was coming out of a missionary farewell in the sacrament meeting after ours. Thought I'd try to be friendly and ask her to stop being mean to you. Should've known better. That girl's messed up."



Pro tip: Use punctuation, contractions, and omissions to condense and fragment speech and control rhythm/pacing

BEFORE:

“I saw Maddi in the foyer after church yesterday. Her minions were not with her. She was coming out of a missionary farewell in the sacrament meeting after ours. I thought I would try to be friendly and ask her to stop being mean to you. I should have known better. That girl is messed up.”

AFTER:

“Saw Maddi in the foyer after church yesterday. Without her minions. She was coming out of a missionary farewell in the sacrament meeting after ours. Thought I’d try to be friendly and ask her to stop being mean to you. Should’ve known better. That girl’s messed up.”

“Thank you for trying,” I said. “I don’t hate you yet.” I was trying to be cheerful.



Where to put the dialogue tag

(again, clarity and rhythm)

I said, “Thank you for trying. I don’t hate you yet.”

“Thank you for trying. I don’t hate you yet,” **I said.**

“Thank you for trying,” **I said.** “I don’t hate you yet.”



Interlude: the rhythms of Aaron Sorkin

*The West Wing, The Newsroom, Sports Night, The Social Network,
Moneyball*



We'll watch them twice

Try to notice rhythm and detours.

Aaron Sorkin:

“Anytime you get two people in a room who disagree about anything, the time of day, there is a scene to be written. That’s what I look for.”

Jamie Frevele, analyzing Aaron Sorkin’s dialogue:

“As people, we don't always say what we mean. . . . Verbal human beings do vent on occasion, and sometimes we do have it out in an argument or with a therapist. But more often than not, we lie. We cover. We say different words than what we're actually trying to say, or what we're trying to avoid saying.”

“What are they trying not to say, and what do they say instead? What do they say, but what do they mean?”



The West Wing, Toby recruits C.J. to join the first Bartlet presidential campaign

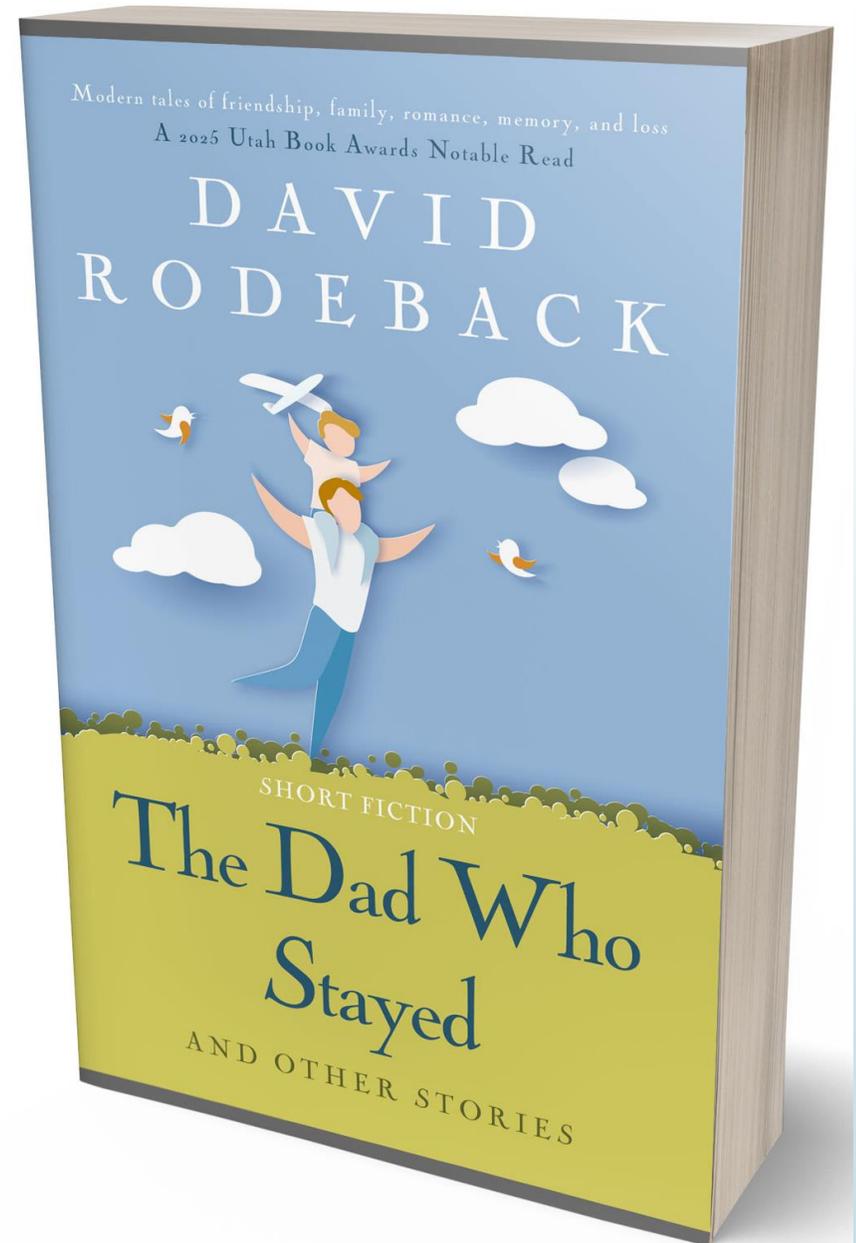


The West Wing,
election
night,
senior
White
House
staff
awaiting
results



From “Missed You”

First few sections from one of two POVs



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Watch for . . .

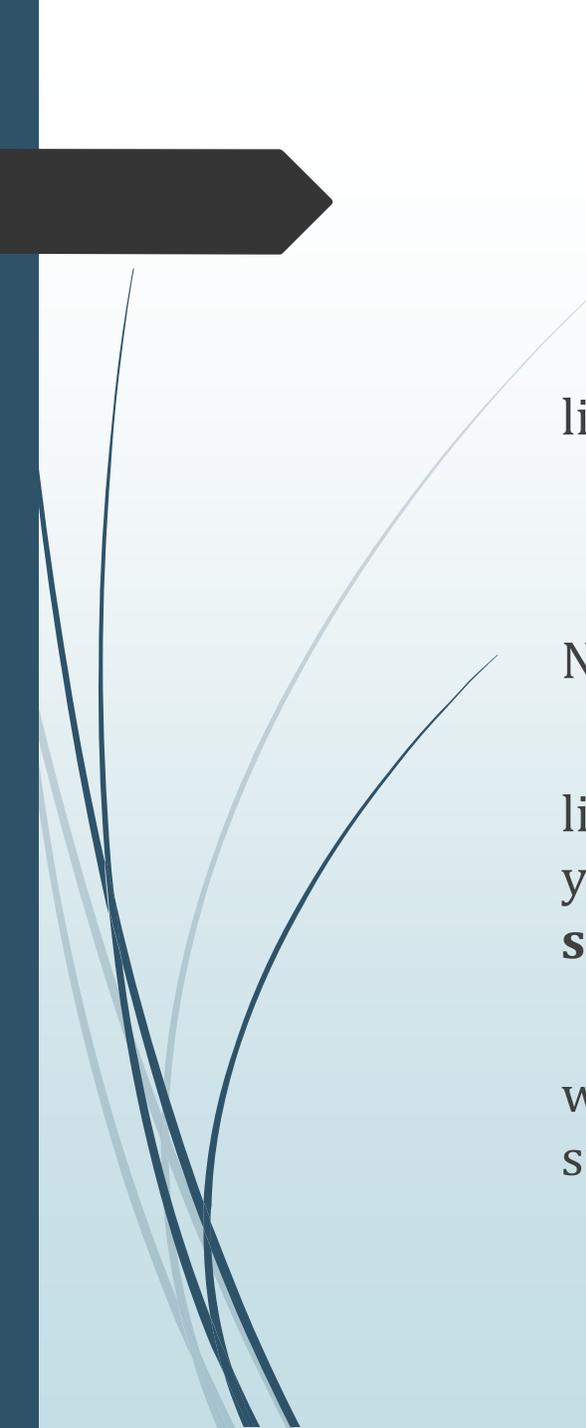
- ▶ Dialogue tags (disappearing and other)
- ▶ Dialogue beats
- ▶ Compression/dropped words
- ▶ People speak with a sort of rhythm most of them can't write with, or give a prepared speech with.
- ▶ Increasing effects of alcohol. (similar: exhaustion, distraction)
 - ▶ Unusual syntax (inverted, fragmented)
 - ▶ Greater effort to amend/explain/clarify.
 - ▶ Philosophizing



Get into it (the beginning)

Mindy and her dearest friend, Diana, asked the server to recommend a local wine to accompany the curry at the posh new restaurant near the waterfront. He had them taste a 2019 Bainbridge Island Siegerrebe, “one of the Puget Sound’s best and most distinctive offerings.” They found it spicy, fragrant, and irresistible. Ordinarily they’d each have ordered a glass, but it was Friday evening, so they ordered the bottle.

Both women found the first glass relaxing. After that, the effects diverged. The second glass turned Diana into a philosopher; some things hadn’t changed since they were college roommates. Mindy’s second glass depressed her; that hadn’t changed either. Her cocktail at the bar before they were seated probably hadn’t helped. Diana had wisely sipped a ginger ale.



“I’ve been thinking,” Diana **declared**. “Men cannot possibly be the meaning of life. If they were, dumping ours would not have felt so liberating.”

“I still want one,” Mindy **griped**.

“Me too,” **said** Diana. “A better one. Ours were not the pinnacle, the Space Needle, the Washington Monument of upright, modern manhood.”

“I didn’t divorce Sam to feel liberated,” Mindy **said**. “It was because he felt so liberated. He must have shared his pinnacle with a dozen other women in the four years we were married. I was oblivious for the first three and a half.” **She suppressed a hiccup**. “Years, not women.”

Diana half-filled both their glasses with the rest of the wine. “Men suck. And we’re out of wine, which also sucks. **Being out of it sucks**. The wine itself does not suck.”



Mindy raised her glass. “Better make it last. A tiny toast: to the infinite suckitude of greater Seattle’s men. But not all of them, **Mindy hopes with historically unwarranted optimism.**”

Diana raised hers. “To the infinitude of male suckitude. And Mindy’s undying optimism.”

They clicked their glasses together, took a sip, and **regarded each other with languid** stares.

“I’m not sure *infinitude* is a word,” Mindy said **solemnly**.

“And *suckitude* is?”

“It should be.”

“You need a man who gets you,” said Diana after a long silence. “Not just your face and smile and figure. Which is looking pretty good for our age. **Your figure. And face.**”

“So do you. And yours too.” Mindy raised her glass again. “Tiny toast: to our pretty good but tragically unappreciated figures. **And faces.**”



2

“Mindy, Mindy, Mindy, Mindy, Mindy,” Diana **said** expansively. “Who was the last man who really *got* the essential Mindy, made you happy, and didn’t ruin things eventually by being himself? Don’t say that weirdo from freshman year.”

“With the hair?” Mindy **asked**.

Not: “Do you mean the weirdo with the hair?”

“Right. He was gross. Don’t say him.”

Mindy silently reviewed her modest resume of former boyfriends, excluding her ex-husband and the weirdo with the hair.

“Well, who?” Diana **demanded**.



“Pretty far back,” Mindy **said**. “What was that boy’s name?”

“What boy?”

“Um, ninth grade.”

Diana pursed her lips. “When you lived with your mom? You overestimate my considerable powers. We didn’t meet until college, remember?”

► *Not: “When you lived with your mom? How would I know that? My powers are considerable, but I wouldn’t have met him then. You and I didn’t meet until college, remember?”*

“I know that. **Myself I was asking.**” Mindy felt **puzzled for a moment but moved on.** “He had a huge crush on me. I moved back to Dad’s and broke his heart.”

“Yours too?”

“Not really. I wanted someone more exciting. He was nice to me though. Liked me how I was. Didn’t try to change me.”



“I wonder where he is now,” Diana **mused**.

“Probably married with kids. **You know, kids like us, when we were kids.**”

“I wonder where he is now,” Diana **repeated**.

“Not happening, Di.”

“Methinks Mindy **doth protesteth** too much. Tell me anyway. I need to hear about a happy relationship.”

Mindy just stared.

“Seriously, Mins. What was it like?”

Mindy sighed. “He came to my junior high volleyball games, even though he was in high school. He was a year older, a sophomore. **He was never condes— . . . con— . . . He never looked down on me** for being in junior high, **which I was back then. In junior high.**”

“I like him already,” **said** Diana. “Tell me more.”



“He wanted to learn about volleyball,” Mindy said, “to understand my games, so he took me to high school games we could watch together. **Which I wanted to see them anyway.**”

“Get to the romance,” Diana **commanded**. “Diana needs romance.”

“We held hands a lot. **A lot a lot a lot.** He said I was pretty, but I didn’t believe him, because braces and gangly legs and stuff. He laughed at my jokes. **And listening to me talk.** He was good at that. **Talked not so much about himself.**”

► *Compare: We held hands a lot. He said I was pretty, but I didn’t believe him. I had braces and my legs were gangly, among other things.*

“You have to go back to ninth grade for a nice guy who was that nice to you?” **asked** Diana. “That’s so pathetically sad.”

“I know, right? **He kissed me once if he could ask me. No, wait.**” She spoke **more slowly.** “**Asked if he could kiss me.**”



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.**

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Differentiate your characters' voices

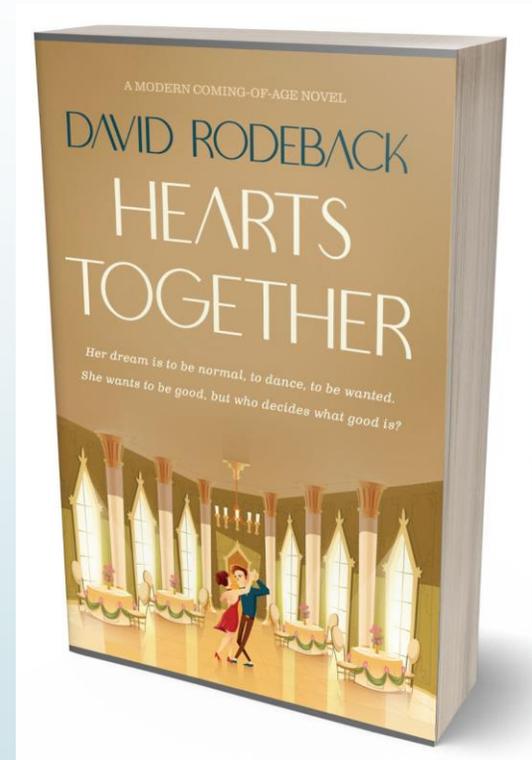
Among many possibilities:

- ▶ 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.



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?”

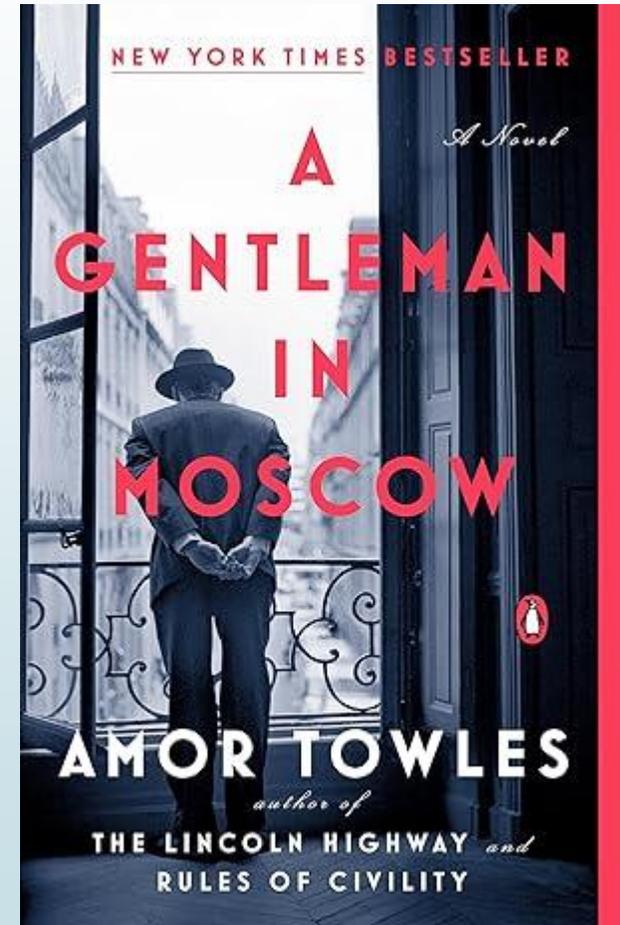
“We'll do everything we can.”

“*Spasibo*,” he rumbled. “Thank you.”

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.
- ▶ **The Bishop**—an inadequate waiter at the hotel's Piazza (decidedly less exalted than the hotel's best restaurant, the Boyarsky, where the Count always dines), 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.





(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.

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Checklist

- ▶ Use punctuation for clarity, readability, rhythm.
- ▶ Use dialogue tags sparingly—also for clarity and rhythm.
- ▶ Use dialogue beats often instead of tags—for action, clarity, rhythm.
- ▶ Signal a new focus, not just a new speaker, with paragraphing.
- ▶ Use interruption, incompleteness, misdirection, repetition, self-correction, unresponsive responses, contractions, etc., for authenticity.
- ▶ Have characters say things in unexpected ways.
- ▶ Internal and external voices can say different things.
- ▶ Differentiate character voices with accents, diction, syntax, slang, etc.—applied sparingly, like seasoning.

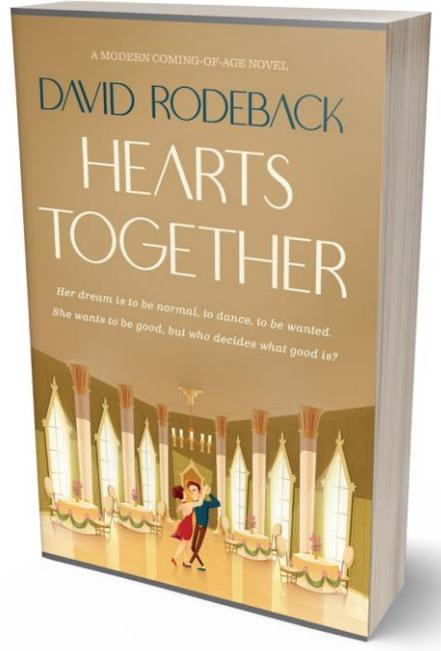
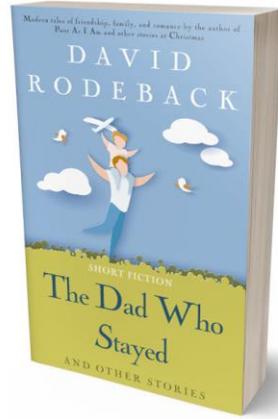
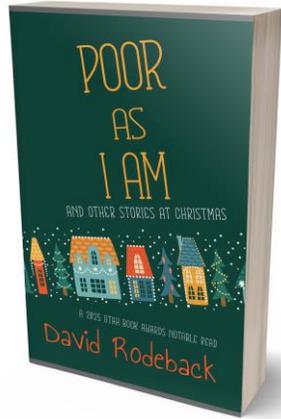


Q&A ASK ME **ANYTHING**



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“He wanted to learn about volleyball,” Mindy said, “to understand my games, so he took me to high school games we could watch together. **Which I wanted to see them anyway.**”

“Get to the romance,” Diana **commanded**. “Diana needs romance.”

“We held hands a lot. **A lot a lot a lot.** He said I was pretty, but I didn’t believe him, because braces and gangly legs and stuff. He laughed at my jokes. **And listening to me talk.** He was good at that. **Talked not so much about himself.**”

- Compare: We held hands a lot. He said I was pretty, but I didn’t believe him. I had braces and my legs were gangly, among other things.

“You have to go back to ninth grade for a nice guy who was that nice to you?” asked Diana. “That’s so pathetically sad.”

“I know, right? **He kissed me once if he could ask me. No, wait.**” She spoke more slowly. **“Asked if he could kiss me.”**

“And you said . . .”

“I said he didn’t have to ask, just do it. He said, ‘I like you, Mindy.’” She looked up at her friend. **“That was my name then. Mindy. Just like now. Mindy. He asked, not to . . . because he didn’t want to scare me away.”** Mindy sighed loudly. (tag or beat?) “It was right before Christmas. I remember he gave me a nice gift, but I don’t remember what it was.”



“And?”

▸ (sometimes we go off in other direction, intentionally or otherwise)

“I gave him a movie gift card or something.”

“Not my question.”

“What?”

“Did he kiss you?”

Mindy nodded slowly. “My first kiss. It was nice. Then I broke his heart and came back to live with Dad. He had emergency surgery, **I mean Dad**, and he needed help for a while, so I went back to Mom’s to get my stuff, then finished school here. I wrote to him. **Not Dad. The boy. A letter. After he wrote to me. Also a letter.** He wrote to me again, and I didn’t, and that was all.”

“You must have liked him less than he liked you.”

“I wanted someone more exciting. Did I say that already? **I saw him when I spent Mom with Christmas during senior year. He was home from college, and a girlfriend. We just said hi and saw when . . . when** we saw each other at church.”



“I wonder where he is now,” Diana said.

“I already said that,” Mindy said. “No, you did. Stop saying that.”

“I wonder where he is now,” Diana repeated.

“I wasn’t the same Mindy then, **even if I had the same name: Mindy.**”

“I wonder where he is now.”

“Let it die, Di.”

“I wonder . . . Okay, I get it,” she said. “What can we learn from this? Where do we find men to really get us? And adore us? And lavish us with kisses, etc.?”

“Let me know if you find mine,” Mindy said. “I’m closing my eyes for a minute.” She sat back and slipped into a haze.