

Dialogue: Writing Between the Lines (Hoyt)

EXAMPLE # 1: Beats & Tags

"I once went in Westminster Abbey," Mr. Fletcher said.
"Were you lost?" Lord Iddesleigh inquired politely.
"Not at all. Mother and the sisters were on an architectural binge."
"I didn't know you had any sisters."
"I do. Three."
"Good God. Excuse me, Vicar."
"Two elder," Mr. Fletcher said chattily, "one younger."
"My felicitations."
"Thanks. Anyway, we toured the Abbey about ten years ago, now, in between St. Paul's and the Tower."
"And you but a young and impressionable lad." The viscount shook his head sorrowfully. "It's so sad when one hears about this type of debauchery at the hands of one's elders. Makes one wonder what England is coming to."

—from *The Serpent Prince* by Elizabeth Hoyt

EXAMPLE # 2: Movement

"Tiggle, why do you think gentlemen kiss ladies?" George adjusted the gauze fichu tucked into the neckline of her dress.
"There's only one reason a man kisses a woman, my lady." Tiggle had several hairpins stuck between her lips as she arranged George's hair and her words were a bit indistinct. "He wants to bed her."
"Always?" George wrinkled her nose at herself in the mirror. "I mean, might he kiss a woman just to show, I don't know, friendship or something?"
The lady's maid snorted and placed a hairpin in George's coiffure. "Not likely. Not unless he thinks bedsport a part of friendship. No, mark my words, my lady, the better half of a man's mind is taken up with how to get a woman into bed. And the rest"—Tiggle stepped back to look critically at her creation—"is probably spent on gambling and horses and such."

—from *The Leopard Prince* by Elizabeth Hoyt

EXAMPLE # 3: Internal Thought

"Who're you?" Edward asked more gruffly than he'd meant to.
The woman's mouth thinned primly, drawing his eyes to it. She had the most erotic mouth he'd ever seen on a woman. It was wide, the upper lip fuller than the lower and one corner tilted. "I am Anna Wren, my lord. What is your dog's name?"
"I don't know." He stalked into the room, taking care not to move suddenly.
"But," the woman knit her brow, "isn't it your dog?"
He glanced at the dog and was momentarily mesmerized by her elegant fingers stroking through the dog's fur.
"He follows me and sleeps by my bed." Edward shrugged. "But he has no name that I know of."
He stopped in front of the rosewood desk. She'd have to move past him in order to escape the room.
Anna Wren's brows lowered disapprovingly. "But he must have a name. How do you call him?"
"I don't, mostly."

—from *The Raven Prince* by Elizabeth Hoyt

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EXAMPLE # 4: Male vs. Female

"No," she said slowly. "That was the worst part. She was there, standing right behind him, and Orpheus saw her for just an instant before Pluto took her back."

"Poor son of a bitch." John rubbed a hand over his eyes. "But I can understand what made him turn around to check."

"Really?" Her tone was curious. "I would've thought you'd have no sympathy for Orpheus losing control."

"Yeah, but see, he couldn't hear her."

"So?"

"So, a woman's voice is the most distinctive thing about her to a man. He hears it day and night, after all."

"I detect some male chauvinism in that remark." She sounded amused.

"You shouldn't. I'm serious." And to his surprise, he was. "Women talk more than men, generally speaking. A guy gets used to his woman telling him what to do, chatting about her day, just gabbing."

"Gabbing?"

He grimaced. He knew he wasn't explaining this well. "Yeah, gabbing. Women do it all the time. Constantly. Even you. It gets to be soothing. Normal. He knows everything's all right with the world by the sound of her voice."

—from *Hot* by Julia Harper

EXAMPLE # 5: Flow

Her eyebrows snapped together. "The pea-green settee."

His mouth curved at one corner. "What?"

"You're the owner of that atrocious pea-green settee, aren't you?"

He bowed. "I confess it."

"With no trace of shame either, I see." Emeline pursed her lips in disapproval. "Are there really gilt owls carved on the legs?"

"I hadn't noticed."

"I had."

"Then I'll not argue the point."

"Humph." She faced forward again.

—from *To Taste Temptation* by Elizabeth Hoyt

EXAMPLE # 5: Underlying meaning

Lucy looked at Simon. "How does your back feel?"

Like hell. "Plucky, just plucky. I think the knife wound may've actually improved it."

She watched him for a moment. And for the life of him, even with all his years of studying women, he'd not a clue as to what she thought.

"Are you ever serious?" she asked.

"No," he said. "Not ever."

"I thought not." Her eyes were intent on him. "Why?"

He looked away—he could not sustain that intense, too perceptive regard. "I don't know. Does it matter?"

"I think you do know," she said softly. "As to whether or not it matters . . . well, that isn't for me to say."

"Isn't it?" It was his turn to stare at her, pressuring her to admit . . . what? He wasn't sure.

"No," she whispered.

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DIALOGUE EXERCISE:

Write a dialogue scene between your hero and heroine. They are arguing. Have your hero indicate love for your heroine without saying the words, "I love you."

A COMPLETELY BIASED LIST OF WRITERS TO READ FOR DIALOGUE:

Suzanne Brockmann: Male vs. female dialogue

Stephanie Laurens: Body language—keep an eye out for how much information her characters convey nonverbally

Elmore Leonard: Flow, baby, flow.

Robert. B. Parker: Lean, snappy dialogue.

Julia Quinn: Witty, historical dialogue.

PG Woodhouse: Internal thought vs. spoken dialogue.

Joss Wedon: Pick up the *Serenity* screenplay (part of the movie companion guide) and look at the dialogue pacing.

SPEAKER BIO:

Publisher's Weekly called **Elizabeth Hoyt's** storytelling "mesmerizing." The author of *The Raven Prince*, *The Leopard Prince*, *The Serpent Prince*, and *To Taste Temptation*, Elizabeth writes wickedly witty historical romance. She also writes deliciously fun contemporary romance under the name Julia Harper. Elizabeth lives in central Illinois with three untrained dogs, two angelic, but bickering children, and one long-suffering husband. Please visit her websites for book excerpts, contests, and upcoming appearances: www.elizabethhoyt.com, www.juliaharper.com.