

WISH YOU WERE HERE!

Postcards
from future
Queensland



LESSON 3: TWO YEARS AFTER LOCKDOWN

You're on a first date and you get chatting about what positive changes you've seen in society since the lockdown.

If you are writing about characters, they are almost certainly going to talk to each other at some point. Dialogue on the page is both different from and similar to dialogue in real life.

Different, because we strip it back to what's important for the story. We tend to cut out the ums and ahs and self-corrections, and when we write a piece of dialogue we start where it serves the story. Characters tend not to shoot the breeze so much as get to the point. In other ways, dialogue must be like real-life speech so that the reader finds it believable. Here are three tips for good dialogue.

First, everyone has a back story and that affects the way they speak. A 60-year-old Australian truck driver is going to speak very differently from a posh British university student. So always remember, things like age, class, and gender affect word choice, cadence, accent, even willingness to express oneself. Now this doesn't mean you should fall back on stereotype, but it does mean

you should think about who the character is and where they come from before you start to write in their voice.

Second, the context of dialogue affects what is said. Are your characters making themselves heard over noise? Or whispering secrets? Are they familiar and open with each other, or wary and awkward? Are there interruptions? Dialogue is not just people talking in white space. Think about the setting, and how it impacts on what can be said and how it's said.

Lastly, conversation is responsive. Between the lines of dialogue, the characters need to be listening to each other, and then responding (or maybe deliberately not responding) to what is said. This requires you to both write the dialogue in one character's perspective, and listen to the dialogue in the other's. Something that really helps with this is reading your dialogue aloud.

This fortnight's task asks you to imagine some dialogue in the future, when society may have changed for the better, but first dates are still super awkward.

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We can't wait to read your dreams and visions, and stories of another world.



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