



200

Q AND A. Write a fragment about something in your story that bothers you like a bad tooth. Write this in the form of twenty questions and answers. Make the questions tough and probing, even unsettling, certainly unusual and unexpected. Write out the questions first, and spend a good deal of time making them lovely, strange, evocative, and part of the process of this story. Then write out the answers, carefully, over time, making every effort to answer the questions honestly and imaginatively. Don't simply answer the questions by reproducing them slyly in the answers. Finally, eliminate the questions from the final draft of this fragment of fiction. You will have twenty answers to hidden questions. 450 words

WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF THIS? How often do writers supply unseen questions to the sentences they're piling up on each other? This is the essence of the exercises in this book—unseen questions behind the narrative momentum. Asking tough questions is at the heart of this process. You want to look straight at your characters, your situations, and your telling details and wonder if you've done enough to open them up, if you let the proper light of day (or an irritatingly objective reader's questions) shine on the work you're too familiar with.