**THE POTENCY OF "QUOTES."**

Quotation marks: Can we consider them among the most important of "seasonings" of the written word? What are their function and how do they influence the way that voice in our head pronounces and emphasizes the words we process as we read? Besides giving added depth and meaning to September 24th, which, by the way, happens to be National Punctuation Day, the quotation mark emphasizes and surrounds words and employs the use of other important strokes and ticks to form the readable language we have probably come to take for granted. In the words of Malcolm Parkes, "It's primary function is to resolve structural uncertainties in a text, and to signal nuances of semantic significance otherwise not to be conveyed at all, or would at best be much more difficult for a reader to figure out." .... and THAT demonstrates one of the uses of quotation marks. Believed to have started life in about the fifteenth century, modern quotation marks evolved from double strokes known as "diples." As they matured and morphed, they took the shape of inverted commas placed in the corresponding margins of recto and verso pages to distinguish and to call out text the author felt was noteworthy. (For more about the history and "shady past" of punctuation, here's an article that appeared in Slate: <http://www.slate.com/blogs/lexicon_valley/2015/01/30/quotation_marks_long_and_fascinating_history_includes_arrows_diples_and.html> )

Whether you're an author or editor, whether you're writing a manuscript or a thesis, novel or dissertation, in order to express the richness and full exuberance of our written word, quotation marks are essential to the conveyance of complete thought and intention. Remember too, that this form of punctuation serves another unique purpose. Without the evolution of these four short but powerful strokes, we would not know to simultaneously bend and flex our index and middle fingers to distinguish and give life to our spoken word employing the gesture commonly known as the "air quote."

All punctuation provides the emphasis and pacing needed to read and comprehend full meaning in the written language. In the earliest history of the printed word, there were different methods employed to distinguish between different forms of quotations. Eventually the symbology used hundreds of years ago evolved into the more simple and universal quotation mark.

According to The Punctuation Guide, "Quotation marks are primarily used to indicate material that is being reproduced word for word, as well as for other important uses." In order to include verbatim words from other sources within the body of written work, quotation marks are used to surround and indicate those passages. The Punctuation Guide also points out that quotation marks are used in translations, "scare quotes," known as words used to "cast doubt," "nicknames," and in measurements... when writing a measurement in feet and inches, the single stroke goes after the measurement in feet while the quote mark goes after the amount in inches, for example, 5'6". Also note that although when only words are used in a quote the ending punctuation goes inside the quotation marks, when expressing measurement, the ending punctuation is found outside the quote mark. To further clarify, placing the end punctuation within the quotation marks is the American method. The British method places the end punctuation on the outside of the ending quotation mark. Here are some examples of the American method:

* The girl was 5'6".
* I gave him the book and he said, "Thank you."

For more information from The Punctuation Guide, here's the link: <http://www.thepunctuationguide.com/quotation-marks.html> .

We are all so fortunate to have the fascinating, puzzling, complex English language as our conduit to expressing and conveying our literary intentions. As writers, freelancers, editors, and people that will hire writers or be hired as writers, it is essential that the information, thoughts, and expressions we commit to type are as authentic to our purpose as possible. Through the use of quotation marks along with the other punctuation partners, the language of self expression flourishes.