

Lisa Seda Rodriguez

Dr. Nancy Reichert

February 12, 2002

English 1102-11

He Said, He Meant

Dear Susan,

Hey! What's up? How's your last year of high school treatin' ya so far? Hope good. Well, school here has been crazy. Since I joined my fraternity, I've been so busy. So. Sorry for not writing last week. I meant to.

I tried calling you last night, but your line was busy. I must have called 3 times. But anyway, I needed to talk to you last night. Susan, I think, since I've moved away to college, we've changed. Things just aren't the same anymore. I've thought about it and I think we should see other people.

Don't worry, Susie-Bear, things will be all right. After all, we'll still be friends. It's almost 10 a.m. and that means I have class in 15 minutes. Gotta go. Call me when you get this. I'll write next week.

Joe

Whether a letter, phone conversation, through a friend, in person, in elementary school, middle school, high school, or in Joe's case, college, we've all experienced a situation like this. It's the letter that every girl dreads getting. It doesn't matter how popular, funny, pretty, smart, or talented we are. Sometimes relationships just don't work out.

If I look closely, it's easy to notice it's not the letter itself that tells poor Susan her long-distance relationship is over, it's what is found IN the letter that gives it all away. I can take the time to reread Joe's letter to Susan and really find out what Joe was trying to say. So, lets pick it apart.

By looking at the format of Joe's letter I see it's short, sweet, and straight to the point. This tells me that Joe didn't really have much to say to poor Susan. I can already see where this letter's going with the "Dear Susan" line. It doesn't sound good. My reasoning: If you know a girl well enough, you never start a letter with "Dear". Most of the time guys will start with the girls' name, or with a "nick-name". Examples would be "Hey Suz," "Susie". Doing this shows sincerity. But a "Dear Susan," that becomes so formal, it shows no personality. He might as well be writing a letter to the Senator.

I can then move on to "How's your last year of high school treatin' ya so far?" Here, Joe's trying to show that he cares about Susan. He approaches the question in a light-hearted way, knowing his real intention is to use this line as an opening for the real reason for writing the letter in the first place. Just by looking at the remainder of the first paragraph, I can translate what he has written into what he meant to say. The new paragraph would read: "Hey! What's up? Hope you're having as much fun as I am, cuz I'm having a great time! Ever since I joined my fraternity, it's been non-stop parties and girls. So, sorry for not writing last week. I thought about it but didn't get to it." Yeah, that sounds about right!

Life's full of exaggerations. Especially when someone's trying to get off the hook by playing the good guy OR girl (but for Susan's sake, guy will work just fine). All I can say is SHAME, SHAME, and SHAME on all of you! In the first line of the next paragraph reads, "I tried calling you last night, but your line was busy." Joe tries to show that he's put forth some effort into the relationship. He goes on to say, "I must have called 3 times." As soon as Susan read this line

she was probably kicking herself in the butt for gossiping to her girlfriends the week before. But if she only knew what Joe was really saying. Any volunteers? No one? Okay, then, I'll clue her in.

There are three types of guys in this world. The ones who tell the truth, the ones who exaggerate, and the ones who flat out lie. Now Joe is hidden in one of these groups. Sorry to say he doesn't stand in a category of his own. I can find where Joe stands by using the process of elimination. An honest guy wouldn't write a letter to break-up with his girlfriend. So, I guess Joe's been officially kicked out of that category. Someone who exaggerates stretches the truth. I guess we could say he stretched the truth. We don't know for sure if Joe ever called Susan. Maybe he called the first time and it was busy. Then called again to find it was actually ringing, so he hung up. Well, the third category is for the liars. Maybe this guy is so bad that he dreamt he called Susan, and thought it was real. And as unrealistic as it sounds, I'm sure a guy or two has used that as a valid excuse. But, for Joe's sake, we'll just say he's exaggerating just a little. He probably dialed her number once and called it quits when he discovered the line was busy.

So far, I've been able to read deeper than what the eye can see. Some things are harder to read than others. In a letter like Joe's, everything I've looked over so far can be analyzed. But I've stumbled upon something I think I cannot read. Joe states, " I really needed to talk to you last night." Could this be true? I don't see why not. There's nothing in the context tells me otherwise. But then again, I end up asking myself if he really wants to talk to her at all, and especially

about this. Writing a letter to break-up with Susan could be used as proof. It could also be that by writing a letter, he's avoiding Susan's reaction to the break-up. So it becomes unclear whether or not Joe is writing what he really means or not. Regardless, Joe may not have much to write, but what he does write is crucial to the relationship.

Joe gets straight to the point when he says, "Susan, I think, since I've moved away to college, we've changed. Things aren't the same anymore. I've thought about it and I think we should see other people." There's no hesitation at all. He doesn't even try to be subtle. But Susan probably shouldn't take these couple sentences literally. It sounds like Joe's having more personal issues than relationship issues. I think Joe really meant to say, "Susan, I think, since I've moved away to college, I've changed. I don't really have feelings for you anymore. I've been dating other chicks on campus and I think you should just let go."

We all know that no break-up letter is good without a closing. And what a fine job Joe does of it. Joe incorporates Susan's pet name, "Susie-Bear," to try to get on her good side. He tells her that things will be all right, knowing that he just broke this poor girl's heart. Yet he stays on the lighter side of conversation by reminding her that they'll "still be friends." How many times have we heard that line? More than I think we can count. "Let's be friends" is found in dozens of movies about tragic break-ups. I guess Joe's just trying to keep up the tradition.

And now for the clean get-away! Where's a guy supposed to go after a fresh break-up? Straight out the door, that's where. Joe makes a clean break for

the door when he carelessly changes the subject from his failed relationship to being late for class. My guess is that Joe doesn't have class in 15 minutes. It's probably 15 minutes until fraternity football practice. His brothers are probably pounding on his door telling him to hurry up because they're going to be late.

After taking a good look at Joe's letter, I think Susan can finally see the whole picture. Reading deeper than the words on paper can be a challenge, yet in the end is very rewarding. Maybe Joe should have taken the time to write what he really meant to say:

Susan,

Hey! What's up? Hope you're not having as much fun as I am, cuz I'm having a great time! Ever since I joined my fraternity, it's been non-stop parties and girls.

So, sorry for not writing last week. I thought about it but didn't get to it. I called you last night and your line was busy, so I gave up. But anyway, I needed to talk to you last night. Susan, I think since I've moved away to college, I've changed. I don't really have feelings for you anymore. I've been dating other chicks on campus and I think you should just let go. It'll be good for you.

Don't worry, you'll get over me. In 2 months you won't even remember my name. Well, it's time to go kick some ass on the football field and the boys are waiting. Gotta go.

Joe

He probably wouldn't have saved his reputation, but at least he would have been honest.