

Student example of dialogue.

One of my former 217 students wrote the following scene, You will notice how the “issue” is not stated directly but hinted at through metaphorically through the lines about the dessert. Also notice how the student skips to a new line to indicate a new speaker. When it’s Maggie’s turn to speak, we skip down to a new line. (When formatting for print—books—you indent/tab (indent 5 spaces) with a new speaker—notice how in “Hills like White Elephants” each time there is a new speaker it is indented as if it is a new paragraph; for web/online publishing, you will see that they simply skip to a new line (such as in Buridan’s Ass.:)

Also notice how the student sticks to simple speaker tags such as ‘said’ and ‘asked,’ (rather than ‘interrogated’, ‘questioned’; ‘demanded’ etc.). He puts punctuation for the spoken phrase inside the quotation marks, and uses a comma after the spoken phrase if the speaker tag comes after the line of dialogue. It’s okay to use cuss words/slang.

Maggie and Anthony were at their favorite Italian restaurant, lingering over a meal they had barely touched.

“I think I’m gonna want some extra dessert,” said Anthony.

“You’re still going on about that?” asked Maggie.

“Was I supposed to forget about it?”

“No,” she said.

“Then why the fucked-up question?”

The waitress came by to refill their water glasses and pour the rest of their wine. They paused their discussion—neither liked the idea of having their private lives become public by way of gossipy waitresses.

“Are you interested in dessert?” the waitress asked, to which Anthony indicated they needed a couple of minutes.

After she took the empty wine bottle away, he said, “I know it’s not my birthday yet, but I think I want—I deserve—a little extra cake or something. Maybe a tart.”

Maggie said, “So I made the mistake of indulging *my* sweet tooth before *my* birthday—is this supposed to make us even? Is this what it’s about—getting even? An eye for an eye?”

“Maybe. I saw a chocolate covered strawberry I can’t resist, over at the bar,” he said, and she turned to sneak a peek at the bar, and the redhead dressed in black.