



DEVELOPING A STORY

DEVELOPING YOUR SETTING

- › = time, place, climate, geography, temperament
- › Why is setting important?
- › What makes developing a setting difficult?
 - › World Building
 - › Write what you know
 - › Use your imagination
- › What makes a setting believable?
- › Can you ever describe something *too much*?

Time of Day
Historical Era
Country
Season
Dialect Customs

WRITING DIALOGUE

CHITTY-CHATTY-BANG-BANG!

- › Dialogue can be one of the most challenging parts of writing – Why?
 - › All people speak differently
 - › Writers need dialogue that moves the plot forward
 - › How do you create characters that sound different from your internal voice?
- › Your dialogue sucks! (at first... and that's ok)

How to Write Dialogue Like a Pro

Everything I say sounds all wrong.

Me too. We need a writer.

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TIP 1:

- ▶ Alfred Hitchcock: "drama is life with all the boring bits cut out."
- ▶ Cut the fluff!
 - ▶ Let the audience make inferences



"The simplest thing would be to tear it down," the man said. "The house is a shambles."
She took this news as a blood-rush to the ears: a roar of peasant ancestors with rocks in their fists, facing the evictor. But this man was a contractor. Willa had called him here and she could send him away. She waited out her panic while he stood looking at her shambles, appearing to nurse some satisfaction from his diagnosis. She picked out words.
"It's not a living thing. You don't just pronounce it dead. Anything that goes wrong with a structure can be replaced with another structure. Am I right?"
"Correct. What I am saying is that the structure needing to be replaced is all of it. I'm sorry. Your foundation is nonexistent."

-Barbara Kingsolver, *Unsheltered*

TIP 2:

- ▶ = a description of the expressions, movements, or even internal thoughts that accompany the speaker's words.
- ▶ Help illustrate what's going on in the scene
- ▶ Helps replace a long list of dialogue tags ("he said," "she said")



TIP 2: USE DESCRIPTIVE ACTION BEATS

"Tommy," I said, quite sternly. "There's mud all over your shirt."
 "So what?" he mumbled. But even as he said this, he looked down and noticed the brown specks, and only just stopped himself crying out in alarm. Then I saw the surprise register on his face that I should know about his feelings for the polo shirt.
 "It's nothing to worry about," I said, before the silence got humiliating for him. "It'll come off. If you can't get it off yourself, just take it to Miss Jody."
 He went on examining his shirt, then said grumpily, "It's nothing to do with you anyway."

-Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*

TIP 3:

- > Characters should sound distinctly "themselves"
- > Syntax and diction
- > Levels of energy and formality
- > Humor and confidence
- > Speech-related quirks



SETH
 (sheepishly)
 Ha -- Hi, MS DARLING.

AMANDA DARLING
 (sweetly)
 Hi, Seth! And how many times do I have to tell you, it's Amanda.

SETH
 (smiling with embarrassment)
 Right, ugh -- so stupid. (smiles widely) Amanda.

AMANDA DARLING
 How's your day going?

SETH
 (stutteringly)
 Oh, great! I taught a really -- awesome lesson -- and then a quiz that was -- just super, and the kids were all like -- "Dang, Mr Morgan, you really are the best teacher I've ever had" -- and it has been like, you know, any other normal day.

AMANDA DARLING
 I'm so glad to hear it!

SETH
 (staring awkwardly)
 Yeah! (said breathily)

WRITING DIALOGUE

NURSE BETHANY
So what are you working on?

DR. WILHELM BLOCK
An experiment.

NURSE BETHANY
Experiment? What kind?

DR. WILHELM BLOCK
It is a secret.

NURSE BETHANY
Oh, that is so exciting! You are so brilliant, Wilhelm -- I mean -- Doctor.

DR. WILHELM BLOCK
You must leave now. I have work to do, and this experiment requires my full attention.

NURSE BETHANY
Oh, but I want to help!

She starts leaning closer to him and drapes her arm across his shoulder.

NURSE BETHANY
You know what my favorite class in nursing school was?

She inches toward him and whispers in his ear.

NURSE BETHANY
(seductive whisper)
Organic chem.

She pulls away, but she leaves her hand resting coquettishly on his back.

NURSE BETHANY
(seductively)
You know where to find me if you want help with any -- experiments. Until later, Doctor.

WRITING DIALOGUE

MELINDA NEWTON
(taken aback)
Seth! You can't poison Ms. Darling into being attracted to you!

SETH
It's not poison! It's just a little... inspiration!

Melinda rolls her eyes dramatically and shakes her head. Dr. Block is looking intrigued but pensive.

DR. WILHELM BLOCK
Well, I do not deal in chemical compounds to excite or attract the opposite sex. My work focuses upon making behavioral modification compounds that dull the senses, or make a subject more subservient.

MELINDA NEWTON
What?

DR. WILHELM BLOCK
(ignoring her question)
Speaking of witch,

Dr. Block pulls out a small pad of paper and clicks a pen to life.

DR. WILHELM BLOCK
Have either of you noticed a change in your students of late? Hmm? Perhaps, quieter? More attentive? Less easily distracted?

WRITING DIALOGUE

So how did you go from a Hollywood set to here?

REX TILLMAN
(sounding philosophical)
The accident put it all in perspective. "Life is as tedious as a twice-told tale, vexing the ear of a drowsy man."

MELINDA NEWTON
What? (nonplussed)

REX TILLMAN
Shakespeare, dude. C'mon. (turning and slapping Seth on the chest again) Am I right?

Seth nods, uncomprehendingly.

REX TILLMAN
Life is short, which brings me back to your original query. Ladies, am I right?

SETH
Yeah.

REX TILLMAN
Look, bruh. After Hollywood, I found that the quickest way to a woman's heart was to get ripped -- but I was already ripped -- so I decided the next best way to a woman's heart is to make a profession out of staying ripped -- Hence! -- gym teacher.

Melinda chortles and rolls her eyes. Rex puts a hand on Seth's shoulder and leans into him.

REX TILLMAN
Look, bruh. You want to reach Ms. Darling's heart, you gotta be ripped enough and man enough to save her in her time of distress. Her knight in shining armor.

TIP 4:

- › You naturally speak differently to different people
 - › Word choice, tone, body language, levels
- › Exercise:
 - › Pretend your character has won the lottery. How does that character reveal the big news to their closest friend?
 - › Now pretend that you are telling that same information to a family member that you rarely speak to because they have always been mean to you.
 - › Now have your character tell the same information to their arch nemesis.



TIP 5:

- › = story elements hidden beneath the text that the reader will infer
- › Do you always tell everyone exactly how you feel in any conversation?

*"Hey, Jake. Long time no see."
"Tell me about it, Ted. The precinct isn't the same without you."
"Well, you know I had good reason for leaving."
"I do. But I also thought you might change your mind."*

TIP 6:

- › People (except teachers, preachers, and crazy people) rarely talk in lengthy monologues.
- › Insert questions, comments, or brief interludes
- › Small bits of action



TIP 7:



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Lucas steps to his back and picks up Lisa without  
her notice.  
LUCAS LEE  
Lucas Lee points his hand at the door.  
CUT  
Oh...uh...uh...  
LUCAS LEE  
Hey, the only thing keeping  
me and her apart is the one  
mistake it's gonna take to  
kick your butt.  
RUPY  
...you dated a famous guy?  
LUCAS LEE  
In 9th grade. We had drama.  
Actually, it might have been  
more. I just remember there  
being lots of drama.  
LUCAS LEE  
RUPY!!!  
Lucas Lee points at Rupa, who remains  
silent.  
RUPA  
He just followed me around. He  
was a little bit weird then.  
CUT  
He had asked if his name was  
his name!  
LUCAS LEE  
RUPY!!!  
RUPA  
It's not a big deal. I only  
dated him for a week and a
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