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## What's the Word?

# I Punctuate; Therefore I Am

By Lorie Boucher; Layout by Tatiana Retamar

In the following article, Boucher makes a case for a person's use of punctuation as the measure of his or her personality. Although it is written tongue-in-cheek, the article might strike similarities to people you know. As you read it, discover which punctuation defines you!

**M**ore than the words we write, the way we write them is considered by some to be a reliable indicator of personality. Perfect, oversized script? Drippy, sugary, kindergarten teachers who sing the alphabet and scold in rhyme. Bubble letters and hearts dotting i's? Bubble-gum-smacking, hair-twirling teens squealing boy band gossip. Tight, jagged, EKG-monitor scribbles? Angry, no-one-understands-me artists.

But really, how can the involuntary metacarpal twitchings of handwriting have anything to do with the way we act, react, and interact? My own tiny, messy handwriting would suggest years of medical school and a shy, academic timidity. Yet the screams of laughter at that prospect from those

who know me would deafen you, my dear reader.

No, it is punctuation that mirrors our personality, punctuation that exposes our true spirit, and punctuation that reveals our soul. The punctuation that saturates our writing, that is, the punctuation marks we choose to overuse, is the real ink blot test of personality. The Punctuation Personality Indicator (PPI) slots all of the world's personalities into nine categories.

### **The Over-Exclamer!!!!**

The jovial first cousin of the screeching ALL-CAPSinator, the Over-Exclamer (OE) is either perpetually surprised or very easily excited. Events are so astonishing and thrilling to the OE that a mere single exclamation point simply cannot convey the depth of the sentiment. And so the OE uses a series of exclamation points, their number directly proportional to the intensity of the statement that precedes them. "Ohmigod, that petunia pink cowl-neck twinset totally brings out your eyes!!!" exclaims the

Over-Exclamer, punctuated with an air-kiss hello.

Incidentally, scientific research indicates that this breed has multiplied exponentially with the incidence of email. Holding down the shift and the #1 key for a few seconds requires far less effort than pushing lines and dots into paper. So we are at risk of living in an exhausting, over-demonstrative, super-exclamatory world. Ugh. Join me in exterminating the OE.

### **The Super-Interrogator???**

The Super-Interrogator (SI) is eternally perplexed. A single question mark cannot communicate the profundity of the SI's confusion. So puzzling is the SI's query that it must be amplified with a series of question marks. "Why do people like cheese?" is a simple question of interest. "Why do people like cheese???" implies that the SI can't fathom, on this green earth, why anyone would put stinky, blue-molded milk curd into their mouth.

Many SIs find their way into the editing field, where they can indulge their penchant for multiple question marks at the first sign of even a mildly ambiguous phrase or turn of logic. They trounce the unsuspecting writer with a barrage of red question marks, implying that the reader could not be expected to possibly understand such

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Lorie Boucher is a writer and editor in Ottawa, Ontario. This article originally appeared in the fall 2000 issue of *Writer's Block* ([www.writersblock.ca](http://www.writersblock.ca)), a quarterly online magazine for Canadians in the writing trade.

a confounding, ill-worded sentence.

This overly critical subcategory of SI is manipulative — it is not that the SI is too slow to get the point; it is that the SI thinks the writer is too slow to make it properly. Resist the urge to counter the SI with multiple exclamation points. There is no excuse for being that annoying.

### **The Pedant;**

So proud are Pedants of their ability to correctly apply the semicolon that the urge to display this capacity at every opportunity is irresistible. A highfalutin show-off, this breed is often born in first-year university classes, where the fledgling Pedant first attempts to stand on his knobby, tentative academic legs. In an effort to appropriate the rhythmic lull of scholarly diction and style, the Pedant inserts a semicolon between all related thoughts. Debating with the Pedant is a recommended cure for insomnia. Sleepless no more!

### **The Educator:**

When the Educator can pry himself away from the Public Access channel long enough to write, the resulting text is riddled with colons. Whatever follows a colon is never offered hypothetically — it is a fact. The Educator makes only statements, never suggestions. Ask the Educator, “What is the meaning of life?” and he will respond with the same certainty as when asked what’s for dinner. Don’t feel bad for hating the Educator. He has friends: those formal Pedants.

### **The Drone.**

The Drone is unimpressed with the fancy variety of punctuation marks and sticks to the good old meat-and-potatoes period. The Drone hasn’t the time for inflection; he gets right to the point, as it were. Drones find employment as automated voice attendants and National Geographic narrators. Without the Drone, we would never know the car door is ajar.

### **(The Quipper)**

The wise-cracking Quipper uses pa-

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rentheses as a subversive device to slip asides into statements, like a jokey, visual elbow to the side. Parentheses create a certain intimacy with the reader, a “you-know-what-I’m saying” sort of kinship. “Jeff asked me out the other day (as if), and I had to come up with a believable excuse right on the spot,” explains the Quipper. “I told him I had to wash my hair (read: forever). Is that heinous?” The sassy, postmodern Quipper has no unwritten thoughts and watches too much Dennis Miller. But we love the Quipper (if tolerance is love).

### **The Rambler,**

Why impose the authoritative finality of the period when the meandering comma can extend a sentence indefinitely? The Rambler is too insecure to make anything so assertive as a point, and therefore avoids it as long as possible, sending you on a grumbling, frustratingly fruitless hunt for the period. Ramblers are wandering, aimless window shoppers who can never commit to buying anything. They insist on the importance of “the process, not the product,” or “the path, not the destination.” They are insufferable. In addition, there are also those Ramblers who overuse the comma as a method of clinging to the rhythm of speech, resisting the requirement to write things

down at all. Hey, if you want to talk, use the phone. To all Ramblers: no one reads Faulkner for a reason.

### **the hippie**

Worse than the overuse of any punctuation mark is the total rejection of all punctuation. The absence of punctuation is sometimes paired with the doubly irritating rejection of that other constricting imposition — capitalization. “punctuation is just The Man controlling self-expression right it’s like totally confining my ideas i can’t be jailed by your dictatorial punctuation regimen man i’m all about the freedom the flow of emotion man yeah.” The hippie treats every piece of communication like some stream-of-consciousness experiment. Ironically, the hippie turns every pacifist editor’s thoughts to violence.

### **The Cliff-Hanger...**

The Cliff-Hanger must have suffered some period-related trauma as a child because he avoids it at all costs. While the Rambler meanders around endlessly in commaland, he at least arrives at the period eventually. The Cliff-Hanger’s psychosis is far more advanced. Nothing can force the Cliff-Hanger into asking a direct question or making a clear-cut statement. “I’m thinking of heading up to the cottage on the weekend... so if you know the directions...” What? Does he need directions? Does he want us to join him? It’s all a big mystery. Tune in next week...

### **In conclusion**

Where in the world would we be without the Over-Exclaimer, the Super-Interrogator, the Pedant, the Educator, the Drone, the Quipper, the Rambler, the Cliff-Hanger, and the hippie? Without them, editors would have little to bond over. We love to hate these overusers of punctuation, to peck at them mercilessly, like superior literary vultures. Without them, what would we do for fun?

## Tick..Tick...

# It Was a Boom Indeed!

**Andrew Garfield stars as the late Jonathan Larson, the composer, and lyricist of the infamous Broadway musical “Rent,” in this musical drama directed by Lin Manuel Miranda.**

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By Tatiana Retamar

**T**ick..Tick.. Boom!” Jonathan’s first meta-musical, which he presented in 1991, was initially considered a one-man “rock monologue” but was later viewed as something more by not only the numerous admirers but by the many aspiring people who had that creative spark in their eye. Writers, performers, and other creatives resonated with “Tik..Tik..Boom!” because they could relate to Larson’s accurate portrayal of the fight to be seen and heard, to create challenging work that would truly speak to the audience, as stated by Larson himself “to be that voice of a generation”. One of those creatives who was moved by Larson was then 17-year-old, Lin Manuel Miranda.

Before Lin Manuel Miranda was known as the director/producer of the infamous musicals and films we know and love today, such as “Hamilton”, “In The Heights”, and Disney’s film “Moana” He was once one of the many people who was inspired by “Rent” discovering a new type of

music in the play, one distinguished by a trendy sound, recognizable characters, and an exceptionally diverse ensemble of characters Larson died with an aortic aneurysm just before the Off-Broadway premiere of “Rent,” making the previous endeavor seem strangely prescient. In it, he expressed concern over not achieving success before the age of 30, as if he realized his time was running out and his heart was ready to stop beating. Miranda’s decision to film “Tick, Tick... Boom!” as his feature directorial debut says a lot about how much Larson meant to him. It’s not a simple project to adapt, and it’ll need some clever retooling to reach the film’s wider audience they want to achieve for November 19th when it’s released on Netflix. Since Larson’s original rendition required him to perform numerous parts, playwright David Auburn of “Proof” refashioned “Tick, Tick... Boom!” was adapted into a three-person show in 2001, and that’s the version that’s been presented many times over the last two decades, but Miranda takes a different approach.

### **The Implicit Meaning of the Boom!**

“Tick, Tick... Boom!” is an anxiety autobiography. Larson, played by Andrew Garfield with kinetic desire, is fixated on success. How is he going to acquire it? How long will his

wallet be able to withstand it? How much could his all-consuming ambition cost him in terms of his emotional well-being? “Do you want to make a deal or do you want to stick it out?” Garfield’s aspirant croons, certain that his approach 30’s— the title’s time bomb — will signal the beginning of his downfall from potential stardom to “waiter with a hobby.” The film is carried by foreshadowing. Larson isn’t yet the lyricist he will become, even in the tunes. The lyrics are full of cheerful observations about his restaurant job, writer’s block, his favored swimming pool, and his haunting fear of death. Miranda’s love for his idol prevents him from turning the musical’s myopic fretting into a universal tale of sacrifice and resolve. Larson is given a charming vulnerability by Garfield.

When movie enthusiasts watch this new upcoming film they expect to see a happy ending which may satisfy people in the short term, but they ignore the complexity of what Larson was attempting to accomplish. Larson relied on his head-scrambling sci-fi operetta called “Superbia” to wow producers. While his closest friends — ex-actor roommate Michael (Robin de Jesus) and ex-dancer girlfriend Susan (Alexandra Shipp) — are cashing out and finding adult jobs, the character is determined to keep his artistic integrity.

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Tatiana Retamar is a writer and editor in Brooklyn, NY. This article originally appeared in the fall 2000 issue of *Writer’s Block* ([www.writersblock.ca](http://www.writersblock.ca)), a quarterly online magazine for Canadians in the writing trade.



Broadway baby: Andrew Garfield stars as Jonathan Larson, the creator of *Rent*, who altered the musical theatre landscape in the 1990s. Photo by Stuart Wood/ BBC/Expectation Entertainment

But Jonathan's devotion may make him intolerable to his loved ones, and thus the film's realistic form portrays how his self-involvement towards his dreams costs him his relationships with his loved ones throughout the film. The blessing of "Tick, Tick... Boom!" isn't that Jonathan finds it, but that we see him slowly define his goals and acknowledge the sources he'll draw on in his later musical "Rent". There are continuous reminders of the AIDS pandemic, whose losses constitute a wake-up call, in 1990 New York. "Try writing what you know," his famed but worthless agent (Judith Light) encourages Jonathan, which is really a frequent enough Hollywood slogan to seem like sage advice.

However, if Larson wants his art to be meaningful, singing of himself is essential but really not an adequate step — and also the same can be said about this production. "Tick, Tick... Boom!" is significant because it serves as a cleaning operation, forcing him to confront his deepest inner fears while also serving as a rough draft of his later masterpiece "Rent," which he will again focus on everyone around him.

### Lin's Twist and Hidden Treasure

Other than the "Superbia" highlight "Come to Your Senses," the soundtrack in this is catchy but it is far from

Larson's strongest, but somehow, Miranda manages to find methods of making the songs feel fascinating, even though they're minor — as in the number "Sunday," filmed at the Moondance Diner where Jonathan use to waits tables at, and which also serves as a showcase for Larson to pay tribute to a few of his greatest cherished Broadway legends. Miranda, in concept, recognizes characteristics from his own artistic thinking in Larson's struggle, potentially creating a second dimension of autobiography towards the picture. How much more of Miranda could we interpret into Jonathan's role, whose fascination with time can also be observed both in "Rent's" "One Song Glory" & "Hamilton's" "Non-Stop"? The debuting director's approach is refreshing in that it seems to be ego-free. Miranda's style is lively and vibrant, frequently moving between several strands within just a song or scene, and it doesn't feel as though he's calling attention to himself even though he's attempting to open up the show — to give itself the wings Jonathan starts singing about in the final number.

### "Dream It Till You Make It"

Jonathan Larson and Lin Manuel Miranda were two of the many creatives who understood the concept of achieving what you believe by any means or cost necessary, Below is a

movie that fits the similarity of the message given in "Tik..Tik..Boom!" in which you see other creatives who strive to reach for their dreams of making it into the entertainment industry, but are hit with the harsh dilemma between their dreams becoming a reality and the real world throwing hints of their harsh realism of self.

First, we have *La La Land* (2016) directed by Damien Chazelle, who gives a prime example of a small town individual moving to the city of Los Angeles looking for a chance to appear behind the big screen or to compose with great time producers. Two aspiring dreamers Sebastian (Ryan Gosling) and Mia (Emma Stone) are instantly drawn together based on their goals their famously big goals of becoming someone, yet when those dreams come true they are hit with the famous face of the reality of making a big-time decision of choosing between the love of each other or choosing the love of their dreams.



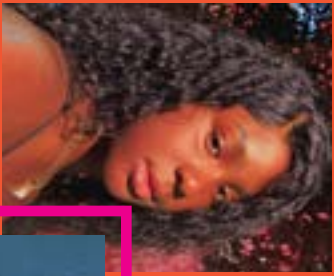
TICK, TICK...BOOM!, Andrew Garfield, 2021. Ph: Macall Polay /© Netflix / Courtesy Everett Collection





## A Spark That Begun The Glow

Evanescence Magazine was founded in January 2007, by two angelic women Tatiana Retamar and Chaeli Retamar in a small college dorm apartment on the campus of Rowan University.



Evanescence Magazine is an international music and entertainment magazine that's published monthly through online and print. The magazine provides music charts, interviews, news, videos, opinions, reviews, events, and fashion trends relating back to the music and film industry.

**"EVERY ONE NEEDS  
THEIR DAILY TEA  
WITH A BIT OF  
EVANESCENCE."**

- NAOMI CAMPBELL



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# E

A Fresh Taste of ...

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# Movies/TV

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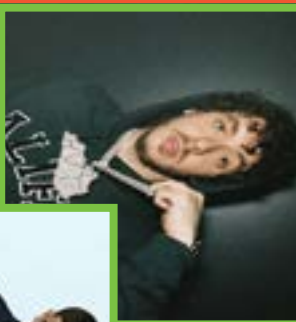
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# Music

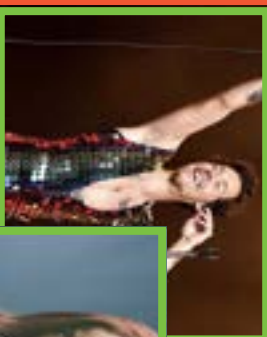
If you are ever in search of new songs to add to your night out into the city playlist or your pou mai character list then look no further, EURNESENCE GOT YOU!!



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