

## Beyond the Realm of Spoken Language

Frowns and smiles speak volumes. Both the expressions and meanings behind them are universally recognized--even in pre-literate cultures. If the hero frowns when he tells the heroine he loves her, the reader probably rolls her eyes.

If the hero is sweating bullets in a cool room, but says he's fine, readers know he's lying.

When we say one thing but do the opposite, the unspoken message comes through louder.

Or does it?

What about the ten-year-old boy who, every chance he gets, pulls the pigtales of the girl in front of him?

What about Scarlett O'Hara flirting with every male around her while watching Rhett out of the corner of her eye?

Then there's the hero who pops antacids like candy and refuses to admit he loves the heroine.

Or there's the heroine who develops a major migraine every time she gets in a tight spot with the hero.

Paraphrasing Walt Whitman: Do we contradict ourselves?

Of course we do . . . we are human.

Exercise: Write a paragraph showing your hero's emotion of disgust.

Exercise: Jot down at least five gestures showing the emotion of shame.

Exercise: Jot down three physiological reactions (PR)s showing the shame.

## Deepen Emotion with Body Language & PRs

New studies of the brain give us insight into the role of hormones on emotions. Testosterone, adrenaline, dopamine and other hormones released into our bodies do affect our emotions and our physical selves.

In moments of crisis or stress, our faces and bodies show our emotions. The facial expressions for anger are universally recognized across cultures and genders. (Frowns, suffused skin, throbbing vein, narrowed eyes, tight mouth are outward clues to our inward seething).

Infants recognize smiles as signs of joy and delight. They also know, when picked up, if that smile is fake. Our PR (accelerated heart rate) gives us away every time.

A few PRs linked to:

Fear -

- hair on the back of the neck prickles
- eyes widen
- muscles in neck and shoulders tense
- HR speeds up
- breathing slows (many of us hold our breath if really scared)
- legs tremble
- body freezes while our mind races

Unseen by us, the brain releases dopamine and other hormones so that our eyes and ears are riveted on every squeak, movement, and memory fragment that might clue us in to what's happening and what's relevant.

The writing challenge is to select a few strong PRs that heighten the emotional impact for the reader.

## Include Smells to Deepen Emotion

Of the five senses, smell presents the most problems for us writers. While words are our tools of trade, they don't serve us very well in describing our physiological response to scents and aromas.

How do you capture the essence of a fresh rose drenched in dew in early spring?

Why, in a recent test, did most of the male participants underestimate by five years on average the ages of women smelling of grapefruit?

What kind of man uses Old Spice?

Did you know that Old Spice remains the Number 1-selling fragrance in history?

Can you describe the differences in the scent of Joy perfume and Dial soap?

The briefest whiff of a specific smell often transports us to another time and place. Depending on the memory we associate with the smell, our HR may speed up. We may get goose bumps. We may feel deliriously happy or relaxed.

If the smells of alcohol and antiseptic remind us of a hospital stint after surgery or visits with a dying relative, we may feel depressed, sad or angry. Physiologically, we may have the energy of a snail.

We make unconscious judgments about people all the time based on how their homes smell (cat litter) or how their clothes smell (tobacco) or how their car smells (dirty gym socks).

How many times do you include smells in your writing to evoke emotion? Try this exercise to get started.

Exercise: Eyes closed, recall a favorite smell from childhood. Write your emotions.

## Engage the Senses, Sharpen Emotions

If you already know that the skin is the largest erogenous zone in the human body, then you probably describe the impact of touch on intimacy with great effectiveness.

Hot breath against an ear, the crook of the neck, the hollow of the throat, between the breasts, on the belly button, the inside of the wrist, the palm, ending with the fingertips can open a caravan of emotional and physiological reactions.

Add moans, whispers, the sounds of tongues licking, a few well-chosen words of love. By engaging two senses, you've just sharpened the emotions of your H/H.

Whether your H/H feast on obviously Phallic foods, indulge in aphrodisiacs such as asparagus, caviar and oysters, or simply taste each other's hot, honeyed lips, mouth and tongue, taste can ratchet up emotions.

Dilated pupils are an absolute physiological giveaway that we're excited. Humans rely on sight more than any other sense. What we see is not what we always get, however. Playing with smoke and mirrors can add a humorous dimension to the other senses as well as emotional depth.

As Diane Ackerman says, "The stimulation of one sense stimulates another." The best love scenes reflect that kind of interaction between the H/H.

Exercise: Write a short scene that answers the following questions:

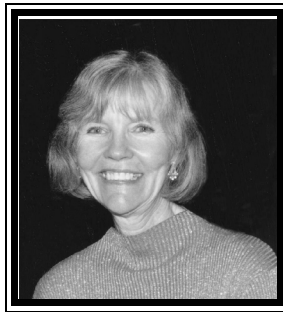
- How does heroine react as the hero runs his fingers through her hair?
- What's her hair smell like to him?
- What emotional memory is evoked for him?

## Other Workshops:

- "Discover Your Writer's Voice."
- "He Said... She Elaborated."
- "Mining the Senses for Emotions."

## More Writing Tip Sheets:

- "Guaranteed Tips to Create Conflict"
- "Tight Places for Your Characters"
- "Emotions Rule"



Barbara lives near the exit off the fast lane in Silicon Valley with her husband and two literary mews, T.C. and Jessica, who never cease to inspire her.

## References:

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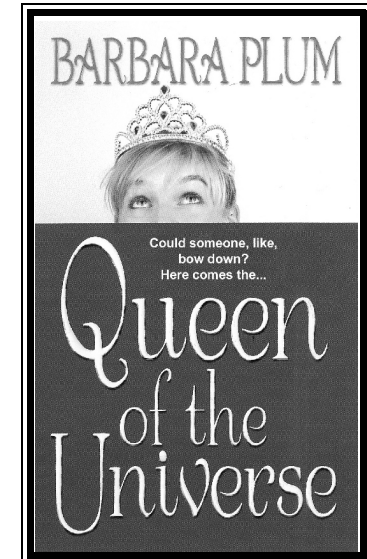
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## Beyond the Realm of Spoken Language©

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Queen of the Universe."



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