

*EDITORIAL ROOMS*  
THE SATURDAY EVENING POST  
The Curtis Publishing Company  
*Wesley Winans Stout Editor*  
PHILADELPHIA

31 March 1941

Dear Mrs. Draper:

I seem to put off the things I really want to take time over while getting more routine matters out of the way and, March being our busiest month, routine matters have simply got the better of me. I do apologize for the delay in answering your letter.

I read your quotation from *Embezzled Heaven* with a great deal of interest but it seems to me that your problem is less subtle and complicated than this. I was thinking mostly of your sentence structure. It is rather hard to follow; it seems to lack flow. "Jerky" is not a nice word either, but I think it is more specific than "artificial" and thus it just may be more helpful. I considered going over a page or two of your manuscript with a pencil but it was not so easy. As I remember, it was not always quite clear whether something was actually happening or just being thought. Sometimes just writing "she thought" is the simplest and therefore the best way of indicating this.

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In trying to express what I mean, I seem to be talking about more than mere sentence structure, but I do think you had quite a few incomplete sentences--dependent clauses and phrases separated by periods. This really does make for hard reading. However, I think this is part of something else, a tendency to leave too much to your reader's imagination. I believe that once before I used the word "impressionistic." In reading your stories I felt a little as if I were getting pieces of a puzzle that I had to put together myself rather than being shown a complete picture.

Most writers try to tell entirely too much and we feel like pleading with them to let their characters' words and actions speak for themselves. Your problem, to my mind, is just the opposite. Your characters are real and your situations seem valid but somehow it is hard for the reader, without a lot of work on his part, to get the characters straight in his mind and to figure out just what the situation is.

Another way to put it might be that your transitions are incomplete, from sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph, from thought to action, and from person to person.

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Poor transitions would mean jerkiness and good ones would make for flow and readability. Above all, we want to be sure exactly who is talking or acting, and which he is doing when.

Does this make any sense to you at all? I do hope so. Remember that I have probably exaggerated for the sake of getting across what I mean and that these matters are all too often impossible of being put into words. I may have failed to do this. If you find that you cannot agree with what I have said, I shan't be too surprised.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Edythe S. Draper  
PD:jb

*The Editors \**  
*Peggy Dowd*

\* habit!

-----ing 0118.