

# Student Handout: Unit 4 Lesson 4



## Dialogue

Suggested time: 1 Hour

### What's important in this lesson:

- Dialogue is an effective way of telling a story
- Dialogue can reveal a person's character and what is happening
- In realistic dialogue, no two characters speak alike
- Using the correct formatting for dialogue helps the reader to follow a conversation

### Complete these steps:

1. With your teacher review how to punctuate written dialogue by reading and completing "Conversations on the Page" diagnostic.
2. Read a biographical selection for 30 minutes. This is your last day for reading. As you read, check out how dialogue is used and formatted.
3. Complete your reading log.
4. Choose a section containing dialogue from any one of your readings to date. Use this section to complete "Analyzing Dialogue" Handout 1. You may ask your teacher for help as you do this worksheet.
5. Referring back to "Conversations on the Page", write a 1-2 page dialogue between yourself and someone else.
  - The dialogue may be set in the school lunchroom or hallway, during the trip home after school, or at home
  - Aim for realism (but reflect your understanding of what is appropriate in school!)
  - The dialogue may be on any topic that might engage a reader.
  - Use correct dialogue formatting. Also try to show that each speaker is unique in the way he or she talks
6. Present your dialogue orally to your teacher and then analyze it, using the probe questions on your "Analyzing Dialogue" Handout 1.

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**Hand-in the following to your teacher:**

1. Your Reading Log entry for today
2. Your completed worksheet “Analyzing Dialogue”
3. Your creative one or two-page dialogue

**Questions for the teacher:**



## Conversations on the Page

How does a writer show the reader what conversations look like?

Look at the following joke and then read the three tips that follow about writing a dialogue:

Looking over the garden fence at Arthur, George asked, “Digging a hole?”  
“Yes,” Arthur replied, “I am.” He did not look up as he spoke but kept his head down, and dug with his shovel.  
“Why?”  
Arthur continued to dig as he replied: “I’m burying our pet budgie bird.” Not once did he look up at his neighbour across the fence.  
“Oh. Sorry it’s dead.”  
“So am I. My wife cried for ages.”  
“Isn’t the hole too big for the budgie?” George asked.  
“Not really. It’s inside your cat.”

### **Tips for Writing Dialogue**

1) Put quotation marks only around words that are spoken directly. So, the opening words here, about Arthur looking over the garden fence, are not put in quotations because they are not said aloud.

→ **Underline** 2 statements in the joke above that are spoken aloud.

2) Each time a speaker begins to speak, the shift is indicated by a new, indented, paragraph. This way, the writer does not always have to say “She said” or “He said.” The physical change of a new paragraph signals a change of speakers.

→ In the joke above, find a statement without the “He said” speaker tag. **Write** beside it whether the speaker is Arthur or George.

3) Use commas, not periods, if a speech is interrupted by a speaker’s tag. (as in *George asked,* or *Arthur replied,* )

→ In the joke above, **highlight** a speaker tag that interrupts a statement spoken aloud and is surrounded by commas.



## Analyzing Dialogue

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Understanding Dialogue – Read this before completing the questions below.**

- Dialogue can be an important part of action in a story
- Dialogue is always written in First Person (using “I” and “you”) and it is written in the present tense so the reader feels as if he or she is a first-hand witness to the story
- Authors may use dialogue to share important information about plot; for example, two people might discuss planning a robbery so we now anticipate a robbery
- or, the dialogue may be used to show a character’s motivations, and goals
- Realistic dialogue means that no two speakers speak in exactly the same way
- Authors try very hard to have the characters speak realistically in terms of their background, the places they live, their education, their job, and even their situation (frightened or angry, for instance)
- A person one hundred years ago spoke differently than we do today; an old farmer speaks differently from an urban teen; a convict speaks differently from a prison guard; we speak differently during a job interview than when we are talking with our friends

**Directions:** From your Biography selections, choose one scene that contains significant dialogue between two people. Re-read the passage, to answer the following probing questions. Use another sheet of paper if you need more space.

1. What scene did you choose? (Include the biography title, page number and one-phrase description of the scene)

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What people are involved in the dialogue?

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

3. What are the people talking about?

\_\_\_\_\_

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4. Decide: What new information do you learn from the dialogue?

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5. Does the dialogue reveal information mostly about the plot, or the motivations of either speaker, or their immediate thoughts or emotions, or a conflict between the speakers?

Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Compare: Find **at least two differences** between the way the two speakers talk. Look at factors such as accent, slang, tone, and manner of speaking. For example, does one speaker speak only in short sentences while the other uses longer ones? Or, does one speaker seem more forceful than the other? And if so, why?

Speaker #1 (name) _____  Factor:	Speaker #2 (name) _____  Factor:
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7. Did you find this dialogue to be realistic? \_\_\_\_\_ Why or why not?

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