

Names

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Okay, it is no secret that I am fascinated by names, that I love naming book characters, that my own children have had to curb my impulse to name their babies, and that even dogs, my own and other people's, are not exempt from my need to baptize.

But recently, in signing books in Florida, I encountered something I've not seen before. A teenage girl had a name---I've forgotten what it was---that ended in an A. The letter A. Let's say it was something like Alyssa.

I wrote "For Alyssa" in her book---spelling it correctly, not Elyssa or Alissa, because I have learned the hard way that I must ask them to write their names for me so that I get it right---otherwise, they sometimes cry, if I misspell.

So I wrote "For Alyssa" above my signature and handed it back to her---but she said, "There's an accent over the A" and handed it back. I looked at what she had written on her post-it and sure enough, there was a little mark of some sort over the final A.

So I was to make it "Alyssá" as in *voilà*. Go figure. Well, what the heck. I added the accent mark.

But no. She almost wailed. "It goes the other way!" She wanted it to be an *accent grave*. For some reason I can't make my computer do that so I can't show you.

So I fixed it, but to be honest it didn't look right.

But what is *right*?pp Often I get kids--both boys and girls---who have mysterious apostrophes in the middle of theirp names. Q'usineish'a.pp LaQuan'da. I could ask my daughter, who is an Arabic scholar, if there is some apostrophe logic that I am not privy to.

Or I could just quit worrying about it, and write their names the way they want their names written, without a second thought.p After all their names are *theirs*.

Lôi's

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