

**Tip #10. AYKB**

Last month I touched on the risks of over-explaining things to your reader, of providing the reader with information that is all too obvious. In much the same vein, the literary device of “As you know, Bob” (AYKB for short) is a technique for imparting obvious information to the reader, the main difference being that it takes place within dialogue. With AYKB however, it comes across as particularly weak because, not only are the words themselves contrived, but the fact that the characters are saying the words make the characters seem contrived too. The result? Your reader pulls out of the story, this time riddled with scorn and having lost all respect for you.

In a nutshell, AYKB occurs when one character tells another character something that they should realistically be expected to know. The basic example goes something like this:

“Honey, it’s your father, the doctor, on the phone.”

While this is a ludicrously obvious example, more subtle examples exist which the attentive reader will find annoying at best, laughable at worst:

“Master Giles, have the crew lower the mainsail, we must leave this wretched island at once.”

“Aye, aye, Captain. But we need to wait for the tide to come in first or we won’t make it past the sandbar.” *Any captain worth their salt would understand the tides.*

Some authors may tart the dialogue up by adding a bit of drama to make it sound more convincing”

“Damnit, George, you know she can’t sing since the operation.” *Again, George knows this so why tell him.*

AYKB crops up time and again in TV series. Often its necessary to keep ‘part-time’ viewers in the know. Some TV series even go so far as to make them a feature of the show. Think CSI Miami which was riddled with corny AYKB:

“How did he die?”

“Gunshot wound to the forehead, point blank range, Detective.”

“So, that means he *saw* his murderer.”

All fine and good if you’re writing slapstick comedy but if you want to be taken seriously as a writer, then stay away from AYKB. It’s a contrivance that tells your reader what you think *they* need to know, but it has nothing to do with what your *characters* need to know and for this reason it loses all credibility.

A simple fix is to remove the information from the dialogue completely and insert a line of narrative, maybe a character reminiscing about an event. Or insert someone into the dialogue who genuinely has no knowledge of the event. With a bit of careful tweaking there should be no need for AYKB to feature in your story.