

+Looked for books by Shirley Jackson

### ***Book notes***

\*There are few absolutes in writing. Copyeditors can learn the craft simply by observing others at work and learning from them.

\*There are some commonly overused words and phrases in prose: very, rather, really, quite, in fact, just (as in merely), and so (as in extremely). Pretty, of course, surely, that said, and actually also make the list. Replace them with stronger words, or just remove them.

\*You can start a sentence with and, but, or because, but see if you can attach it to the prior thought with a comma or semicolon first. Those words often are weak opening words for a sentence. And never start multiple sentences with the same word twice in one paragraph.

\*Using but or however to show how a second thought contradicts an earlier idea isn't very effective.

\*A sentence can end with a preposition, but what's the point? Try to end it on a noun.

\*A passive voice means the subject would be the object of an active voice sentence. An odd test - if you can append 'by zombies' to the sentence, it's likely in the passive voice.

\*A sentence generally improves when the protagonist shows up at the start.

\*None can be singular if it refers to a collection of discrete entities, but is plural when referring to something done as a group.

\*Commas should be applied as needed, but removing traditionally used commas in a reverse application of this principle often causes confusion, and reveals a writer's inability to see the work as a reader.

\*Always set off direct address with commas, even: "But, Mom, you said..."

\*When it comes to names like 'Aunt Phyllis', capitalize based on whether the relationship is a descriptor or included in the sense of a proper noun.

\*Commas are used to set off nouns for which they are the only one of their kind because the knowledge is inessential - we know who or what it is (the eldest son, etc). Do not set off nouns if there are multiple possibilities (the prize winner, etc). A similar rule applies for that and which - that is for the essential, and has no comma; which is for the additional, and should be set off with a comma.

\*Using pronunciation to determine how to add a possessive 's' to a word is an odd idea given that there is very little agreement on how to properly pronounce pluralized versions of many nouns.

\*If you don't like the look of a pluralized last name that ends with 's', just rearrange the phrasing (the Jones's -> the Jones family).

\*Add a possessive 's' to a singular but no need for a plural, given that the noun ends in an 's'.

\*The idea of removing articles from the title of a work if it is the object of the possessive noun is going out of style, mostly due to occasional odd results (James Joyce's *Dead*).

\*Using a parentheses does not break up the plural of a subject, so make sure the verb tense matches the count.

\*Writers learn to avoid parentheticals if they fear a lazy editor will cut all of it out in the name of cutting out the unnecessary.

\*Using a semicolon is one way to set off items in a list that contain commas.

-> Much like a CSV?

\*Collisions of punctuation when a sentence ends with a quoted section might be a good sign to reroute the sentence.

\*A hyphen is best for clarifying the location of the verb (a man-eating shark or a man eating shark), which also helps identify the object. It also helps define the role of the prefix 're-' by clarifying the difference when certain words contain the prefix as part of the spelling.

\*Use hyphens to turn an age into an adjective: a six-year-old boy.

\*Numbers within a paragraph should be styled in the same way if they are related to make the comparison easier on the eye.

\*A quick rule for who or whom - think of who as I, he, she, and they while whom is best for him, her, or them.

\*It's important to remember that constructions of x and y should be kept parallel - not only through dedication but through perseverance. Add an also after 'but' if desired.

\*Writing isn't speaking, particularly when multiple pronouns are used in the same block.

\*To use a flashback, introduce the section with a series of 'had' constructions (past perfect) before dropping the 'hads' when it becomes appropriate to slide into the past tense.

\*'And then' can almost always become 'then'.

\*Small oddities like comma-splicing work best in dialogue, particularly to indicate a speaker's self-interruption. On a similar thought, idioms can sometimes outweigh accuracy, though again this is generally better in dialogue or in a comment styled in an informal way.

\*When you are making reference to a position in a sequence, always go back to the start of the idea and recount.

\*If you don't have open fists, you can't really have closed fists.

\*In dialogue, drop the 'only' into the early portion of a sentence; in writing, find the part being singled out.