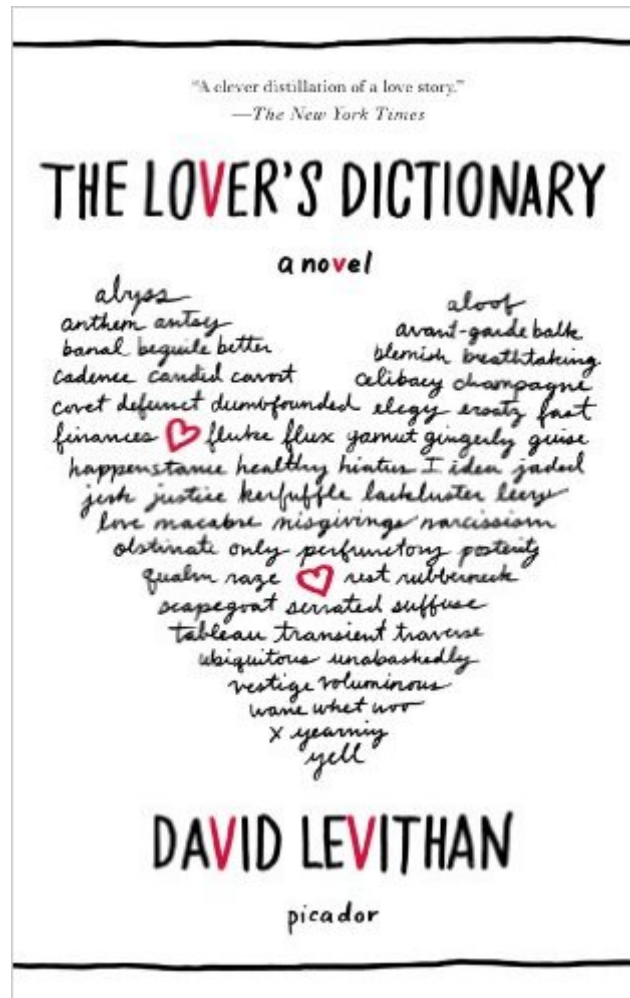


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# The Lover's Dictionary: A Novel



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I just finished David Levithan's *THE LOVER'S DICTIONARY* and thrust it into the hands of the nearest person I saw, so they could love it, too. (Don't worry, I knew them, so it's okay. But I'd still probably give this book out to random people...) I don't usually post reviews but I had to talk about this book. Like, yesterday. Now, I'm familiar with David's young adult books, *NICK AND NORAH*, *WILL GRAYSON*, *WILL GRAYSON*, etc., and, as a children's book professional, was very curious to see how his writing would flow for the adult market. As he said at the ALA conference this past weekend, there's absolutely no difference: his are all just words in the service of a story. And the story in *THE LOVER'S DICTIONARY* is a great one. Told in dictionary entries, topped by words that set the tone, *DICTIONARY* is about two people, one self-conscious, the other sometimes painfully not, and the course of their relationship and cohabitation in New York City. Some entries are poignant, some hilarious, some coy, some painful. From these snatches of memory and thought

and feeling, a rich tapestry begins to emerge. It charts very accurately the swell of love, the pangs of betrayal, the small mishaps of the unexciting everyday moments, the lonely and numbing void left behind when feelings, and people, change. My favorite thing a writer can do is something David did literally dozens of times in *DICTIONARY*. It's when a character has a thought or does something or feels a certain way...and it's so close to one of my thoughts or feelings or actions...that I have to look over my shoulder, because I swear the author has somehow reached into my head to grab a very private piece of me.

I saw David Levithan read the book tonight at Borders in NYC--a moving evening. David's passion comes through each line read, each written. I love his books, but I didn't know he was such a wonderful performer. He feels deeply as he reads, and he's hilarious when he isn't breaking your heart--no, he's hilarious when he's breaking your heart too. His is a beautiful heart, such a generous artist. *The Lover's Dictionary* is one of the most creative novels I've read. Alphabetized entries headed by beautiful words most of us don't take the time to speak anymore give pieces of a relationship that on one page is in devastating freefall, and then in the next entry the lovers are riding the heights. The structure is exhilarating, pulling you inside out with anticipation with each new chapter--and the chapters are short, at times only a line or two long. You want to linger on the language, but the relationship's constant ups and downs keep you moving into the next chapter. I kept thinking, Will they make it? Will their love last? It doesn't and it does--I won't spoil it for you. But having the chance to root for these two people was uplifting. The writing is gorgeous. I always feel this way about David's books, but *TLD* is different. It's so very poetic. With few words, the author had me hoping, wishing, wistful at times but above all laughing. So many moments in here rang true with my direct experience. That's my very favorite thing about the book: It speaks to so many of us, man, woman, gay, straight, human. It's a wonderful gift to us, to be able to see ourselves in a romance so heartfelt--and so cinematic. David's language is evocative. His characters are our friends, and I was blessed to spend time with them. Truly a lovely work of art, and a terrifically fun read too.

David Levithan is an unapologetic romantic. His young adult novels co-written with Rachel Cohn (*NICK & NORAH'S INFINITE PLAYLIST*, *DASH & LILY'S BOOK OF DARES*) are joyful celebrations of quirky young romance, and his collection of love stories, *HOW THEY MET*, remains one of my favorite books on the topic of love. Many of those tales had their origin in his tradition of writing a Valentine's Day story for his family and friends. Now, in his first novel marketed to adults, Levithan

offers an unusual portrait of a long-term relationship, exploring not only How They Met but also How They (Almost?) Fell Apart. THE LOVER'S DICTIONARY is told not chronologically but alphabetically, as Levithan's narrator uses a series of dictionary entries to tell the story of his love for an unnamed woman. Although the first entry (aberrant, adj.) tells of their first date --- the two met on an online dating site --- after that, the entries move back and forth freely in time, from their earliest courtship to the most recent betrayal that has stressed the relationship to the brink. We're told this story from the point of view of the man in the relationship; we never hear the woman's own voice (except as reported by the narrator). Surprisingly, though, we do learn a lot about her. She's charismatic, impulsive, maybe more than a little untrustworthy. She has a tendency to drink too much, but people (almost) always forgive her because she's so darn charming. And she inevitably fails to put the cap back on the toothpaste, but our narrator usually keeps his mouth shut. Because, well, he loves her.

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