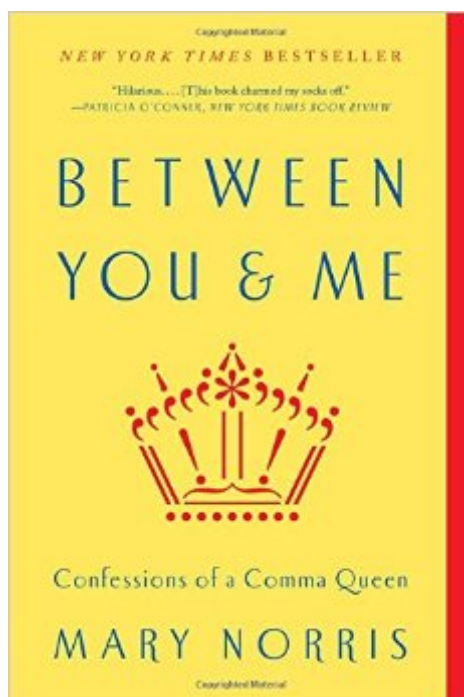


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# Between You & Me: Confessions Of A Comma Queen



## Synopsis

• "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."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I've got a bad habit of buying books about the history and proper usage of the English language

and not reading them. I've got a shelf in my home library that's attractively stacked with books like Bill Bryson's *Mother Tongue: English and How It Got That Way* and Sister Bernadette's *Barking Dog* by Kitty Burns Florey. I tend to read the first few pages, enjoy them as much as I expect to, then get distracted by some work of fiction or other. I'm terrible about nonfiction, even if it's on a topic I'm very interested in. But *Between You & Me* was a Goodreads win, and I'm more likely to win other titles if I read and review this one, so I had a bit more motivation than usual. Also, well, it didn't hurt that Mary Norris is so funny. Witness the following examples and tell me you don't want to read this book, too: "Whom" may indeed be on the way out, but so is Venice, and we still like to go there. Chances are that if you use the Oxford comma you brush the crumbs off your shirtfront before going out. *Between You & Me* covers such topics as spelling, punctuation, and profanity in a direct and easily-understood manner. Norris makes frequent mention of the ways that style and usage vary between major publications such as *The New Yorker* (where she's worked since 1978) and *The New York Times*. There's even an entire chapter dedicated to pencils and pencil sharpeners! (This might sound boring to you, but if it doesn't, we should probably be friends.) I learned from this book, and I enjoyed myself immensely while reading it. It's made me want to pick up my next work of nonfiction sooner than the usual schedule (which would be maybe in six months or so?). It made me want to buy, read, and annotate/highlight a style guide to learn even more.

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