



Between You & Me: Confessions of a Comma Queen

Mary Norris

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“Hilarious. . . . This book charmed my socks off.” —Patricia O’Conner, *New York Times Book Review*

Mary Norris has spent more than three decades in *The New Yorker's* copy department, maintaining its celebrated high standards. Now she brings her vast experience, good cheer, and finely sharpened pencils to help the rest of us in a boisterous language book as full of life as it is of practical advice.

Between You & Me features Norris's laugh-out-loud descriptions of some of the most common and vexing problems in spelling, punctuation, and usage—comma faults, dangles, "who" vs. "whom," "that" vs. "which," compound words, gender-neutral language—and her clear explanations of how to handle them. Down-to-earth and always open-minded, she draws on examples from Charles Dickens, Emily Dickinson, Henry James, and the Lord's Prayer, as well as from *The Honeymooners*, *The Simpsons*, David Foster Wallace, and Gillian Flynn. She takes us to see a copy of Noah Webster's groundbreaking Blue-Back Speller, on a quest to find out who put the hyphen in *Moby-Dick*, on a pilgrimage to the world's only pencil-sharpener museum, and inside the hallowed halls of *The New Yorker* and her work with such celebrated writers as Pauline Kael, Philip Roth, and George Saunders.

Readers—and writers—will find in Norris neither a scold nor a softie but a wise and witty new friend in love with language and alive to the glories of its use in America, even in the age of autocorrect and spell-check. As Norris writes, "The dictionary is a wonderful thing, but you can't let it push you around."

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