

Title: Love Unscripted | Love in Full Color: The Emotional Landscape

Synopsis:

In this episode, Tim and LeeAnna take a wrench to the sputtering engine of modern love and tinker with everything from trust and intimacy to how being “in love” sometimes feels like trying to start a chainsaw with a wet noodle. With a handy metaphor (love = engine), they drive us through nine essential “inputs” (trust, attraction, fidelity, finance, etc.) and ten deliciously complicated “outputs” (tenderness, joy, and accepting that sometimes love belches smoke). Bonus: dramatic dialogue readings from characters James and Alice, who prove—again—that even fictional people need couples counseling.

Podcast:

[Listen on Apple Podcasts](#)

[Listen on Spotify](#)

[Listen on Audible](#)

[Listen on PodBean](#)

[Listen on iHeart Radio](#)

The Snark’s Review: [here](#)

Discussion Questions

Use these questions to spark conversation and reflection in the classroom:

- Which of the nine love “inputs” do you think breaks down first in most fictional relationships? Why?
- Are any of the “outputs” possible without at least all of “inputs” firing? If less are needed, is that cheating?
- Can a fictional relationship be too healthy? (Do you want to read about two people who communicate perfectly and share chores with joy? No? Didn’t think so.)
- When do you think a character knows they’re in love? Is it when they panic? When they apologize? When they stop stealing the last soda?
- Which matters more to your characters: shared values, or shared playlists?

Writer’s Prompts

Creative exercises to help students apply the themes of the topic:

- **Prompt 1:** The World-Saving Superhero with a Relationship Issue. Write about a superhero whose ability to deflect meteors is top-tier, but whose partner thinks he’s emotionally unavailable. How do you save the world and still make it home in time for therapy? Keep the drama domestic and the explosions metaphorical.
- **Prompt 2:** The Detective and the Dreaded Ex. Write a jaded private eye whose most unsolvable case is why his ex-wife still haunts his emotional life (and maybe his voicemail).

Avoid clichés—she’s not just “awful,” maybe she’s right and he just can’t handle it. Bonus if he talks to his dog about it.

- **Prompt 3:** Write a scene where one of your characters realizes the person they thought they loved was just a “warm placeholder.” Feel free to sob while writing. It’s healthy.
- **Prompt 4:** Write a meet-cute where one person is already in a relationship... with someone they respect but don’t love. Now what?
- **Prompt 5:** Describe a first kiss that goes awkwardly wrong, but leaves both people weirdly optimistic.
- **Prompt 6:** Write a short internal monologue where a character realizes they’re staying in the relationship for safety, not love.
- **Prompt 7:** Write a breakup that never actually says the words “break up.” But it’s clearly over.

Class Activities

These activities will help expand on the themes of the topic:

- **Group Discussion:** Split the group into pairs. One person plays “Input” (like Trust), the other “Output” (like Tenderness). Argue about what went wrong in a fictional relationship. Bonus if someone blames the Finances.
- **Design Exercise:** Create a relationship “dashboard” like a car. What lights flash when something’s wrong? How does your couple know when they’re about to emotionally overheat?
- **Debate:** “Physical attraction is more important than shared values in the short term.” Discuss. Ideally without ending your own relationships.
- **Collaborative Alien Story-Building:** Just because we can’t stop thinking about aliens, imagine an alien species that uses an entirely different model of love—maybe spores or contract negotiations. Now throw them into a human romance story and see what catches fire.

Closing note from the Podcasters, Tim & LeeAnna

Writers—if you take nothing else from this episode, take this: love in fiction doesn’t have to be perfect. In fact, it shouldn’t be. What makes it real is the misfiring, the awkward repairs. Just like a real engine, a fictional relationship runs best when it’s maintained—through humor, vulnerability, and maybe a shared bag of chips. So write with heart, write with flaws, and remember: it’s not about the horsepower—it’s about whether it still starts on cold mornings.