



# The Lover's Dictionary: A Novel

By David Levithan

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How does one talk about love? Is it even possible to describe something at once utterly mundane and wholly transcendent, that has the power to consume our lives completely, while making us feel part of something infinitely larger than ourselves? Taking a unique approach to this age-old problem, the nameless narrator of David Levithan's *The Lover's Dictionary* constructs the story of a relationship as a dictionary. Through these sharp entries, he provides an intimate window into the great events and quotidian trifles of coupledness, giving us an indelible and deeply moving portrait of love in our time.

## The Lover's Dictionary: A Novel By David Levithan Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #53752 in Books
- Brand: Picador USA
- Published on: 2012-01-17
- Released on: 2012-01-17
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 182.12" h x 17.02" w x 4.48" l, .44 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 224 pages

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### Editorial Review

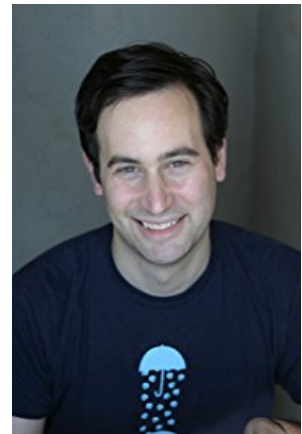
Amazon.com Review

**Amazon Best Books of the Month, January 2011:** In his first book for adults, popular young-adult novelist David Levithan creates a beautifully crafted exploration of the insecurities, tenderness, anger, and contented comfort that make romantic relationships so compelling (or devastating). Through sparingly written, alphabetical entries that defy chronology in defining a love affair, *The Lover's Dictionary* packs an emotional wallop. For "breathtaking (adj.)," the unnamed narrator explains, "Those moments when we kiss and surrender for an hour before we say a single word." For "exacerbate (v.)," he notes, "I believe your exact words were: 'You're getting too emotional.'" Ranging from over a page to as short as "celibacy (n.), n/a," the definitions-as-storyline alternate between heart-wrenching and humorous--certainly an achievement for a book structured more like Webster's than a traditional novel. Proving that enduring characters and conflict trump word count, Levithan's poignant vignettes and emotional candor will remind readers that sometimes in both fiction and life, less is truly more--and the personal details of love can be remarkably universal. --

*Jessica Schein*

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### Amazon Exclusive: A Q&A with David Levithan



**Q:** What inspired you to write *The Lover's Dictionary*?

**Levithan:** Every year for the past 23 years, I've written a story for my friends for Valentine's Day. It started when I was a junior in high school and remarkably bored in my physics class--I decided to go through the physics book and find all the romantic references I could (opposites attracting, magnetism, etc), and turn it into a love story. My friends liked it, and the next year, they demanded a new story for Valentine's Day. A tradition (or, at least, a deadline) was born.

Two years ago, I hit February 1st and I hadn't started writing my Valentine's Day story. I had a few ideas, but none were kicking in. I sat down at my desk to think something up, and right by an elbow was a book I'd recently recovered from my parents' basement--a book of "words you need to know" that I'd been given as a gift (probably for my high school graduation). I thought it might be interesting to take random words from that book, in alphabetical order, and tell the story of a relationship through those words, in dictionary form. I didn't plan any of it out--I let the words tell the story. And two weeks later, I had the story version of *The Lover's Dictionary*.

**Q:** How (if at all) was the experience of writing what is classified as an adult novel different from writing a young adult novel? Did you approach the emotion of love differently?

**Levithan:** I didn't approach this book any differently from my other books. Because, really, the emotions don't change. Perspective changes (a little, sometimes not even a little), but the emotions are still there. Yes, the twenty-something characters in *The Lover's Dictionary* are facing some issues most teens don't face--moving in together, paying rent. But most of what they're feeling is merely a continuation of the emotions that come to the fore when you're a teenager--wanting to belong, wanting to understand yourself, wanting to understand the person you love, wanting to know what love is. I'd love to say that when we become adults we stop being insecure, that we have answers, that we know the right words for the right moments. But that's simply not true.

**Q:** Were there any words/definitions that didn't make it in to the final book?

**Levithan:** Not that many. I just went back to the first draft and found one:

*haggle*, v. There was no way I was letting the Atlanta Braves lamp to our apartment, and you said, fine, then my lunchbox collection could go back to my parents' basement, where it belonged.

I'm not even sure why it didn't make the cut. Maybe there were already too many entries about decorating the apartment.

**Q:** *The Lover's Dictionary* isn't a linear story and is organized alphabetically, much like a traditional reference dictionary. How (if at all) did you change your writing process knowing that it would unfold this way?

**Levithan:** I loved writing in a nonlinear way. Because it feels to me like a more accurate way of how we recount relationships. They never come back to us as a narrative, told beginning-middle-end. Whether it's over or ongoing, we remember it in flashes. Different moments from the past hit us at different moments in the present. So when the narrator sits down to recount the relationship to the lover, it makes sense to me that the relationship would appear to him in this way, with the words as the catalyst for the memories, and the memories adding up to the truth.

**Q:** Why did you decide to write the novel in first person, directed at a second person?

**Levithan:** The act of writing the book (for the narrator) is as much a part of the story as the story itself. I don't want to explain the book too much, so I can leave it at that. And I wanted it to play like a love song you hear on the radio--the most effective love songs are somehow both specific and universal. You feel you are hearing someone else's story, but at the same time you relate to it so much that their story doesn't preclude your story. I wanted *The Lover's Dictionary* to be like that.

**Q:** Describe how you feel about writing in three words.

**Levithan:** Wonderment. Curiosity. Random.

From Publishers Weekly

This cute "novel" by YA author Levithan consists of a series of words and their definitions, each evoking a phase or theme about a fledgling romance. (e.g., fledgling: "Part of the reason I preferred reading to sex was that I at least knew I could read well"). The entries do gradually unravel a love story: the narrator has met a woman ("you") through an online dating site (aberrant: " ~I don't normally do this kind of thing,' you said.

~Neither do I, I assured you"). He endures all the writhings of new love, by turns eager, reserved, and hopeful about their evolving relationship, and transported by the joy of mutual exploration, the two move in together (balk: "If it all went wrong, the last thing I'd care about was who was to blame for moving in together") and are eventually undone (livid: "You went and broke our lives"). Levithan attains some heartbreaking moments as well as pitches of hilarity with his concise, polished writing. Inherent in such an endeavor (that just happens to hit shelves around Valentine's Day) is an adorableness thankfully grounded by Levithan's wit. (Feb.)

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From [Booklist](#)

**\*Starred Review\*** Levithan, a popular YA author and an editorial director at Scholastic, has had the inspired idea of writing the story of a love relationship in the form of a dictionary. Each word, from aberrant to zenith, defines the language of love, while adding to the reader's knowledge and understanding of the male lovers' partnership. Interestingly, each definition is told from the point of view and in the first-person voice of only one of the partners. The other partner's voice remains silent throughout except as quoted by the narrator. Nevertheless, both come wonderfully alive, emerging as complex, multidimensional human beings, happy and unhappy, ebullient and angry, sweet and sour, and so—delightfully—forth. Happily, the order of the alphabet does not dictate the order of the story, which moves backward and forward in time. Thus, the dramatic necessity of conflict arises from one partner's infidelity, the impact of which is then explored at various points in the history of the partnership. Nothing is cut-and-dried, however, for as Levithan demonstrates, intimacy is sometimes enigmatic and, as he notes under ineffable, "No matter how many words there are, there will never be enough." So you must clearly pick and choose which to use, an act that Levithan has accomplished artfully and satisfyingly. --Michael Cart

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#### **Melvin Paul:**

As people who live in the modest era should be change about what going on or details even knowledge to make these people keep up with the era that is certainly always change and move forward. Some of you maybe may update themselves by reading through books. It is a good choice to suit your needs but the problems coming to you is you don't know what type you should start with. This The Lover's Dictionary: A Novel is our recommendation to make you keep up with the world. Why, since this book serves what you want and want in this era.

#### **David Briggs:**

Hey guys, do you really wants to finds a new book to study? May be the book with the title The Lover's Dictionary: A Novel suitable to you? Often the book was written by famous writer in this era. Typically the book untitled The Lover's Dictionary: A Novel is one of several books that will everyone read now. This particular book was inspired many people in the world. When you read this book you will enter the new dimension that you ever know previous to. The author explained their thought in the simple way, consequently all of people can easily to know the core of this reserve. This book will give you a wide range of information about this world now. To help you see the represented of the world in this particular book.

**Pearl Moore:**

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**Michael Emery:**

People live in this new day of lifestyle always make an effort to and must have the extra time or they will get lots of stress from both way of life and work. So , when we ask do people have free time, we will say absolutely without a doubt. People is human not only a robot. Then we inquire again, what kind of activity do you possess when the spare time coming to a person of course your answer will certainly unlimited right. Then do you try this one, reading books. It can be your alternative throughout spending your spare time, often the book you have read is definitely The Lover's Dictionary: A Novel.

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