

## A Comma Can Matter

Good writing – either a natural talent or acquired skill – is critical to effective communication, and can bring us information, entertainment and inspiration. Sadly, the art of writing is suffering by practitioners of texting, tweeting and other forms of electronic messaging. English teachers at all grade levels report the decline of letters – as literary culture is sometimes referred to – in our society because of the quick-and-easy approach offered by iPads and iPhones.

But even in these emerging conversational tools, details do count.

For example, if you think commas don't matter, you may be interested in knowing that a single comma once saved a man's life in Russia.

Czarina Maria Fyodorovna transposed a comma in an order that had been signed by her husband, Alexander III, according to *The Funny Side of English*, written by O. Abootty (Pustak Mahal).

Originally, Alexander had written:

**“Pardon impossible, to be sent to Siberia.”**

The czarina craftily moved the punctuation mark so that the order read this way:

**“Pardon, impossible to be sent to Siberia.”**

And that is our English lesson for the day.

Hopefully, it also begins your morning with a chuckle.

– Beecher Hunter

