

WELCOME TO LINDA'S TEA ROOM



First lines. They're meant to grab the reader, set the tone, create questions... If you Google first lines, you'll come up with hundreds of famous ones. Here are a few of my favorites. See if they make you want to read the novel.

"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." Jane Austin, *Pride and Prejudice* – one of my all-time favorites lines as well as novels, and mini-series with Colin Furth as Mr. Darcy. There's no better Mr. D!



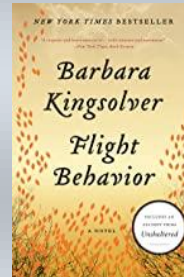
Call me Ishmael." Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* – probably the most well-known first lines.

Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins." Vladimir Nobokov, *Lolita* – "fire of my loin" would surely get some people to read further

"Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself." Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*. Even if you're not a Virginia Woolf fan, read *The Hours* by Michael Cunningham, a favorite book of mine. He weaves Mrs. Dalloway into the story.

“You better not never tell nobody but God.” Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*. The words make you wonder, don’t they?

“A certain feeling comes from throwing your good life away, and it is one-part rapture.” Barbara Kingsolver, *Flight Behavior*. I think I’ve read every Kingsolver book. She’s a huge fan of first lines and I’m a huge fan of her novels.



And here’s one that is not a favorite. I think it’s why I cut Freshman English, aside from the fact it was at the ungodly hour of 8 AM! **“Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tucktoo.”** James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Sometimes I overuse commas (thank goodness for editors) but this sentence sure could use a few!

In researching first lines, I came across one that’s way too long to print here. It’s from *Double or Nothing* by Raymond Federman. If I wrote like that, my readers would have slammed the book shut! And reviewers, well...I’d rather not think of what they’d say today.

As with many writers, my first lines changed countless times, especially since I changed the first chapter many times. Though, once I knew my first chapter (after several drafts) of *The Disharmony of Silence* and wrote the first line, I married it! **“The Roths aren’t coming.”** Those four words set-up the whole story. I hoped readers would wonder why the Roths weren’t coming and read on to find out. Isn’t that what first lines are supposed to do?



And now for my upcoming novel, *Sisters of the Vine*, set on a hillside vineyard in the Hudson River Valley. The first line changed so many times. An original was, **“The shadow from the half empty closet loomed across the room.”** It’s a good, isn’t it? Well, that draft was garbage. I dumped it and started the story in a different place, even in a different time period – therefore it now has a new first line and you’ll be able to read it in March 2021 when the book releases.