**PUNCTUATION:**

**Em Dash**

An **em dash** is the width of an *m.* Use an **em dash** sparingly in formal writing. In informal writing, **em dashes** may replace commas, semicolons, colons, and parentheses to indicate added emphasis, an interruption, or an abrupt change of thought.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Example:** | **Explanation** |
| *I wish you would—oh, never mind.*  | This shows an abrupt change in thought and warrants an **em dash**. |
| *Never have I met such a lovely person—before you.* | Same as above. Sort of like an “after thought” |
| *You are the friend—the only friend—who offered to help me.* |  |
| *Please call my agent—Jessica Cohen—about hiring me.* Parentheses or commas would work just fine here instead of the dashes.)***Rewrite the sentence above with a comma:****\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_* |  |
| *I need three items at the store—dog food, vegetarian chili, and cheddar cheese.* (A colon (:):would be used here in formal writing.) |  |
| *My agreement with Fiona is clear—she teaches me French and I teach her German.* (Again, a colon would work here in formal writing.) |  |
| *I pay the bills—she has all the fun.* (A semicolon (;) would be used here in formal writing.) |  |

**Directions:** Re-read “The Yellow Wallpaper” and notice all the times that Perkins uses an em-dash. Indicate whether is an ***abrupt thought, a description that adds more details,*** *something like a* ***parenthesis or side note,*** *or anything else****.*** *Explain the purpose of using the em-dash in the sentence. What is the author trying to convey?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Examples from “The Yellow Wallpaper”** | **Explanation / Purpose of use** |
| **“**John is a physician, and perhaps – (I would not sat it to a living soul, of course, but this is dead paper and a great relief to my mind) – perhaps that is one reason I do not get well” | An abrupt thought that feels out of place. It depicts the narrator thinking / wandering thoughts.  |
| **“** If physician of high standing, and one’s own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing that matter with one but temporary nervous depression – a sight hysterical tendency – what is one to do?” | Acts as a parenthesis to diminish the severity of what the narrator has. |
| **“**There is a delicious garden. I never saw such a garden – large and shady, full of box-bothered paths, and lined with long grape-covered arbors with seats under them” | Serves to further describe the garden and to go into more detail.  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

**Think of your stories. How can you use / play with / manipulate punctuation to create a voice for your character? What decisions will you make?**

**Use other pieces of writing to see how authors use punctuation You can also look at the poems you read!!! We all know how much poets love to play with language ☺**