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Good Writing

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Good Writing

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George and Monty, go to the board and work out the third problem.

Note what happens if the comma is omitted.

George and Monty go to the board and work out the third problem.

The imperative sentence becomes a declarative sentence,
a completely different statement.

Together, they tell a complete story:

“George and Monty, go to the board and work out the third problem.”

George and Monty go to the board and work out the third problem.

Note the conclusive ending.

That’s good writing.

However, note what happens when a dash is added.

George and Monty go to the board and work out—the third problem.

George and Monty suddenly become part of a problem,
apparently the third such problem we’ve had to face,
even though George and Monty, themselves, haven’t changed at all.

Now imagine what happens if George and Monty don’t go to the board.

Imagine what happens if George and Monty refuse to be the subject of this little game,
if they perform their acts elsewhere, perfidiously devoted to their own affairs.

The declarative sentence becomes a lie on the part of the writer,
and all of our problems remain unsolved.