

BEST WRITING QUOTES—COLLECTION #3

There are head books, heart books, and pocket books. One you write just for the money. One you write because it's something you've always wanted to write—it's important to your soul to write. And one you write because it's interesting—it's something you simply want to explore.

—Jane Yolen

Even if I knew for certain that I would never have anything published again, and would never make another cent from it, I would still keep on writing.

—Brenda Ueland

It was one of those evenings when men feel that truth, goodness and beauty are one. In the morning, when they commit their discovery to paper, when others read it written there, it looks wholly ridiculous.

—Aldous Huxley

Maybe you're one of those people who writes poems, but rarely reads them. Let me put this as delicately as I can: If you don't read, your writing is going to suck.

--Kim Addonizio

Writing is the spectrum through which the chaos of life can be seen, studied and understood.

—Stewart Stafford

I don't want to restrict the life of a play to a particular production. The original actors might leave after the first six months, and I want the play to last 30 or 40 years. You write for the character, not the actor on the stage.

--Neil Simon

I know that I have reached the pinnacle of rewards. There's no more money anyone can pay me that I need. There are no awards they can give me that I haven't won. I have no reason to write another play except that I am alive and I like to do it.

—Neil Simon

An artist carries on throughout his life a mysterious, uninterrupted conversation with his public.

—Maurice Chevalier

We writers—and especially writers for children, but all writers—have an obligation to our readers: it's the obligation to write true things, especially important when we are creating tales of people who do not exist in places that never were—to understand that truth is not in what happens but what it tells us about who we are. Fiction is the lie that tells the truth, after all. We have an obligation not to bore our readers, but to make them need to turn the pages. One of the best cures for a reluctant reader, after all, is a tale they cannot stop themselves from reading. And while we must tell our readers true things and give them weapons and give them armor and pass on whatever wisdom we have gleaned from our short stay on this green world, we have an obligation not to preach, not to lecture, not to force predigested morals and messages down our readers' throats like adult birds feeding their babies pre-masticated maggots; and we have an obligation never, ever, under any circumstances, to write anything for children that we would not want to read ourselves. We have an obligation to understand and to acknowledge that as writers for children we are doing important work, because if we mess it up and write dull books that turn children away from reading and from books, we've lessened our own future and diminished theirs.

—Neil Gaiman

Ending a novel is almost like putting a child to sleep—it can't be done abruptly.

—Colm Toibin

I am most alive and most fulfilled sitting alone in a room, hoping that those words forming on paper in the Smith Corona will be the first perfect play ever written in a single draft.

--Neil Simon

Commas in the *New Yorker* fall with the precision of knives in a circus act, outlining the victim.

—E. B. White

I had learned already never to empty the well of my writing, but always to stop when there was still something there in the deep part of the well, and let it refill at night from the springs that fed it.

—Ernest Hemingway

Kids who hate reading inevitably end up being terrible writers.

—Wataru Watari

Writers, by their very nature, live a thousand lives and die a thousand times. They experience loss each time a character dies. They revel in exquisite pain and fear the writer's block that comes with finding happiness. In all my time, I've never met an author who didn't have a tortured soul or a personal demon.

—Larry Ray Palmer

Sometimes,
when inspiration runs dry,
I drink classical music
until my words spill out.

—Kamand Kojouri

The creative urge is the demon that will not accept anything second rate.

—Agnes de Mille

If you only write when inspired, you may be a fairly decent poet, but you'll never be a novelist.

—Neil Gaiman

Writers are archeologists of themselves.

—Vicki Grove

I write in order to comprehend.

—Anna Kamienska

How we always long to become something more than just one being, more than a solitary brain inside an isolated organism.

—Nicolai Houm

Writing is the most fun you can have by yourself.

—Terry Pratchett

I'll be writing as long as I can hold a pen in my curled, crimped arthritic hands and then I'll dictate it, if it comes to that. They'll have to pry my pen out of my cold, dead fingers—and even then, I'll fight 'em for it. Guaranteed.

—Wanda Lea Brayton

I can't write, it's all a fantasy: a kind of circling obsession.

—Philip Larkin

Ideas must work through the brains and arms of men, or they are no better than dreams.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

The empty page is a white flag of...surrender.

—Ilya Kaminsky

A writer of fiction lives in fear. Each new day demands new ideas and he can never be sure whether he is going to come up with them or not.

—Roald Dahl

How could poetry and literature have arisen from something as plebian as the cuneiform equivalent of grocery-store bar codes? I prefer the version in which Prometheus brought writing to man from the gods. But then I remind myself that... we should not be too fastidious about where great ideas come from. Ultimately, they all come from a wrinkled organ that at its healthiest has the color and consistency of toothpaste, and in the end only withers and dies.

—Alice Weaver Flaherty

What art offers is space—a certain breathing room for the spirit.

—John Updike

When you write with a pencil, you are, in a very real sense, drawing. You're laying down the two-dimensional images of words. You can write little or big; with light pressure or heavy; you can print carefully or race along in whatever version of cursive is yours....You don't have to baby a pencil. You can leave it lying around, you can even lose it without too much grief. You can write with in a canoe or on a mountain ledge, or upside-down while lying in bed. No worries about ink, mechanisms, batteries.

—Elizabeth Sims

Miniature microphones and voice-to-text software literally enable us to write as fast as we can talk. The next phase is nearly upon us, where a machine will write my novels for me—and no double publish them, collect royalties and spend the money on nice things for itself.

—Elizabeth Sims

There's no denying, for sheer efficiency and volume of work, nothing surpasses modern computer and word-processing software. Those things keep getting better and better: Where once WordPerfect was the living end, it now makes you want to slam your face on a brick. We're all indebted to Microsoft Word and similar software for making our process incredibly easy....for the final product, there's nothing like deleting and inserting with up-to-the-minute software.

—Elizabeth Sims

Whether taken from 200 B.C., Victorian England, or the Roaring 20s, quotations yield insight both into the nature of the age and also into the nature of the people who originated the quotes. Quotations embody habits of thought, customs, and moral values. By carefully selecting from the writing of one period, one can unfold, little by little, characteristics and values of that particular age. Similarly, by selecting passages from a particular author's writings, a teacher can illustrate the style, techniques, values, and the unique traits of that writer.

—Dan L. Miller

Any discipline can help your writing: logic, mathematics, theology, and of course and particularly drawing. Anything that helps you to see, anything that makes you look. The writer should never be ashamed of staring. There is nothing that doesn't require his attention.

—Flannery O'Connor

The most difficult and complicated part of the writing process is the beginning.

—A. B. Yehoshua

A hammer made of deadlines is the surest tool for crushing writer's block.

—Ryan Lilly

The quality of your writing is absolutely capped at your understanding of human behavior. You'll never write above what you know about people.

—Tony Gilroy

Most people put off my mother's erratic behavior to the fact that she was a writer, as if that just explained everything. To me that was just an excuse. I mean, brain surgeons can be crazy too, but no one says that's all right.

—Sarah Dessen

The first requisite for immortality is death.

—Stanislaw Lec

You have to write the book that wants to be written. And if the book will be too difficult for grown-ups, then you write it for children.

—Madeleine L'Engle

It's the craziest contradiction we deal with as writers: We're the freest of the world's free spirits and we're constantly strapped to rigid works schedules. Publishers all insist on deadlines. Authors who want their writing published learn to meet them.

—Franklynn Peterson
and Judi
Kesselman-Turkel

If you have to use the English language in almost any structured way in your job, you will have a double, a quadruple difficulty in finding your English language at night and on Sundays. When I had to earn my living for many years, I taught French. I should have taught mathematics. By teaching math or biology or physics, you come refreshed to writing.

—Thornton Wilder

I had always said to myself that forty was the cut off point of my apprenticeship which may for some people sound like a very long one, but the novel as art is a middle-aged art.

—Jane Rule

Reading and writing cannot be separated. Reading is breathing in; writing is breathing out.

—Pam Allyn

I loathed every day and regret every day I spent in school. I like to be taught to read and write and add and then be left alone.

—Woody Allen

I used to be embarrassed because I was just a comic-book writer while other people were building bridges or going on to medical careers. And then I began to realize: entertainment is one of the most important things in people's lives. Without it they might go off the deep end. I feel that if you're able to entertain people, you're doing a good thing.

—Stan Lee

The Covenant of the Arc: The screenwriting law that says: Every single character in your movie must change in the course of your story. The only characters who don't change are the bad guys.

—Blake Snyder

Why did I decide to start a diary today? Has something important happened? Have I discovered that my friends are keeping diaries of their own? No! I just want a friend. Somebody I can talk to about my everyday worries and joys. Somebody who'll feel what I feel, believe what I say and never reveal my secrets. No human being could ever be that kind of friend. Today, my diary, is the beginning of our deep friendship. Who knows how long it will last? It might even continue until the end of our lives.

—Renia Spiegel, Polish
Teen and
Holocaust Victim,
(1939)

I don't want to live for nothing like most people. I want to be useful or give pleasure to the people around me who don't yet know me. I must have something besides a husband and children, something that I can devote myself to! I want to go on living even after my death.

—Anne Frank

I am the best and sharpest critic of my own work. I know myself what is and what is not well written.

—Anne Frank

I once stayed in a hotel, next door to a well-known writer. He never talked about writing. Each night I heard his typewriter, hour after hour, past midnight. Everybody else in the hotel was asleep. The sound of that machine reminds me, still, that what writers do is write.

—Richard Bach

Success means accomplishing what you set out to do, and in my case, that was seeing my name on the cover of a book—which was the only objective I'd ever had. I felt like a success when my son, not yet two years old, pointed to the photo on the dust cover and said, 'Daddy!'

—Tom Clancy

Getting published is really exciting, but it's not the point of writing. The actual writing is what it's all about—the daily joy in sitting down to a blank page and crafting something beautiful or funny or heartwrenching or even just blah (depending on the day). While getting a book (and articles, and stories) published is a great ego boost, the real meaning in writing comes from the words flowing out of your fingertips—and the sense of achievement in a finished project.

—Bridget McNulty

For me, the job of writing is pretty uphill most of the time. It's like climbing a mountain—you get some fantastic views when you pause or when you get to the top, but the actual process can be tough. I'm sure there are people out there who enjoy writing, and I wish them all the best, but I'm not like that. I wish I could enjoy the process more, but I think I've come to accept that for it to work, I have to be uncomfortable.

—Mark Haddon

Just thinking about distress to one's self may not have and usually does not have the same outcome as writing it down. Why not? First, because the writing is 'official,' indelible; it takes time and requires attention. Writing is also a matter of doing something other than emoting over the unwanted feelings; it may be reciprocally inhibiting the anxiety. Writing offers an 'out,' a relief from the binding anxiety, and relief from the redundant issues of problem-anxiety-distress-distraction-further anxiety. The individual who stops to write something down is more likely to remember his effort and can retain a record of having done the writing. Writing forces one to enter into a different set of activities, compared to 'just thinking about the matter.'

—E. L. Phillips

Being goal-oriented instead of self-oriented is crucial. I know so many people who want to be writers. But let me tell you, they really don't want to be writers. They want to have been writers. They wish they had a book in print. They don't want to go through the work of getting the damn book out. There is a huge difference.

—James Michener

I will never do anything like this to her and our children again...I will revel in, truly revel in, the thought that I am no longer a writer.

—Karl One Knausgaard

THE ADVANTAGES OF WRITING THERAPY:

- The preparation of a 'written production' such as a diary, autobiography, short story, poem, letter, etc., by a client isn't an expressive and creative act. It both analyzes and synthesizes emotion in a deeply personal way and, as such, works counter to repressive and regressive forces in the personality. It is catharsis in the best sense. It heals through its major symbolism—not un like Greek drama—and because the unexpressible can often be expressed.
- The content of the 'written production' provides materials for analysis similar to dreams, fantasies, projective tests, and other imaginative productions. The language of the 'written production' is also as much a source of parapraxis as are slips of the tongue, forgetting, etc.
- 'Written production' further interval therapy by providing for rehearsal of therapeutic hours. In this way the development of insight and cognition is encouraged. Above all, if the psychotherapist is the respondent of the 'written production,' his presence in interval-therapy is given a tangible imaginal form.
- A 'written production' usually has a wider social base than an individual therapy session. In this sense, it is more outer-directed for it involves family, peer groups, authority figures, etc., in greater quantities than in the sessions. Since society is the place where the client ultimately makes his life, written productions permit him a wider social integration of analytic material.
- My impression has been that, under certain circumstances, the time required for treatment may be eclipsed by the judicious use of 'written productions.'
- Under emergency circumstances of separation of client and therapist, 'written productions' have a place along with the telephone, standby colleagues, etc.

—Arthur Burton

I have often believed the pen to be a needle, and ink to be a thread. Each story is an intricately woven tapestry and with each word I invariably sew a piece of myself into the page.

—Shaun Hick

BENEFITS OF WRITING THERAPY IN CLASSROOM SETTINGS:

- Many students are enabled to discuss their needs and their problems.
- The therapeutic writing facilitates progress in counseling interviews.
- Students become more willing to go into the subject matter of the class and are more successful in it.
- Learning takes place through the curriculum without lowering standards.
- Students assume more responsibility in classroom activities.
- Students achieve an increased sense of security.
- Students gain more self insight.
- As more value is placed upon individuals, they become more aware of themselves

—Joseph S. Zaccaria,
Harold
Alton Moses, &
Jeff S. Hollowell

Books used to be written by humanity's greatest thinkers, or at least our greatest entertainers. Now every halfwit can publish his verbal diarrhea. And millions of shitty, mediocre, uninspired, trite books are drowning out mankind's greatest literary accomplishments.

—Oliver Markus Malloy

Most self-published books are kinda like dreams. Your dream was interesting to you, but when you tell others what you dreamed last night, their eyes glaze over, because your nightly hallucinations really aren't all that interesting to anyone else.

—Oliver Markus Malloy

Writing is hard work, and don't let anybody tell you otherwise. It's hard on the eyes, the back, the fanny, the disposition and the nail polish.

—Louise Dickinson Rich

Writing at its best is simply taking dictation from your soul.

—Catherine Carrigan

A writer gets to live yet another life every time he or she creates a new story.

—Pawan Mishra

When people shine a little light on their monster, we find out how similar most of our monsters are.

—Anne Lamott

What is writing but an expression of my own life?

—Zane Grey

Writing is a solitary endeavor, being an author is not.

—Karen A. Chase

When you put down the good things you ought to have done, and leave out the bad ones you did do—well, that's Memoirs.

—Will Rogers

I'm not a writer. Ernest Hemingway was a writer. I just have a vivid imagination and type 90 WPM.

—Tiffany Madison

Constant work, constant writing and constant revision. The real writer learns nothing from life. He is more like an oyster or a sponge. What he takes in he takes in normally the way any person takes in experience. But it is what is done with it in his mind, if he is a real writer, that makes his art.

—Gore Vidal

Have you ever pondered the miracle of popcorn? It starts out as a tiny, little, compact kernel with magic trapped inside that when agitated, bursts to create something marvelously desirable. It's sort of like those tiny, little thoughts trapped inside an author's head that—in an excited explosion of words—suddenly become a captivating fairy tale!

—Richelle E. Goodrich

Similar to any other restless act of philosophizing, writing is an attempt to understand our world. Writing enables a person to congeal the fragments of a disorderly life into a meaningful collage. It encourages us to iron out internal inconsistencies and damper an outraged heart. When we stumble in life, writing allows us to pick ourselves up and see the beauty and virtue in doing so. Writing feverously enables us to revive a depleted spirit, discover a joyous stand in the wilderness, and find a means to be at peace with the world.

—Kilroy J. Oldster

I am a compost heap, and everything I interact with, every experience I've had, gets shoveled onto the heap where it eventually mulches down, is digested and excreted by worms, and rots. It's from that rich, dark humus, the combination of what you encountered, what you know and what you've forgotten, that ideas start to grow.

—Anne Patchett

A writer turns to paper to stem a burble of pain, shut the door on sadness, and allow the mind to release unsavory obsessions.

—Kilroy J. Oldster

A personal essay is probably the most malleable form of writing style, because it enables a writer to engage in a felicitous conversation with oneself. The more formal rules that govern academic writing are largely inapplicable to personal essay writing. Personal essays are free from the forbidding cadence and rigid structure of thesis writing. A personal essay's lilt reflects the movement of the writer's mind.

—Kilroy J. Oldster

Writing seemed to me to be the most natural thing to do during my college days. I could not open up to others and so I started writing my thoughts in my journal. It gave me a sense of calm and peace.

And now after so many years to write my thoughts in my journal still seems to me to be the most natural thing to do. I am still not able to open up easily in front of people. And so writing keeps me sane!

—Avijeet Das

All methods of writing represent an intellectual technique of inquiry and expression. Both personal essay writing and poetry provide a reputable method of a person sharing their physical and emotional experiences, observations, and thoughts.

Kilroy J. Oldster

Sometimes the title IS the story, and the rest is just an explanation.

—James K. Bowers

We write more when we hurt. Facing a physical, emotional, or spiritual crisis, a person might turn to writing as a panacea. A person overcome with frustration or doubt might attempt to regain their intellectual and spiritual bearings by probing the matrix of their confused thoughts in a logical or creative manner.

—Kilroy J. Oldster

All writing is essentially autobiographical because our composed thought patterns reflect our accumulated life experiences. At some level, every type of work, whether it is literature, poetry, music, painting, photography, sculpture, or architecture, is always a portrait of the creator. We cannot escape ourselves any more than we can outrun our shadow.

—Kilroy J. Oldster

Writing is a form of intense thinking that takes a person on a journey into previously uncharted territory of the writer's mind.

—Kilroy J. Oldster

All writers want to a place their mark upon human consciousness by creating a physical record of their distinctive thoughts and an index of their cherished emotional memories.

—Kilroy J. Oldster

Writing is the act of finding out what I think.

—Stephen King

Writing therapy can serve as an ancillary vehicle for self-insight. During a disciplinary interview a student may be defensive and actually more worried about saving himself or herself or covering up his or her errors than in taking a thoughtful look at himself or herself and his or her behavior. During a writing session, however, he or she will have time to think and reflect, and while still perhaps trying to cover up his or her actions, the writing may prove cathartic and start in motion the process of self-evaluation and self-insight. The student, unhampered by the dean, now has time to cool down, reflect, and express his or her feelings in a comfortable atmosphere. Rather than battling the dean in an interview, the student is only struggling with himself or herself and his or her own problem. He or she may very well, during the writing, even solve the problem or realize the counter productivity of his or her behavior.

—Dan L. Miller

Another important function of writing therapy may also help the dean counsel students in need of help. A student who has no friends, is immature and being teased by other students, or for any reason has a strong need to communicate with someone in a position to help him or her, may be able to keep in close and constant touch with the dean through emails. At any time at home or at school when the student feels troubled and needs to communicate with a friend, he or she should feel free to do so through an email to the dean. The dean should have established with the student a positive relationship that would promote this type of correspondence, and, in fact, the dean could build a large portion of his or her counseling around this particular system of communication. Realistically, the dean cannot spend as much time in counseling as many students would want or as much time as many students may need. A student taking advantage of this system of communication would write as long an email as he or she needed. Many students are discouraged when they want to talk with the dean or their counselor but can't because the dean is out or busy. If the student does get in to see the dean, the dean may be rushed because he or she has other work to attend to. By writing an email, the student is free to say whatever he or she wants and to communicate for as long as he or she wants. The dean, of course, should also make it a point to keep in personal contact with these types of students and to counsel them as often as possible. The email writing system of communication can, moreover, spread the services of the dean over a larger portion of the student body and extend the length of therapy and counseling.

—Dan L. Miller

When I write a novel it is like I am taking a thought for a walk.

—Aminatta Forna

Everyone lies about writing. They lie about how easy it is or how hard it was. They perpetuate a romantic idea that writing is some beautiful experience that takes place in an architectural room filled with leather novels and chai tea.

—Amy Poehler

Art is not a metonym for truth telling. All art is a form of a falsifying; otherwise why would anyone need art to tell us what we already know? Art makes us stand back and see what lies outside the four corners of a canvas, it makes us look inside ourselves and realize the sublime truth that previously eluded us. Art makes us realize what already lies within ourselves waiting for the resolute seeker to discover. Art frequently concentrates on the blemishes of nature. When one sees nature disfigured, it reveals both sides of the same notion

—Kilroy J. Oldster

The ultimate goal of any writer is to explore the lightest and darkest aspects of being. If a writer accomplishes this task, the work might assist other people endure their own heartaches and appreciate more deeply the profundity of life.

—Kilroy J. Oldster

The irony that all writers confront and must overcome is that the writer is afraid to commence, frightened to finish what is slowly becoming an embodiment of oneself, and terrified that unless they do complete their manuscript that all their effort will remain stillborn.

—Kilroy J. Oldster

Sometimes when I prepare to write, I feel the same sensation wash over me as if my toes were curling over the brink of a high cliff, my gaze peering downward into a dark pond, and I anxiously wonder, will the water prove deep enough? Will my words be satisfactory?

—Richelle E. Goodrich

Writing is one of the best therapies that exist. Either on paper, computer, phone or tablet, in any form it is helpful. Whenever you feel like writing, just do it. Let the words flow out of your mind and heart. It doesn't have to make sense to anyone but you. Some people may find it easier to express themselves in writing than verbally. While you will have time to choose the best words, you will also escape the fear of immediate reaction. Take your time and play with the words until you feel you got them right. One can write about anything. About a dream, a fantasy, a love story, happenings during the day, an apology or a greeting, everything is permitted in the world of writing. There it is not good or bad.

—Nico J. Genes

Writing is daydreaming with ink.

—Liana Brooks

I could never stand to be a writer. Not a real writer. It's entirely too awful, having thoughts that refuse to become sentences.

—Caitlín R. Kiernan

You will find that, if you continue to write fiction, every character you create is partly you.

—Stephen King

We write, not because we claim to know more than others, but perhaps because we want to know more than others. Writers are explorers.

—Bangambiki
Habyarimana

There is good news and bad news regarding the literacy levels and literary engagement of today's youth. The good news is that today's young people are reading and writing at high levels heretofore unachievable. They are engaged in literacy activities for major portions of their day. The bad news is that their reading and writing is comprised of communicating through social media—Twitter, Facebook, and texting. Although the level of literary engagement is high, the quality of the engagement is quite low. Texters and chatters communicate with phrases, single words, sentence fragments, misspellings, myriad abbreviations, web slang, acronyms, and emoticons-:).

—Dan L. Miller

I cannot find any patience for those people who believe that you start writing when you sit down at your desk and pick up your pen and finish writing when you put down your pen again; a writer is always writing, seeing everything through a thin mist of words, fitting swift little descriptions to everything he sees, always noticing. Just as I believe that a painter cannot sit down to his morning coffee without noticing what color it is, so a writer cannot see an odd little gesture without putting a verbal description to it, and ought never to let a moment go by undescribed.

—Shirley Jackson

If you're not creating, you're disintegrating.

—Tawny Lara

I wrote the last sentence of *The Patron Saint of Liars* in early April and stumbled out of my apartment and into the beautiful spring feeling panicked and amazed. There is no single experience in my life as a writer to match that moment, the blue of the sky and the breeze drifting in from the bay. I had done the thing I had always wanted to do: I had written a book, all the way to the end. Even if it proved to be terrible, it was mine.

—Ann Patchett

Writing is just rubbing words together long enough to make a fire.

—Gillian Marchenko

There's a difference between the 'art' of writing and the 'craft' of writing. Art is subjective, its beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder, but craft is objective. There is a right way and a wrong way to craft.

—Gerard de Marigny

Writing is therapeutic. It helps you cope with issues that seem gargantuan at the time. The process of expressing yourself about a problem, editing your thoughts, and writing some more can help you control issues that you face.

—Guy Kawasaki

I can't wait to get back to writing today so I can see what happens next.

—Kim Cormack

That is what kills political writing, this absurd pretense that you are delivering a great utterance. You never do. You are just a puzzled man making notes about what you think. You are not building the Pantheon, then why act like a graven image? You are drawing sketches in the sand which the sea will wash away.

--Walter Lippmann

The discipline of writing something down is the first step toward making it happen.

--Lee Iacocca

Of all the arts in which the wise excel, nature's chief masterpiece is writing well.

--Duke of Buckingham

The biggest obstacle to professional writing is the necessity for changing a typewriter ribbon.

--Robert Benchley

Writing ought either to be the manufacture of stories for which there is a market demand—a business as safe and commendable as making soap or breakfast foods—or it should be an art, which is always a search for something for which there is no market demand, something new and untried, where the values are intrinsic and have nothing to do with standardized values.

--Willa Cather

So often is the virgin sheet of paper more real than what one has to say, and so often one regrets having marred it.

—Harold Acton

Writing crystallizes thought and thought produces action.

--Paul J. Meyer

For me, a page of good prose is where one hears the rain [and] the noise of battle.

—John Cheever

Writing is probably one-fifth coming up with the stuff, and four-fifths self-editing again and again and again.

—David Mitchell

When I'm writing a novel, I feel like I have a funnel for a head and everything in my life and outside of it just pours into the story. I'm constantly traipsing through my own emotional landscape and experience, and I also steal from everyone else....And I'm always looking further afield, too. I dove into the study of classical music when writing *Sky* and visual art when writing *Sun*. I took courses in stone carving to better understand Jude and Guillermo and have been taking cooking classes for my new novel. For me, one of the best parts of novel writing is getting to learn about things that interest me via my characters.

—Jandy Nelson

The pen sometimes builds a more enduring monument than can the hammer or chisel.

—James Lendall Basford

A man may speak with his tongue and only be heard around the corner; but another man may speak with his pen and be heard around the globe.

—James Lendall Basford

Ink on paper is as beautiful to me as flowers on the mountains.

—Terri Guillemets

I'd rather be caught holding up a bank than stealing so much as a two-word phrase from another writer.

—Jack Smith

There is a zone to writing. It takes some effort, some hours of struggle to reach, but once you're there, the words flow as if from a spigot. Thoughts fill up the page. Your fingers function independently of your body and brain as you tap out the poetry. It's the groove that baseball hitters speak of. The hot hand that basketball players relish. It is that sweet moment in a race car when everything slows down despite the speedometer reading 175 miles per hour. Everything doable in life has a zone like this.

--Joe Kita

A well-disposed research librarian is a writer's best friend, as essential as ink.
—Barbara Rogan

You write to communicate to the hearts and minds of others what's burning inside you. And we edit to let the fire show through the smoke.
—Arthur Polotnik

How vain it is to sit down to write when you have not stood up to live!
—Henry David Thoreau

It is impossible to discourage the real writers—they don't give a damn what you say, they're going to write.
—Sinclair Lewis

Writing is utter solitude, the descent into the cold abyss of oneself.
—Franz Kafka

I write because I'm afraid to say some things out loud.
—Gordon Atkinson

The arts are not a way to make a living. They are a very human way of making life more bearable. Practicing an art, no matter how well or badly, is a way to make your soul grow, for heaven's sake. Sing in the shower. Dance to the radio. Tell stories. Write a poem to a friend, even a lousy poem. Do it as well as you possible can. You will get an enormous reward. You will have created something.
—Kurt Vonnegut

Write what should not be forgotten.
—Isabel Allende

All I need is a sheet of paper
and something to write with, and then
I can turn the world upside down.
—Friedrich Nietzsche

A writer is a person who cares what words mean, what they say, how they say it. Writers know words are their way towards truth and freedom, and so they use them with care, with thought, with fear, with delight. By using words well they strengthen their souls. Story-tellers and poets spend their lives learning that skill and art of using words well. And their words make the souls of their readers stronger, brighter, deeper.
—Ursula K. Le Guin

One ought only to write when one leaves a piece of one's own flesh in the inkpot, each time one dips one's pen.

—Leo Tolstoy

At the point of the pen is the focus of the mind.

—James Lendall Basford

The best style is the style you don't notice.

—Somerset Maugham

We who make stories know that we tell lies for a living. But they are good lies that say true things, and we owe it to our readers to build them as best we can. Because somewhere out there is someone who needs that story. Someone who will grow up with a different landscape, who without that story will be a different person. And who with that story may have hope, or wisdom, or kindness, or comfort. And that is why we write.

—Neil Gaiman

Being a writer, is ultimately about asking yourself, How alive am I willing to be?

—Anne Lamott

Writing is a concentrated form of thinking. I don't know what I think about certain subjects, even today, until I sit down and try to write about them. Maybe I wanted to find more rigorous ways of thinking. We're talking now about the earliest writing I did and about the power of language to counteract the wallow of late adolescence, to define things, define muddled experience in economical ways. Let's not forget that writing is convenient. It requires the simplest tools. A young writer sees that with words and sentences on a piece of paper that costs less than a penny he can place himself more clearly in the world. Words on a page, that's all it takes to help him separate himself from the forces around him, streets and people and pressures and feelings. He learns to think about these things, to ride his own sentences into new perceptions.

—Don DeLillo

I knew in my bones that Emily Dickinson wouldn't have written even one poem if she'd had two howling babies, a husband bent on jamming another one into her, a house to run, a garden to tend, three cows to milk, twenty chickens to feed, and four hired hands to cook for. I knew then why they didn't marry. Emily and Jane and Louisa. I knew and it scared me. I also knew what being lonely was and I didn't want to be lonely my whole life. I didn't want to give up on my words. I didn't want to choose one over the other. Mark Twain didn't have to. Charles Dickens didn't.

—Jennifer Donnelly

Ink, a Drug.

—Vladimir Nabokov

The trouble with writing fiction is that it has to make sense, whereas real life doesn't.

—Iain M. Banks

Writing is finally about one thing: going into a room alone and doing it. Putting words on paper that have never been there in quite that way before. And although you are physically by yourself, the haunting Demon never leaves you, that Demon being the knowledge of your own terrible limitations, your hopeless inadequacy, the impossibility of ever getting it right. No matter how diamond-bright your ideas are dancing in your brain, on paper they are earthbound.

—William Goldman

The job of the writer is to take a close and uncomfortable look at the world they inhabit, the world we all inhabit, and the job of the novel is to make the corpse stink.

—Walter Mosley

novel rough draft is like bread dough; you need to beat the crap out of it for it to rise.

—Chris Baty

The modern ballpoint pen was invented by two Hungarian brother—George and Ladislao Bíró—who confirmed the advantage of quick-drying ink for use in pens. The first prototype was completed 1938. The pair fled Hungary during World War II and eventually ended up in Argentina. The new pens were favored by the British Royal Air Force during the war because they were much more useful at high altitudes than fountain pens.

—Roger Matile

A word is not the same with one writer as it is with another. One tears it from his guts. The other pulls it out of his overcoat pocket.

—Charles Péguy

A deadline is, simply put, optimism in its most kick-ass form. It's a potent force that, when wielded with respect, will level any obstacle in its path.

—Chris Baty

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

—Seamus Heaney

Strong words outlast the paper they are written upon.

—Joseph Bruchac

Panicky despair is an underrated element of writing.

—Dave Barry

When I am writing, I am trying to find out who I am, who we are, what we're capable of, how we feel, how we lose and stand up, and go on from darkness into darkness. I'm trying for that. But I'm also trying for the language. I'm trying to see how it can really sound. I really love language. I love it for what it does for us, how it allows us to explain the pain and the glory, the nuances and delicacies of our existence. And then it allows us to laugh, allows us to show wit. Real wit is shown in language. We need language.

—Maya Angelou

No one wants to read poetry. You have to make it impossible for them to put the poem down—impossible for them to stop reading it, word after word. You have to keep them from closing the book.

—Muriel Rukeyser

Two things put me in the spirit to give. One is that I have come to think of everyone with whom I come into contact as a patient in the emergency room. I see a lot of gaping wounds and dazed expressions. Or, as Marianne Moore put it, 'The world's an orphan's home.' And this feels more true than almost anything else I know. But so many of us can be soothed by writing: think of how many times you have opened a book, read one line, and said, 'Yes!' And I want to give people that feeling, too, of connection, communication.

—Anne Lamott

Writing a long and substantial book is like having a friend and companion at your side, to whom you can always turn for comfort and amusement, and whose society becomes more attractive as a new and widening field of interest is lighted in the mind.

—Winston S. Churchill

Writer's block is real. It happens. Some days you sit down at the old typewriter, put your fingers on the keys, and nothing pops into your head. Blanko. Nada. El nothingissimo. What you do when this happens is what separates you from the one-of-these-days-I'm-gonna-write-a-book crowd.

—James N. Frey

We write by the light of every story we have ever read.

—Richard Peck

In writing. Don't use adjectives which merely tell us how you want us to feel about the thing you are describing. I mean, instead of telling us a thing was 'terrible,' describe it so that we'll be terrified. Don't say it was 'delightful'; make us say 'delightful' when we've read the description. You see, all those words (horrifying, wonderful, hideous, exquisite) are only like saying to your readers, 'Please will you do my job for me.'

—C. S. Lewis

I don't think writers are sacred, but words are. They deserve respect. If you get the right ones in the right order, you might nudge the world a little or make a poem that children will speak for you when you are dead.

—Tom Stoppard

Writing, the art of communicating thoughts to the mind through the eye, is the great invention of the world...enabling us to converse with the dead, the absent, and the unborn, at all distances of time and space.

—Abraham Lincoln

The society to which we belong seems to be dying or is already dead. I don't mean to sound dramatic, but clearly the dark side is rising. Things could not have been more odd and frightening in the Middle Ages. But the tradition of artists will continue no matter what form the society takes. And this is another reason to write: people need us, to mirror for them and for each other without distortion—not to look around and say, 'Look at yourselves, you idiots!,' but to say, 'This is who we are.'

—Anne Lamott

Writers don't write from experience, although many are hesitant to admit that they don't. ...If you wrote from experience, you'd get maybe one book, maybe three poems. Writers write from empathy.

—Nikki Giovanni

When you're a writer, the question people always ask you is, 'Where do you get your ideas?' Writers hate this question. It's like asking Humphrey Bogart in *The African Queen*, 'Where do you get your leeches?' You don't get ideas. Ideas get you.

—Connie Willis

To those who care about punctuation, a sentence such as 'Thank God its Friday' (without the apostrophe) rouses feelings not only of despair but of violence. The confusion of the possessive 'its' (no apostrophe) with the contractive 'it's' (with apostrophe) is an unequivocal signal of illiteracy and sets off a Pavlovian 'kill' response in the average stickler.

—Lynne Truss

Being a writer is 1% inspiration, 50% perspiration and 49% explaining you're not a millionaire like J.K.Rowling.

—Gabrielle Tozer

He drove his mind into the abyss where poetry is written.

—George Orwell

It's good for you to write down your thoughts. It's therapeutic because it forces you to slow down and think about life.

—Katie Kacvinsky

The job of the first eight pages is not to have the reader want to throw the book at the wall, during the first eight pages.

—David Foster Wallace

I confess to wincing every so often at a poorly chosen word, a mangled sentence, an expression of emotion that seems indulgent or overly practiced. I have the urge to cut the book by fifty pages or so, possessed as I am with a keener appreciation for brevity.

—Barack Obama

There are a thousand thoughts lying within a man that he does not know till he takes up the pen to write.

—William Makepeace
Thackeray

A letter is always better than a phone call. People write things in letters they would never say in person. They permit themselves to write down feelings and observations using emotional syntax far more intimate and powerful than speech will allow.

—Alice Steinbach

Writing without revising is the literary equivalent of waltzing gaily out of the house in your underwear.

—Patricia Fuller

The mind travels faster than the pen; consequently, writing becomes a question of learning to make occasional wing shots, bringing down the bird of thought as it flashes by. A writer is a gunner, sometimes waiting in the blind for something to come in, sometimes roaming the countryside hoping to scare something up.

—E. B. White

Anyone who is going to be a writer knows enough at fifteen to write several novels.

—May Sarton

Only amateurs say that they write for their own amusement. Writing is not an amusing occupation. It is a combination of ditch-digging, mountain-climbing, treadmill and childbirth. Writing may be interesting, absorbing, exhilarating, racking, relieving. But amusing? Never!

—Edna Ferber

Wrote my way out of the hood...thought my way out of poverty! Don't tell me that knowledge isn't power. Education changes everything.

—Brandi L. Bates

Talent is extremely common. What is rare is the willingness to endure the life of the writer.

—Kurt Vonnegut

I don't go back and look at my early work, because the last time I did, many years ago, it left me cringing. If one publishes, then one is creating a public record of Learning to Write.

—Lorrie Moore

The minute you put in a word that everybody don't know, you have just muddled up that many readers. Running onto a word you can't read, or understand, is just like a detour in the road. You cuss it, and about a half dozen of em, and you will take a different road the next time. I love words but I don't like strange ones. You don't understand them, and they don't understand you. Old words is like old friends, you know em the minute you see um.

—Will Rogers

Writing is.... being able to take something whole and fiercely alive that exists inside you in some unknowable combination of thought, feeling, physicality, and spirit, and to then store it like a genie in tense, tiny black symbols on a calm white page. If the wrong reader comes across the words, they will remain just words. But for the right readers, your vision blooms off the page and is absorbed into their minds like smoke, where it will re-form, whole and alive, fully adapted to its new environment.

—Mary Gaitskill

It's a wonderful thing to be able to create your own world whenever you want to.

—Woody Allen

I enter the world through what I write. I grew up believing, and continue to believe, that I am a screw-up, that growing up with my family and friends, I had nothing to offer in any conversation. But when I started writing, suddenly there was something that I brought to the party that was at a high-enough level.

—Aaron Sorkin

Writing is an intense form of thought.

—Don DeLillo

I could not think without writing.

—Jean Piaget

Good novel are written by people who are not frightened.

—George Orwell

People who are prone to sadness are more likely to pick up a pen.

—Lang Leav

The key to understanding any people is in its art: its writing, painting, sculpture.

—Louis L'Amour

Writing: It starts at the keyboard, and it ends at the far corners of the universe.

—Vincent Lowry

It's possible, in a poem or a short story, to write about commonplace things and objects using commonplace but precise language, and to endow those things—a chair, a window curtain, a fork, a stone, a woman's earring—with immense, even startling power. It is possible to write a line of seemingly innocuous dialogue and have it send a chill along the reader's spine—the source of artistic delight, as Nabokov would have it. That's the kind of writing that most interests me.

—Raymond Carver

I want people who write to crash or dive below the surface, where life is so cold and confusing and hard to see. Your anger and damage and grief are the way to the truth.

—Anne Lamott

The first good reason to write a book is to add value to people's lives.

—Guy Kawasaki

I still encourage anyone who feels at all compelled to write to do so. I just try to warn people who hope to get published that publication is not all it is cracked up to be. But writing is. Writing has so much to give, so much to teach, so many surprises. That thing you had to force yourself to do—the actual act of writing—turns out to be the best part. It's like discovering that while you thought you needed the tea ceremony for the caffeine, what you really needed was the tea ceremony. The act of writing turns out to be its own reward.

—Anne Lamott

Writing a book isn't an easy process nor is it always enjoyable, but it is one of life's most satisfying achievements.

—Guy Kawasaki

Good writing is the hardest form of thinking. It involves the agony of turning profoundly difficult thoughts into lucid form, then forcing them into the tight-fitting uniform of language, making them visible and clear. If the writing is good, then the result seems effortless and inevitable. But when you want to say something life-changing or ineffable in a single sentence, you face both the limitations of the sentence itself and the extent of your own talent.

—Pat Conroy

You write for the people in high school who ignored you. We all do.

—Carolyn Kizer

It's okay to embark on writing because you think it will get you love. At least it gets you going, but it doesn't last. After a while you realize that no one cares that much. Then you find another reason: money. You can dream on that one while the bills pile up. Then you think: 'Well, I'm the sensitive type. I have to express myself.' Do me a favor. Don't be so sensitive. Be tough. It will get you further along when you get rejected.

Finally, you just do it because you happen to like it.

—Natalie Goldberg

To get the right word in the right place is a rare achievement. To condense the diffused light of a page of thought into the luminous flash of a single sentence, is worthy to rank as a prize composition just by itself...Anybody can have ideas—the difficulty is to express them without squandering a quire of paper on an idea that ought to be reduced to one glittering paragraph.

—Mark Twain

If I didn't know the ending of a story, I wouldn't begin. I always write my last lines, my last paragraph first, and then I go back and work towards it. I know where I'm going. I know what my goal is.

—Katherine Ann Porter

A poem was a box for your soul. That was the point. It was the place where you could save bits of yourself, and shake out your darkest feelings, without worrying that people would think you were strange. While I was writing, I would forget myself and everyone else; poetry made me feel part of something noble and beautiful and bigger than me.

—Andrea Ashworth

All the time I'm not writing I feel like a criminal. It's horrible to feel felonious every second of the day. It's much more relaxing to actually write.

—Fran Lebowitz

When the last autumn of Dickens's life was over, he continued to work through his final winter and into spring. This is how all of us writers give away the days and years and decades of our lives in exchange for stacks of paper with scratches and squiggles on them. And when Death calls, how many of us would trade all those pages, all that squandered lifetime-worth of painfully achieved scratches and squiggles, for just one more day, one more fully lived and experienced day? And what price would we writers pay for that one extra day spent with those we ignored while we were locked away scratching and squiggling in our arrogant years of solipsistic isolation?

—Dan Simmons

Late into the night I write and the pages of my notebook swell from all the words I've pressed onto them. It almost feels like the more I bruise the page the quicker something inside me heals.

—Elizabeth Acevedo

Journal writing is a voyage to the interior.

—Christina Baldwin

I just rearrange words into a pleasing order for money.

—Terry Pratchett

We publish only to satisfy our craving for fame; there's no other motive except the even baser one of making money.

—Thomas Bernhard

There are very few professions in which people just sit down and think hard for five or six hours a day all by themselves. Of course it's why you want to become a writer—because you have the liberty to do that, but once you have the liberty you also have the obligation to do it.

—Tobias Wolff

If you are a real writer, then just surrender to the writer's life, all of it, even the bad stuff. When you do that, the beauty appears: the peace, the meaning, the joy, the fulfillment, the sense that you are doing what you were born to do and what could be better, in the end, than that?

—Lauren B. Davis

'Writer's block' is just a fancy way of saying 'I don't feel like doing any work today.'

—Meagan Spooner

In my profession it isn't a question of telling good literature from bad. Really good literature is seldom appreciated in its own day. The best authors die poor, the bad ones make money—it's always been like that. What do I, an agent, get out of a literary genius who won't be discovered for another hundred years? I'll be dead myself then. Successful incompetents are what I need.

—Walter Moers

In the very act of writing I felt pleased with what I did. There was the pleasure of having words come to me, and the pleasure of ordering them, re-ordering them, weighing one against another. Pleasure also in the imagination of the story, the feeling that it could mean something. Mostly I was glad to find out that I could write at all. In writing you work toward a result you won't see for years, and can't be sure you'll ever see. It takes stamina and self-mastery and faith. It demands those things of you, then gives them back with a little extra, a surprise to keep you coming. It toughens you and clears your head. I could feel it happening. I was saving my life with every word I wrote, and I knew it.

—Tobias Wolff

When you are writing a book you have to include some descriptions of things. I said that I could take photographs and put them in the book. But she said the idea of a book was to describe things using words so that people could read them and make a picture in their own head.

—Mark Haddon

You know you're writing well when you're throwing good stuff into the wastebasket.

—Ernest Hemingway

How can I tell Bob that my happiness streams from having wrenched a piece out of my life, a piece of hurt and beauty, and transformed it to typewritten words on paper? How can he know I am justifying my life, my keen emotions, my feeling, by turning it into print?

—Sylvia Plath

In middle school I typed an entire paper while clicking the space bar twice between each word bc I thought that's what double spaced meant.

—Internet Meme

You can make something out of every unfinished story and every rejection if you work at it.

—Tomi Adeyemi

I would say that music is the easiest means in which to express, but since words are my talent, I must try to express clumsily in words what the pure music would have done better.

—William Faulkner

I write to reach eternity.

—James Jones

I do not write poetry; I take words and dip them in feelings.

—Arti Honrao

It's up to the artist to use language that can be understood, not hide it in some private code. Most of these jokers don't even want to use language you and I know or can learn . . . they would rather sneer at us and be smug, because we 'fail' to see what they are driving at. If indeed they are driving at anything—obscurity is usually the refuge of incompetence.

—Robert A. Heinlein

Writing is like baking cupcakes, you're trying to make something from the raw. Like with cupcakes it's flour and eggs and stuff, and with books it's ideas and words. The end result is the same though, you want people to eat them up.

—Emma Shortt

I've always known that the best part of writing occurs before you've picked up a pen. When a story exists only in your mind, its potential is infinite; it's only when you start pinning words to paper that it becomes less than perfect. You have to make your choices, set your limits. Start whittling away at the cosmos, and don't stop until you've narrowed it down to a single, ordinary speck of dirt. And in the end, what you've made is not nearly as glorious as what you've thrown away.

—Carolyn Parkhurst

While writing he found the words came from the muscles in his hands, the feel of the shaft of his pen, the locked joint of his elbow, the scratching noise of the nib marking paper and, underneath all that, some coordinating impulse in his guts.

—Ali Shaw

I'm like one of those old aqueducts: there's so much rubbish clogging up the banks of my thought that it flows slowly, and only spills from the end of my pen drop by drop.

—Gustave Flaubert

Everyone should read, we say, but we act as if only those with special talent should write.

—Roy Peter Clark

Have you ever pondered the miracle of popcorn? It starts out as a tiny, little, compact kernel with magic trapped inside that when agitated, bursts to create something marvelously desirable. It's sort of like those tiny, little thoughts trapped inside an author's head that—in an excited explosion of words—suddenly become a captivating fairy tale!

—Richelle E. Goodrich

I get a fine warm feeling when I'm doing well, but that pleasure is pretty much negated by the pain of getting started each day. Let's face it, writing is hell.

—William Styron

Writing is the voices inside our heads, our minds, the creativity that exists for us to, from nothing, create alternate worlds, manipulate a personality or to introduce a new kind of love, a new kind of hate or pain or happiness or wonder or... anything we want. Through words, we can do, we can be anything we want.

—Allie Burke

Most people carry their demons around with them, buried down deep inside. Writers wrestle their demons to the surface, fling them onto the page, then call them characters.

—C.K. Webb

Feel oddly barren. My sickness is when words draw in their horns and the physical world refuses to be ordered, recreated, arranged and selected. I am a victim of it then, not a master.

—Sylvia Plath

I wonder what the retirement age is in the novel business.
The day you die.

—Yasunari Kawabata

Storytellers are individuals who enjoy creating a holiday for the mind.

—Linda Daly

If you can't write clearly, you probably don't think nearly as well as you think you do.

—Kurt Vonnegut

The writer who loses his self-doubt, who gives way as he grows old to a sudden euphoria, to prolixity, should stop writing immediately: the time has come for him to lay aside his pen.

—Colette

The best thing about Art is that the people who create it live forever.

—Jonathan Heatt

Writing keeps me at my desk, constantly trying to write a perfect sentence. It is a great privilege to make one's living from writing sentences. The sentence is the greatest invention of civilization. To sit all day long assembling these extraordinary strings of words is a marvelous thing...

For me, a line has to sing before it does anything else. The great thrill is when a sentence that starts out being completely plain suddenly begins to sing, rising far above itself and above any expectation I might have had for it. That's what keeps me going on those dark December days when I think about how I could be living instead of writing.

—John Banville

All writers are waiting for replies.

—Niall Williams

We must work at our profession and not make anybody else's idleness an excuse for our own. There is no lack of readers and listeners; it is for us to produce something worth being written and heard.

—Pliny the Younger

Writing is easy. Writing well is hard work.

—Amy Joy

Writing is the best anti-depressant.

—Fierce Dolan

You can't just write and write and put things in a drawer. They wither without the warm sun of someone else's appreciation.

—Anne Morrow
Lindbergh

I am constantly writing autobiography, but I have to turn it into fiction in order to give it credibility.

—Katherine Paterson

I've put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant, and that is the only way of insuring one's immortality.

—James Joyce

Happy children do not seem to grow up to be writers.

—Piers Anthony

For me to ask, ‘Can you give me 15 hours of your life?’ That is major! It’s almost like asking for marriage! It’s such a big deal nowadays to ask someone for their time. So I think, I need to work for that. I need to merit that.

—Min Jin Lee

What makes writing painful for all of us is when we have expectations on recognition. Recognition is something that’s really fanciful and evanescent.

—Min Jin Lee

But ‘why then publish?’ There are no rewards
Of fame or profit when the world grows weary.
I ask in turn why do you play at cards?
Why drink? Why read? To make some hour less dreary.
It occupies me to turn back regards
On what I’ve seen or pondered, sad or cheery,
And what I write I cast upon the stream
To swim or sink. I have had at least my dream.

—Lord Byron

I write to make sense of my life.

—John Cheever

Most writers don’t talk about their craft—they just do it.

—Alfred Lansing

I don’t know much about creative writing programs. But they’re not telling the truth if they don’t teach, one, that writing is hard work, and, two, that you have to give up a great deal of life, your personal life, to be a writer.

—Doris Lessing

The writing of solid, instructive stuff fortified by facts and figures is easy enough. There is no trouble in writing a scientific treatise on the folk-lore of Central China, or a statistical enquiry into the declining population of Prince Edward Island. But to write something out of one's own mind, worth reading for its own sake, is an arduous contrivance only to be achieved in fortunate moments, few and far in between. Personally, I would sooner have written Alice in Wonderland than the whole Encyclopedia Britannica.

—Stephen Leacock

The easiest thing to do on earth is not write.

--William Goldman

Nothing so sharpens the thought process as writing down one's arguments. Weaknesses overlooked in oral discussion become painfully obvious on the written page.
—Hyman G. Rickover

A book is never, ever finished. You simply get to a point where you and your editor are reasonably happy with how it is and you go with that. Left to our own devices, a writer would endlessly fiddle with a book, changing little thing after little thing.
—Kimberly Pauley

Writing became such a process of discovery that I couldn't wait to get to work in the morning: I wanted to know what I was going to say.
—Sharon O'Brien

Each book creates its own structure and its own length. I've written three or four slim books. It may be that the next novel is a big one, but I don't know.
—Don DeLillo

Send message to the future by writing it today!
—Toba Beta

When you're a student of poetry, you're lucky if you don't realize how untalented you are until you get a little better. Otherwise, you would just stop.
—Tony Hoagland

The first (if not necessarily the prime) function of a novelist, of ANY artist, is to entertain. If the poem, painting, play or novel does not immediately engage one's surface interest, then it has failed. Whatever else it may or may not be, art is also entertainment. Bad art fails to entertain. Good art does something in addition.
—Brigid Brophy

That is the mystery about writing: it comes out of afflictions, out of the gouged times, when the heart is cut open.
—Edna O'Brien

When you're writing, you're creating something out of nothing ... A successful piece of writing is like doing a successful piece of magic.
— Susanna Clarke

For me the experience of writing is really an experience of losing control.... I think it's very much like dreaming or like surfing. You go out there and wait for a wave, and when it comes it takes you somewhere and you don't know where it'll go.
—Margaret Atwood

The greatest writers have persistence.

—Gina Nahai

The historian records, but the novelist creates.

—E. M. Forster

BENEFITS OF WRITING THERAPY

Keeping a journal can be extremely helpful for the user, whether it helps them improve their memory, record important bits and pieces of their day, or just helps them relax at the end of a long day. These are certainly not trivial benefits, but the potential benefits of writing therapy reach further and deeper than simply writing in a diary.

In individuals who have experienced a traumatic or extremely stressful event, expressive writing can have a significant healing effect. In fact, participants in a study who wrote about their most traumatic experiences for 15 minutes, four days in a row, experienced better health outcomes up to four months later.

Another study tested the same writing exercise on over 100 asthma and rheumatoid arthritis patients, with similar results. The participants who wrote about the most stressful event of their lives experienced better health evaluations related to their illness.

A recent study suggested that expressive writing may even improve immune system functioning, although it may need to be sustained for the health benefits to continue.

In addition to these more concrete benefits, regular therapeutic writing can help the writer find meaning in their experiences, view things from a new perspective, and see the silver linings in their most stressful or negative experiences. It can also lead to important insights about yourself and your environment that may be difficult to determine without focused writing.

Overall, writing therapy has proven effective for many different conditions or mental illnesses, including:

Posttraumatic stress

Anxiety

Depression

Obsessive-compulsive disorder

Grief and loss

Chronic illness issues

Substance abuse

Eating disorders

Interpersonal relationship issues

Communication skill issues

Low self-esteem

—Courtney Ackerman

Medicines and surgery may cure, but only reading and writing poetry can heal.
—J. Arroyo

Writing is like giving yourself homework, really hard homework, every day, for the rest of your life. You want glamorous? Throw glitter at the computer screen.
—Katrina Monroe

If you wrote something for which someone sent you a cheque, if you cashed the cheque and it didn't bounce, and if you then paid the light bill with the money, I consider you talented.
—Stephen King

Writing with deep feeling improves immune system function, decreases stress, lowers blood pressure, and increases positive short and long term mood changes.
— James Pennebaker

Writing keeps you sharp with age. Writing is a thinking exercise, and like physical exercise, it can help keep you 'in shape' as you age....Just like how friendships help keep you happy and healthy through their ties to social interaction and dialogue, writing seems like the private equivalent—it keeps you thinking regularly and helps keeps the mental rust from forming.

—Gregory Ciotti

A paper cut is a tree's last revenge.

—*theChive*

Bibliotherapy is an expressive therapy that involves the reading of specific texts with the purpose of healing. It uses an individual's relationship to the content of books and poetry and other written words as therapy. Bibliotherapy is often combined with writing therapy. It has been shown to be effective in the treatment of depression. These results have been shown to be long-lasting.

—*goodreads.com*

I've written all these stories without any pornography, without any obscenity. I grew up among sailors and miners and lumberjacks and the roughest kind of men in the world, but I never found it necessary to use all that in the stories. I can make them real without that. I think much of that kind of writing is a cover up for lack of real skill.

—Louis L'Amour

When I sit down to write a poem, I am opening myself up to the magic of possibility, of something beautiful and profound taking shape on the page. I am never sure what will happen.

—Faisal Mohyuddin

How can writing be used to solve a behavior problem, as in the case of a student who comes late to class?

Although students are often late for ‘no good reason,’ sometimes those reasons are important to them. Teachers who automatically assign detention are not willing to listen to what a student might have to say.

If right before class Janie’s boyfriend announces that he is breaking up with her, it’s not hard to figure out why, when she is late, she becomes angry at the teacher who says, ‘Report to me after school.’ If, however, the teacher hands Janie a piece of paper and says in a calm and neutral voice, ‘Please write and tell me why you’re late,’ Janie has a chance to explain without wasting classtime.

Writing doesn’t replace punishment in this situation—although ‘punishment’ might not be called for—but it allows the student a chance to reflect on the situation and to cool down. The teacher later reads what the student wrote and can then make a decision about the next step.

Later by talking to the student privately, person-to-person, not authority-to-subordinate, the teacher can enlist the student’s help in solving the problem so detention isn’t even necessary.

The student is not put into a power struggle with the teacher where both would end up losing. The teacher treats the student as a person worthy of consideration. Being treated as someone whose opinions count gives the student a sense of control in the situation. The teacher has not given up any authority by allowing the student to explain, but the teacher’s willingness to listen prevents the student from feeling like a victim.

The amazing thing about using writing to communicate is that often when students have ‘no good excuse’ for being late, not doing their homework, or whatever, they actually follow up their written explanation with a commitment to take care of the problem....Teachers have fewer problems to deal with in the classroom if they work with students to find solutions rather than trying to maintain control by punishing students to show them who’s boss....If penalties or consequences are called for, the teacher can often get students to accept responsibility of the situation when they take time to listen to the student’s view either on paper or in person and to explain their own view in a natural conversational tone.

Writing itself isn’t the key, but writing offers the busy teacher a means of giving the student an opportunity to talk on paper, buying some time to consider the situation, and scheduling a private conference with the student as a follow-up, if necessary. Such a meeting may have to be held after school, but it serves a different purpose than that of detention.

—Anne Wescott Dodd

When teachers use writing as a means of communication, students almost automatically become more motivated to do assignments and get involved in class activities. They come to believe that the teacher values them and their opinions. Because they have a vehicle for individually communicating with the teacher, they aren't just squares on a seating chart or lines in the gradebook. The teacher cares, so they begin to care more about doing well in that class. It happens as long as students are not punished or penalized for what they write.

—Anne Wescott Dodd

Reading Helps You Write Better. Regular reading can improve your vocabulary, but that's not all. It will also help you be more articulate when it comes to writing. You'd need to study or take a seminar if you want to be a writer, but you can start by making reading a regular habit.

You don't need to be an aspiring writer to have a reason to read every day. Reading can help you with school papers and applications. The more you read, the more you'll learn. College applications require essays, and knowing a lot can help you create a well-written article that can be your ticket to your dream university....It can also help you with your studies or work since regular reading improves your vocabulary and writing skills.

—Leslie Wyman

Among educated citizens, especially those who become afflicted by 'professional' languages, the demon 'jargon' afflicts the written word with what appears to be an incurable disease. One only needs to pick up professional journals in such areas as education, sociology, and law to realize the unintelligibility of much of the written prose as vended by presumably educated people.

—William Goldstein

One sentence can take on eight meanings, simply by moving the word 'only':

Only I hit him in the eye yesterday.

I only hit him in the eye yesterday.

I hit only him in the eye yesterday.

I hit him only in the eye yesterday.

I hit him in only the eye yesterday.

I hit him in the only eye yesterday.

I hit him in the eye only yesterday.

I hit him in the eye yesterday only.

—Ernest Brennecke

Although society assumes that (1) schools should teach grammar and (2) learning grammar will help students to write better, those who teach both writing and grammar have long questioned the second assumption. As early as 1906, researcher Franklin S. Hoyt demonstrated that a knowledge of grammar is not a concomitant of effective writing....While some studies connect grammar instruction and writing, many more suggest that the ability to write well has little to do with how much formal grammar a person knows. One might argue that if the reverse were true, grammarians would be the best writers in our society. Those who have read widely in their works certainly cannot endorse such a contention.

—R. Baird Shuman

Citing a study of 3,000 graded essays drawn from students across the United States, (Rei R.) Noguchi notes that the 20 most common types of error are in punctuation, especially the use of commas and apostrophes; in verb use, particularly irregular verbs; and in pronoun use and reference of pronouns.

—R. Baird Shuman

The study of traditional school grammar (i.e., the definition of parts of speech, the parsing of sentences, etc.) has no effect on raising the quality of student writing. Every other focus of instruction...is stronger. Moreover, a heavy emphasis on mechanics and usage (e.g., marking every error) results in significant losses in overall quality....The presentation of good pieces of writing as models is significantly more useful than the study of grammar....Free writing. This focus asks students to write freely about whatever concerns them. As a major instructional technique, free writing is more effective than teaching grammar in raising the quality of student writing.

—George Hillocks, Jr.

Human beings are the only ones in nature who are aware that they will die. For that reason and only for that reason, I have a profound respect for the human race, and I believe that its future is going to be much better than its present. Even knowing that their days are numbered and that everything will end when they least expect it, people make of their lives a battle that is worthy of a being with eternal life. What people regard as vanity—leaving great works, having children, acting in such a way as to prevent one's name from being forgotten—I regard as the highest expression of human dignity.

— Paulo Coelho

As a student of Zen, you once believed that each life lived, no matter how short, was a complete life. But this was before you fell, body and soul, down the writing well. If death came tomorrow, no way would you be ready! Why? You are thinking about all the stories inside you, bubbling in the cauldron of your mind, stories waiting to rise to the rim.

—Reni Roxas

I love to write. But it has never gotten any easier to do and you can't expect it to if you keep trying for something better than you can do.

—Ernest Hemingway

Here's the sorry-ass deal if you are an unknown writer: The world is not waiting for your novel. Nobody cares if you finish it, not even your mother. Nor the agent who says by all means, send her your manuscript.

Nobody cares. But one. You. You care. Desperately.

The clock in your room tells the time, each tick as fleeting as a heartbeat....You no longer have time to fail. So you remain in the chair, pounding the keys so you can fuel that late-blooming fire that is yours and yours alone. Because it's nontransferable, it's perishable.

Time.

As a writer it is all you ask for.

Time to finish.

—Reni Roxas

Writing is more akin to constructing a crossword puzzle than to solving one. And in what genre you do it is not as important as how interesting you make it.

—Ashley Kunsu

First drafting is mania, and editing is more like depression. It's more like a thing I have to slog through. I don't enjoy it as much, but I understand the necessity of it. With a book you have so many edits—you usually have a developmental edit, a copy edit, a line edit, and first-pass pages. By the time a book gets published, I've looked through it like 20 times, and I'm done with it.

—Ryan G. Van Cleave

Poets serious about making careers in institutions understand that the criteria for success are primarily quantitative. They must publish as much as possible as quickly as possible. The slow maturation of genuine creativity looks like laziness to a committee. Wallace Stevens was forty-three when his first book appeared. Robert Frost was thirty-nine. Today these sluggards would be unemployable.

—Dana Gioia

Good writers are those who keep the language efficient. That is to say, keep it accurate, keep it clear. It doesn't matter whether the good writer wants to be useful, or whether the good writer wants to be harm.

—Ezra Pound

I do not write poetry for publication, I write it for the same reason that, according to Wilde, one should write a diary, to have something sensational to read on the train. And as a way of speaking to myself. But most importantly of all for pleasure.

—Stephen Fry

Maybe you are too old a dog to learn new tricks? Maybe you have missed the bus? That's hoey. Thomas Hardy (a finer poet than he was a novelist in my view) did not start publishing verse till he was nearly sixty.

—Stephen Fry

He started writing poetry again, but it didn't come as easily. It was hard now to get past the self-consciousness—the silliness, really—of being such a well-established adult applying himself, seriously, to such a youthful joy.

—B. J. Novak

Reading and writing, like everything else, improve with practice. And, of course, if there are no young readers and writers, there will shortly be no older ones. Literacy will be dead, and democracy—which many believe goes hand in hand with it—will be dead as well.

—Margaret Atwood

I write because I'm free,
because I can,
because I will.

I write because I must,
because I'm breathing,
because I'd go crazy otherwise,
because it's who I am.

I write to make a statement,
to share my thoughts,
to discover myself,
to express my ideas.

But most of all, I write for future generations.

I write for love.

I write to inspire.

I write to encourage.

I write for me.

—Nadège Richards

This is an embarrassing confession for an adult to make. In their idle hours Winston Churchill and Noel Coward painted. For fun and relaxation Albert Einstein played the violin. Hemingway hunted, Agatha Christie gardened, James Joyce sang arias and Nabokov chased butterflies. But poetry?....An adolescent girl may write poetry, so long as it is securely locked up in her pink leatherette five-year diary. Suburban professionals are permitted to enter jolly pastiche competitions in the Spectator and New Statesman. At a pinch, a young man may be allowed to write a verse or two of dirty doggerel and leave it on a post-it note stuck to the fridge when he has forgotten to buy a Valentine card. But that's it. Any more forays into the world of Poesy and you release the beast that lurks within every British breast—and the name of the beast is Embarrassment.

—Stephen Fry

Put the right word in the right place, make the connection, and there's a perceptible sweetness of impact. Stadiums do not rise when it happens, earthly crowds do not roar, but at your desk or your wobbling perch in Starbucks you feel it: silent terraces of angels pumping their fists.

—James Parker

A deadline—the galloping clock, the smell of the editor—is a particular concentration of mortal tension. The brain on deadline does whatever it can: It improvises, it compresses, it contrives, it uses the language and the ideas that are at hand. Inspiration comes or it doesn't. Here the writer is an athlete—performing under pressure and, if he or she is good, delivering on demand.

—James Parker

Few things are more excruciating for a writer than confronting the words written by her younger self. Her tone is bound to seem stilted, her thoughts alien or insignificant. Did I really think that? she wonders, aghast. Worse yet: Did I really commit it to paper? Ensure that my words would come back to shame me in the future?

—Merve Emre

As a kid, I lived almost entirely inside books, and eventually the books started returning the favor. A lot of my internal world feels like an anthology, or a library. It's eclectic and disorganized, but I can browse in it, and that hugely shapes both what and how I write.

—Kathryn Schulz

The writing life...can feel like a villain: writers' block, rejection letters, bad clients, the novel ending that just refuses to come right, mean reviews, single digit sales. It's a tough gig. By the end of some days we have been made black and blue by a single paragraph, even a single sentence.

—Ericka McIntyre

Writers, by and large, aren't people who play it safe. In fact, considering the grim prospects for making a living (the Author's Guild reported recently that the median income for American writers in 2017 was \$6,080), you could argue that deciding to pursue a writing career requires a certain devil-may-care attitude toward regular meals and personal safety (also, personal hygiene).

—Jeff Somers

Oh my God, what if you wake up some day, and you're 65, or 75, and you never got your memoir or novel written; or you didn't go swimming in warm pools and oceans all those years because your thighs were jiggly and you had a nice big comfortable tummy; or you were just so strung out on perfectionism and people-pleasing that you forgot to have a big juicy creative life, of imagination and radical silliness and staring off into space like when you were a kid? It's going to break your heart. Don't let this happen.

—Anne Lamott

Three qualities are necessary to write superb lyric poetry. First, the writer must have something of a gift: she must be able to make music, command metaphors, compress sense, write melodiously when the situation demands and gratingly when need be. She must be versed in irony; she must have control of tone. But there is more—a second requirement. She must also have something to say. There must be some region of her experience that has transfixed her and that she feels compelled to put into words and illuminate. She must burn to attack some issue, must want to unbind a knot, tighten it, or maybe send a blade directly through its core. Given these powers—the power of expression and the power to find a theme—the poet still must add ambition. She must be willing to write for her readers. She must be willing to articulate the possibility that what is true for her is true for all. When these three qualities—lyric gift; a serious theme, passionately addressed; real ambition (which one might also call courage)—come together, the results can be luminous.

—Mark Edmundson

You can't learn to write in college. It's a very bad place for writers because the teachers always think they know more than you do—and they don't. They have prejudices. They may like Henry James, but what if you don't want to write like Henry James? They may like John Irving, for instance, who's the bore of all time. A lot of the people whose work they've taught in the schools for the last thirty years, I can't understand why people read them and why they are taught. The library, on the other hand, has no biases. The information is all there for you to interpret. You don't have someone telling you what to think. You discover it for yourself.

—Ray Bradbury

Great books write themselves, only bad books have to be written.

—F. Scott Fitzgerald

The hard part about writing a novel is finishing it.

—Ernest Hemingway

The worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt.

—Sylvia Plath

The artist is nothing without the gift, but the gift is nothing without work.

—Emile Zola

The worst thing that can happen to a writer is to get published.

—Dorothy Allison

Bookstores are a writer's drug. We walk the aisles, dancing our fingers over the bindings, lips quivering, wanting a fix.

—Jeanne Veillette
Bowerman

Writing before you are published for the first time is lonely, exciting, full of equal amounts of self-about and hope.

—Bonnie Hearn Hill

Of all the tasks in the world, none is easier to avoid or quit than writing. Any excuse will do.

—Peter Selgin

One should use common words to say uncommon things.

—Arthur Schopenhauer

People often ask me why my style is so simple. It is, in fact, deceptively simple, for no two sentences are alike. It is clarity that I am striving to attain, not simplicity.

Of course, some people want literature to be difficult and there are writers who like to make their readers toil and sweat. They hope to be taken more seriously that way. I have always tried to achieve a prose that is easy and conversational. And those who think this is simple should try it for themselves.

—Ruskin Bond

Every work of art escapes the artist's control—the more popular and complex, the greater the misunderstandings.

—George Packer

THE PERPETUAL POET

So often with others I write in my mind.
My wife when she sees me will poke from behind.
I wake in the night to scribble what seems
Some clever ideas conveyed in my dreams.
At ball games I often draft with my phone
The gist of, to me, the world's greatest poem.
I find that my writing flourishes best,
In places I find myself fully obsessed.
I thrive in that setting,
While often forgetting
I've closed out all life—
Including my wife.

—Dan L. Miller

THE FOIBLES OF FAMOUS AUTHORS—AND ME

Pink, textured pads were the preference of Plath.
The backs of rejections are my chosen path.
On a desk in the attic and facing a wall
His novels Doctorow tended to scrawl.
Cheever it was who faced a hot furnace
Alone in the basement with a pad for his surface.
For me, it's a window I need with a view
Of my neighbors to work in the snow they trudge through.
It's only round pencils that Steinbeck would use.
The hex cut his fingers on others he'd choose.
Rounds tend to shift around in my grip.
The hex gives me service without any slip.
Rostand often bathed while he wrote,
But I tub doze, and my stuff just won't float.
So books in a soapy bathtub I author,
Rejected they'd be by my tepid bath water.

—Dan L. Miller

MY WRITING LIFE

My Mac,
My Dog,
My Muse,
And Me.

—Dan L. Miller

The image of the writer-walker was well enough entrenched by the 20th century that a walk could be consciously undertaken as a literary apprenticeship. In a 1975 reminiscence about New York, the novelist and essayist Edward Hoagland recalls how he stalked the streets of his hometown, first ‘to smell the yeasty redolence of the Nabisco factory’ and then ‘to West Twelfth Street to sniff the police stables.’ The author was inhaling the raw stuff that would fuel creativity: ‘I knew that every mile I walked, the better writer I’d be.’

—Michael LaPointe

If I waited for inspiration, I wouldn’t really be a writer.

—Toni Morrison

There’s only one good reason to be a writer—we can’t help it! We’d all like to be successful, rich and famous, but if those are our goals, we’re off on the wrong foot. In the beginning, when I was in my 20s, I didn’t think about fame or success. I just wanted to earn enough money so I could work at home on my writing. I eventually managed to freelance at home by taking on all sorts of extras that I could pay the bills with, while saving my mornings for fiction writing. (I reviewed, lectured, read manuscripts, taught writing, wrote articles—and scraped by.) It was many years before I could give myself wholly to my writing as I do now.

—Phyllis Whitney

I used to write because I wanted to become rich, and when I didn’t become rich, I wrote because I wanted to become famous, and when I didn’t become famous, I wrote because I liked to write.

—Thomas Sullivan

Forget the first book. My relatives didn’t even buy it. I went on a book tour and sold one desk, two copies of another authors’ book, and guided 36 people to a restroom. I never believed press clippings after I read in one that I had four children and was a chubby housewife. (I had three kids and was fat!) I guess the readers made me feel like a success through their letters. People I had never met before, who had no reason to say nice things, began to write and empathize with me. Don’t take yourself or your success seriously. Remember, your last book is only a garage sale away.

—Erma Bombeck

Some of the greatest artists never know they have ‘succeeded.’ Emily Dickinson died after having published only seven poems in her lifetime. Brahms remarked wistfully that he would give everything he had ever written to have composed one of Strauss’s waltzes. Too many great writers are not found to have ‘succeeded’ until well after their deaths. Did Kafka ‘succeed’? Do writers who end as suicides (Hemingway, Berryman, Sexton, Plath) succeed?

—Anthony Hecht

Creative people don't have a mess, they have ideas lying around everywhere!
—Internet Meme

I love my rejection slips. They show me I try.
—Sylvia Plath

It isn't sufficient to want to be a writer merely for the romance of it, for the ego, for the fame, for the money: mostly because only a very small number of writers achieve the career which affords them any or all of these delicious benefits.
—Tara Mokhtari

If you wrote something for which someone sent you a check, if you cashed the check and it didn't bounce, and if you then paid the light bill with the money, I consider you talented.
—Stephen King

Nothing teaches you as much about writing dialogue as listening to it.
—Judy Blume

I want to do something splendid...something heroic or wonderful that won't be forgotten after I'm dead...I think I shall write books.
—Louisa May Alcott

What artists can do is bring stories to the table that are unshakably true—the sort of stories that, once you've heard them, won't let you return to what you thought before....At the end of the day, our job as artists is to tell the truth as we see it. If telling the truth is an inherently political act, so be it. Times may change and politics may change, but if we do our best to tell the truth as specifically as possible, time will reveal those truths and reverberate beyond the era in which we created them. We keep revisiting Shakespeare's *Macbeth* because ruthless political ambition does not belong to any particular era. We keep listening to *Public Enemy* because systemic racism continues to rain tragedy on communities of color. We read Orwell's *1984* and shiver at its diagnosis of double-think, which we see coming out of the White House at this moment. And we listen to Rodgers and Hammerstein's *South Pacific*, as Lieutenant Cable sings about racism, 'You've got to be carefully taught.' It's all art. It's all political.

—Lin-Manuel Miranda

Such [political] material enters a writer's work not because the writer is or is not consciously political, but because a writer is an observer, a witness, and such observations are the air he breathes.

—Margaret Atwood

‘Come with me,’ the writer is saying to the reader. ‘There is a story I have to tell you, there is something you need to know.’ The writer is both an eye-witness and an I-witness, the one to whom personal experience happens and the one who makes experience personal for others.

—Margaret Atwood

Each book I write is a shout into the silence and prayer and a plea for change.

—Jacqueline Woodson

If I don’t write, I’d die. I understood Hemingway completely when he blew his brains out because he couldn’t write anymore. I’m not gonna do that; I’m a good Catholic boy, so I don’t believe in suicide. But once I can’t write, that’s when I’ll get old.

—Pat Jordan

Revision is your chance to pull off one of fiction’s greatest tricks; namely, convincing the reader that the sentence she just read in a few seconds didn’t actually take hours and hours of labor to get right.

—Anthony Varallo

A sense of isolation can be softened by focusing on yourself. Autobiographical work like journaling can help lonely people deal with the feeling that they don’t matter.

—Rosemary Blieszner

Writing is discovery, not capture; It’s something you kindle, not something you freeze.

—Steve O’Keefe

Frustration is not an interruption of the process, frustration is the process. The frustration, the hard part, the obstacle, the insecurities, the difficulty, the ‘I don’t know what to do with this things now,’ that’s the creative process. And if you want to do it without encountering frustration and difficulty, then you’re not made for that line of work.

—Elizabeth Gilbert

Studies have shown that it takes us 20 minutes to return to our task with full concentration after checking email one time.

—Dana Shavin

If you show someone something you've written, you give them a sharpened stake, lie down in your coffin, and say, ‘When you’re ready’.”

—David Mitchell

In the first place will you allow me to suggest that you forget hereafter to tack the 'ess' on to 'author', because one who writes a book or a poem is an author and literature has no sex.

—Gene Stratton-Porter
(1923)

A written word is the choicest of relics. It is something at once more intimate with us and more universal than any other work of art. It is the work of art nearest to life itself. It may be translated into every language, and not only be read but actually breathed from all human lips;—not be represented on canvas or in marble only, but be carved out of the breath of life itself.

—Henry David Thoreau

Typography is the craft of endowing human language with a durable visual form.

—Robert Bringhurst

I love the sound of words, the feel of them, the flow of them. I love the challenge of finding just that perfect combination of words to describe a curl of the lip, a tilt of the chin, a change in the atmosphere. Done well, novel-writing can combine lyricism with practicality in a way that makes one think of grand tapestries, both functional and beautiful. Fifty years from now, I imagine I'll still be questing after just that right combination of words.

—Lauren Willig

Language is a tool that allows us to express our thoughts. We use mechanisms of language including oral storytelling and indicative writing to depict a storehouse of evocative images. Language links our mind's tawny memory and blooming imagination to the world. Storytelling connects each of us to the consciousness of other people who inhabit this planet.

—Kilroy J. Oldster

As a writer, I roll around in words the way cats roll around in catnip.

—Gina Barreca

We do not select the stories we write, we do not pick the voices. They take us by surprise and we surrender to them. They write us, they write in us, all over us, through us. They occupy us. We are, in a sense, puppets—to language, with language.

—Lynne Tillman

Emojis are by no means taking away from our written language but rather accentuating it by providing a tone that words on their own often cannot. They are, in a sense, the most evolved form of punctuation we have at our disposal.

—Emmy J. Favilla

Good writing has an aliveness that keeps the reader reading from one paragraph to the next, and it's not a question of gimmicks to 'personalize' the author. It's a question of using the English language in a way that will achieve the greatest clarity and strength.

—William Zinsser

When Arnold M. Ludwig, an adjunct psychiatry professor at Brown University, examined the lives of more than 1,000 eminent people—including Frida Kahlo, Jean-Paul Sartre, and John Lennon—for his book *The Price of Greatness*, he found that creative types, such as artists and writers, were more likely than, say, business people to be considered 'odd or peculiar' as children, and more likely than public officials or soldiers to be considered 'different' as adults.

—Olga Khazan

the most honorable of men is he who thinks best and acts best, but the most powerful is he who is best able to talk and write.

—George Sand

Novel writing is the slowest art form in the world. It is not a sprint. It is not even a marathon. It is a series of marathons that stretch over and over across a continent.

—Mohsin Hamid

There's always this impression that book publishing is a young person's game, but, really, it's about sheer grit....One of the benefits of being over 50 is that there's a little more room in your life, a little more space, so that if you really do want to write or create something—if you're disciplined—you can make that time to write your true book, your best book.

—Kim Brown Seely

Most of the members of my writing group are in their 60s and 70s. It's a productive time of life for many writers, strengthened by life experience and more realistic goals.

—Iris Graville

Ends always give me trouble. Characters run away from you, and so won't fit on to what's coming.

—E. M. Forster

It was not [E. M. Forster] who fathered that trite little whimsy about characters getting out of hand; it's as old as the quills, although of course one sympathizes with his people if they try to wriggle out of that trip to India or wherever he takes them. My characters are galley slaves.

—Vladimir Nabokov

If I explained how [the process of turning a real-life character into a fictional one] is sometimes done, it would be a handbook for libel lawyers.

—Ernest Hemingway

When I write, I aim in my mind not toward New York but toward a vague spot a little to the east of Kansas. I think of the books on library shelves, without their jackets, years old, and a countryish teenage boy finding them, and having them speak to him.

—John Updike

Death steals everything except our stories.

—Jim Harrison

It is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self.

—Donald Winnicott

A hunch is creativity trying to tell you something.

—Frank Capra

The essential part of creativity is not being afraid to fail.

—Edwin H. Land

When I realized I'd let the fun go out of my writing, that was a welcome revelation. The problem had been me, but it was so easily fixable! A matter of perspective, it was. What's the best thing about being me? My writing. And what is writing? A process, by turns messy, precise, light-hearted, grim. I had to remember my own old motto: If it's not fun, make it fun. If you can't make it fun, decide it's fun.

—Elizabeth Sims

China has spent all but a few centuries of its 5,000 year history at the vanguard of information technology. Along with Sumer and Mesoamerica, it was one of three places where writing was independently invented, allowing information to be stored outside the human brain. In the second century A.D., the Chinese invented paper. This cheap, bindable information-storage technology allowed data—Silk Road trade records, military communiqués, correspondence among elites—to crisscross the empire on horses bred for speed by steppe nomads beyond the Great Wall. Data began to circulate even faster a few centuries later, when Tang-dynasty artisans perfected woodblock printing, a mass-information technology that helped administer a huge and growing state.

—Ross Andersen

We do not select the stories we write, we do not pick the voices. They take us by surprise and we surrender to them. They write us, they write in us, all over us, through us. They occupy us. We are, in a sense, puppets—to language, with language.

— Lynne Tillman

My dream is a worthy one, and that if I keep at it, I will see it one day blossom into reality. And above all, I know that whether published or not, read by hundreds or just my mom, I am a writer from the depths of my soul.

—Alexandra Claus

We need good storytellers to keep us alive and imagining. The exercise of the imagination is the training ground of compassion. Stories educate the heart. Stories, like poetry, are related to prayer. They have an incantatory, invocational function. They call forth and focus our dread and desire. They are vehicles of confession, thanksgiving, petition.

—Marilyn Chandler
McEntyre

Writers aren't alchemists who transmute words into the aurous essence of the human experience. No, they are glassmakers. They create a work of art that enables us to see inside to help us understand. And if they are really good, we can see our own reflections staring back at us.

—Kamand Kojouri

The writing style which is most natural for you is bound to echo the speech you heard when a child. English was the novelist Joseph Conrad's third language, and much of that seems piquant in his use of English was no doubt colored by his first language, which was Polish. And lucky indeed is the writer who has grown up in Ireland, for the English spoken there is so amusing and musical.

—Kurt Vonnegut

It is the inherent right of all writers to experiment with the possibilities of language in every way they can imagine—without that adventurous spirit, nothing new can ever be born.

—Haruki Murakami

The true indicator of future success is what you do on days you don't want to do it. Lifting. Running. Relationships. Work. School. Doesn't matter. Anyone can smile and work hard on easy days.

—*TheEnlightenedMind622*

Your white sheet of paper, it's really an adventure playground, isn't it?

—Ralph Steadman

Studying the world's oldest writing for the first time compels you to wonder about what writing is and how it came about more than five thousand years ago and what the world might have looked like without it.

Writing as I would define it serves to record language by means of an agreed set of symbols that enable a message to be played back like a wax cylinder recording. The reader's eye runs over the signs and tells the brain how each is pronounced and the inner message springs into life.

—Irving Finkel

I just like the feeling of finding the right word in my mind and employing it. I get pleasure from that feeling. I prefer language to gesture.

—Aimee Bender

Oftentimes, people meet our writing before they meet us; our writing is our first impression. People read our résumés, cover letters, proposals, and emails, and that's the basis on which we are judged first. If our writing is full of grammar and punctuation errors, even though the content may be great, it's like wearing a beautifully made Prada dress that has deodorant stains.

—Jenny Baranick

The words a person reads and hears and repeats become his own, enter his verbal storehouse. When needed they become, even if he does not know it, the clothing for the thoughts to which he gives birth.

—Moshe Seidel

Eating words and listening to them rumbling in the gut is how a writer learns the acid and alkali of language. It is a process at the same time physical and intellectual. The writer has to hear language until she develops perfect pitch, but she also has to feel language, to know it sweat and dry. The writer finds the words are visceral, and when she can eat them, wear them, and enter them like tunnels she discovers the alleged separation between word and meaning between writer and word is theoretical.

—Jeanette Winterson

A blank sheet of paper is the best friend I ever had. It listens without judgment, advice, or admonishment. And no matter what I told it in the teenage years full of angst, it never altered our relationship. It also presents a silent challenge: to explore the power of words, to play with letters and ideas that can be transformed with a slight nudge. It is a nod to creativity and the freedom to figure myself out.

—Patty Becnel

If they'll pay for such stuff, why, here's the job I've been looking for all along—no boss, no regular hours [or] responsibility.

—Badger Clark

What we need today are writers who can restore to writing its powerful traditions of leadership in crisis. Most of the great tests in human history have produced great writers who acknowledged a special responsibility to their times. They defined the issues, recognized the values at stake, dramatized the nature of the challenge. In terms of today's needs, the challenge to writers is to see themselves as representatives of the human community. For the central issue facing the world today is not the state of this nation or that nation, but the condition of man. That higher level today needs its champion as never before.

—Norman Cousins

The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims, one turns as if it were instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish squirting out ink.

—George Orwell

Even reading is rarely reading 'just for pleasure' if you're a writer. Some part of your head is always learning.

—Yi Shun Lai

One of the pleasures of writing is the discovery of a fictional world. You begin with a hunch, follow the threads and characters, discover something, the unexpected, including the ending.

—Rona Wineberg

Not knowing what's going to happen is a necessary mystery—it's part of the engine that drives the writing process.

—Alix Ohlin

Me: What's wrong?

8-Year-Old: I have to write a whole paragraph for school.

Me: That's not so bad. I write entire books.

8-Year-Old: Yeah, but this has to be good.

—James Breakwell

All men dream, but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds, wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act on their dreams with open eyes, to make them possible.

—T. E. Lawrence

Beginning is scary, exciting, terrifying, and all things amazing. Begin even when you're not sure.....What do you have to lose?

—Chris Burkmenn

You cannot protect the title of a book or a movie...as a trademark, which is why you may see several novels with the same title. So long as there is no attempt to pass off the novel of one author as the work of another, this does not cause a problem. Cover photos and subtitles are often used for this purpose. *Thus Gone With the Wind: The Definitive Guide to Kite Flying* would not be confused with Margaret Mitchell's Civil War saga, and *War and Peace: The Presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower* would never be confused with Tolstoy's novel.

—Ellen M. Kozak

Is, am, was, were, be, been, are, has, have, had, may, can, must, might, would, could, should, shall, will, do.

'These class,' Mrs. Stanton, my fourth-grade teacher, said grimly as she scribbled The Terrible 20 on the chalkboard, 'constitute the...linking verbs.' She spat the phrase, as if biting heartily into an apple and finding a worm.

'Avoid them!' She snapped. 'They add little to your writing, and they force you to use the passive voice.'

Ah, the dreaded passive voice! Mrs. Stanton explained to us the day before that the passive voice too often poisoned the 25 sentences (due Mondays, except holidays) each student wrote from weekly vocabulary lists.

'The passive voice represents the easy way out,' Mrs. Stanton said with a sneer, 'but not the best way. Strong sentences use strong verbs. Remember that!'

—Michael Hemmes

The invention of writing and of a convenient system of keeping records on paper has had a greater influence in uplifting the human race than any other intellectual achievement in the career of man.

—James H. Breasted

Alphabetic writing, the most highly developed and widespread system of writing in the world today, has proved to be much more convenient and adaptable to spoken language than has syllabic writing. Based on the notion that the separate speech sounds of a language, its phonemes, constitute the units that written symbols represent, alphabetic writing would, ideally, have a distinct symbol for each sound. A spoken language with forty speech sounds, for example, would have an alphabet of forty characters. The simplicity, adaptability, and suitability of alphabetic writing has secured its place as the predominant method of writing in the world today. The alphabet that was derived from the ancient Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans is now used not only in English but in French, Italian, German, Spanish, Turkish, Polish, Dutch, and Hungarian—to name a few of the languages that employ essentially the same alphabetic characters.

—Richard E. Hodges

90 percent of all writing consists of 1,000 basic words.

—John Irving

If you're a bad speller, you probably think you always will be. There are exceptions to every spelling rule, and the rules themselves are easy to forget. George Bernard Shaw demonstrated how ridiculous some spelling rules are. By following the rules, he said, we could spell fish this way: *ghoti*. The 'f' as it sounds in enough, the 'i' as it sounds in women, and the 'sh' as it sounds in fiction.

With such rules to follow, no one should feel stupid for being a bad speller....English spelling changed with foreign influences. Chaucer wrote 'gesse,' but 'guess,' imported earlier by the Norman invaders, finally replaced it. Most early printers in England came from Holland; they brought 'ghost' and 'gherkin' with them.

—John Irving

Children who aren't asked to write in a discipline are denied the opportunity to learn the ways in which vocabulary and language structures interact in that discipline.

—James R. Squire

Competence in the use of language—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—is the basis for all other learning. A subject is not fully known until the learner can talk or write about it in his or her own words. A principal cause of failure of college students or young people in the workplace is inability to handle language effectively... It follows that all teachers of all subjects have a major responsibility to foster growth in language skills...[and] Studies have shown that, outside of English classes, most teachers are not fulfilling their responsibility to foster growth in language skill.

—*National Council of
Teachers of
English*

Since the purpose for learning to spell is to be able to write fluently and correctly, much practice in application—writing—is an essential part of any good spelling program.

—Robert L. Hillerich

People would ask me what I did when I ran out of ideas. I always thanked them for not noticing. Failure to send in something was never an option.

—Garry Trudeau
(Syndicated Comic
Strip Writer)

Early authors were typically of high birth and privileged enough to spend their leisure time writing, or they had patrons. Writers funded by patrons would write long and flowery dedications, complimenting the patron, who was then expected to pay for that compliment.

—Jane Friedman

While students need opportunities to explore the writing process that works best for them, they also need the reassurance of knowing that even published authors do not write perfect first drafts. When I am writing for a critical audience, I call on trusted colleagues to proofread my last draft. Student writers may similarly rely on peer review groups, conferences with a teacher-editor, or help from a friend or family member. Only when the piece of writing takes its final form does spelling become significant. The more important the work, the higher the value on its correctness.

—Rebecca Bowers Sipe

Schools and businesses have been known to turn down prospective employees because of misspellings on letters and resumes. Writers need to be understood by their readers, and misspelled words are a source of distraction and irritation.

—Rebecca Bowers Sipe

The best ideas in the world are often expressed in words that can't be read by half the adults in the world. They are illiterate. Many specialists have not yet learned how to put important political, health, and economic information into interesting, easy-to-read prose. There is an urgent need for writers who can write to the reading level of most Americans. These writers will be word conscious. They will have studied readability levels and will know the importance of giving their reader contextual clues to necessary but hard-to-understand words. They will use the short, simple, vivid, concrete, easily understood words instead of the longer, more abstract equivalents....They will excise obese phraseology—cut out the fat.

—Edgar Dale

I've just bought myself a pen that writes underwater. It writes other words too.

—Internet Meme

Research...bears out a strong relationship between spelling and writing: Writers who must think too hard about how to spell use up valuable cognitive resources needed for higher level aspects of composition. Even more than reading, writing is a mental juggling act that depends on automatic deployment of basic skills such as handwriting, spelling, grammar, and punctuation so that the writer can keep track of such concerns as topic, organization, word choice, and audience needs. Poor spellers may restrict what they write to words they can spell, with inevitable loss of verbal power, or they may lose track of their thoughts when they get stuck trying to spell a word.

—Louisa Moats

A writer cannot do too much research, though sometimes it is a mistake to try and cram too much of what you learned into your novel. Research gives you a foundation to build on, but in the end it's only the story that matters.

—George R. R. Martin

You have your antenna out. You're just walking through the world and you're picking up these signals of emotions and spirit and history and events, today's events and past remembrances. These things you divine from the air are all intangible elements: spirit, emotion, history. These are the tools of the songwriter's trade before he even picks up the pen.

People who are very attuned to that atmosphere usually end up being artists of some sort. Because they're so attuned to it, they have a desire to record it. If that desire to record it is strong enough, you learn a language to do so. Whether it's paintings, films, songs, poetry...

—Bruce Springsteen

The birth of authorship—or at least authorship as we'd recognize it today in the Western world—came about with the invention of the printing press and the wide distribution and sale of books. At first, printers focused on producing the classics, or ancient texts that were in jeopardy of being lost and were in high demand. Up until then, manuscripts had to be reproduced by scribes, and it was a slow process. But once printers satisfied that demand, they started looking for other things to print and sell, and it didn't take long for intellectuals of the day to offer up their work. These early authors reaped big benefits: Publishing their work brought more influence and fame than ever before.

At the time, printers also served as booksellers and publishers, but it was rare for them to share profits with the author, and not because they were money-grubbing despots. Rather, it simply wasn't the custom to pay for writing, and fame was seen as just compensation. Authors didn't mind; they'd found a path to immortality. One could now write something and expect that it would last behind their lifetime, a first.

—Jane Friedman

If one accounts for all the writing that gets done in public today—the blogging and the tweeting and the Facebooking—we've reached an era of universal authorship. Literacy increasingly involves not just reading and writing, but also publishing. Some of us write and publish as much as we read or more than we read. And this has produced some strange effects in the digital era, where visibility and discoverability become increasingly difficult and sometimes more important to a writer than payment.

Publication used to be a guarantee of reaching a certain number of people because of the investment and expertise required to print and publish. But the bar now is very low: To publish something is to click a button. It is not a specialized activity. And writers can't be guaranteed that just because they publish something, they're going to get a readership, much less a living wage.

—Jane Friedman

AUTHOR EARNINGS ACROSS THE AGES

- Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400): Gallon of wine a day, for life; King Edward III's payment for *The Canterbury Tales*.
- John Milton (1608-1674) £5 advance for *Paradise Lost*
- Jane Austen (1775-1817): C10, amount paid for rights to her first novel, *Northanger Abbey*
- Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) \$14, book advance for *Eureka* (partially refunded for lack of sales)
- Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896): \$300, advance for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
- Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855) £100, advance for *Jane Eyre*
- Henry Miller (1891-1980): \$500, advance for *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare*
- William Faulkner (1897-1962): \$200, advance for *Soldier's Pay*
- Stephen King (1947-) \$2,500, advance for first novel, *Carrie*
- Dave Eggers (1970-) \$100,000, advance for *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*

—Jane Friedman

In the late 1800s, a golden age for publishing, a writer complained to a U.S. congressional committee that he did not know any author who made a living by writing literary work. Of all the learned professions, he said, 'Literature is the most poorly paid.'

—Jane Friedman

A writer has got to have a pretty good—a reasonably attuned—memory of his past. And the stuff that I can't remember, I just make up.

—Bruce Springsteen

Now, maybe I shouldn't be so needy as to need that [bestseller] affirmation, but I was. I was, and any writer who tells you otherwise is full of shit.

—Erik Larson

This idea that we need to be productive and in some ways we only count productivity as you made money or you generate words. And those are really bad metrics for any kind of creative project. As Americans, I think our culture is very much into productivity—do two things at once, multi-task, have eight tabs open on your computer. And the truth is that writing, like any artistic process, is not straightforward, and you can't measure it the same way you measure any other form of productivity. We're not a factory. I think it's really keeping yourself in that mind frame. This is not something you can measure by money, or word count, or copy sold. That's not where the value of any of this lies.

—Celeste Ng

Writing is about paying attention and telling the truth.

—Anne Lamott

Anyone who survived childhood has enough material to write for the rest of his life.

—Flannery O'Connor

My books are like water; those of the great geniuses are wine. Fortunately everybody drinks water.

—Mark Twain

One of my greatest pleasures in writing has come from the thought that perhaps my work might annoy someone of comfortably pretentious position. Then comes the saddening realization that such people rarely read.

—John Kenneth
Galbraith

Each of us has been designed for one of two immortal functions, as either a storyteller or as a cross-legged listener to tales of wonder, love, and daring. When we cease to tell or listen, then we no longer exist as a people.

—Bryce Courtenay

Many people who want to be writers are afraid to say they're writers, because somebody will ask, 'Published?'

—Anne Lamott

I never thought of myself as much of a success. When I was younger, I was embarrassed about the things I wrote. I felt there were men building bridges, doing medical research. And here I am writing these ridiculous comic book stories....People always tell me things like, 'When I was a child, my mother was gone, my father was drunk, but your comic books were there for me.' These characters are important to people in ways I can't even understand. But is that success? Is it being wealthy? I know a lot of people richer than I am. Is it being happy all the time? Nobody's happy all the time. But then again, I don't think anybody ever stops a bridge builder on the street and says, 'Your bridges! They're thrilling!'

—Stan Lee (Author of the
comics Spiderman,
The Incredible
Hulk, Black
Panther, and the
X-Men)

Writing is a lot like basically eating a pound of dough, a whole pepperoni, a couple of pounds of mozzarella, and a bunch of spices, then throwing up a pizza.

—Mike Pondsmith

A professor reaches at most a few hundred students. You [as a journalist] reach hundreds of thousands.

—Prof. Peter Turchin

Writers are resilient. Writers are the ones who live on, through their work, to tell the tale of the difficult times.

—Amy Jones

Aren't we [translators] simply the humble, anonymous handmaids-and-men of literature, the grateful, ever-obsequious servants of the publishing industry? In the most resounding yet decorous terms I can muster, the answer is no, for the most fundamental description of what translators do is that we write—or perhaps re-write—in language B a work of literature originally composed in language A, hoping that readers of the second language [...] will perceive the text, emotionally and artistically, in a manner that parallels and corresponds to the esthetic experience of its first readers.

—Edith Grossman

The more books from more places that are available to fledgling authors, the greater the potential flow of creative influence, the more irresistible the spark that ignites literary imaginations. Translation plays an inimitable, essential part in the expansion of literary horizons through multilingual fertilization. A worldwide community of writers would be inconceivable without it.

—Edith Grossman

I've discovered that rejections are not altogether a bad thing. They teach a writer to rely on his own judgment and to say in his heart of hearts, 'To hell with you.'

—Saul Bellow

We write to heighten our own awareness of life. We write to lure and enchant and console others. We write to serenade our lovers. We write to taste life twice, in the moment and in retrospection. We write, like Proust, to render all of it eternal, and to persuade ourselves that it is eternal. We write to be able to transcend our life, to reach beyond it. We write to teach ourselves to speak with others, to record the journey into the labyrinth. We write to expand our world when we feel strangled, or constricted, or lonely...When I don't write, I feel my world shrinking. I feel I am in prison. I feel I lose my fire and my color. It should be a necessity, as the sea needs to heave, and I call it breathing.

—Anaïs Nin

Writers and artists build by hand little worlds that they hope might effect change in real minds, in the real world where stories are read. A story can make us cry and laugh, break our hearts, or make us angry enough to change the world.

—Grant Morrison

I'm a creator, a visionary, a poet. I approach the world with the eyes of an artist, the ears of a musician, and the soul of a writer. I see rainbows where others see only rain, and possibilities when others see only problems. I love spring flowers, summer's heat on my body, and the beauty of the dying leaves in the fall. Classical music, art museums, and ballet are sources of inspiration, as well as blues music and dim cafes. I love to write; words flow easily from my fingertips, and my heart beats rapidly with excitement as an idea becomes a reality on the paper in front of me. I smile often, laugh easily, and I weep at pain and cruelty. I'm a learner and a seeker of knowledge, and I try to take my readers along on my journey. I am passionate about what I do. I learned to dream through reading, learned to create dreams through writing, and learned to develop dreamers through teaching. I shall always be a dreamer. Come dream with me.

—Sharon M. Draper

And what, you ask, does writing teach us?

First and foremost, it reminds us that we are alive and that it is gift and a privilege, not a right. We must earn life once it has been awarded us. Life asks for rewards back because it has favored us with animation.

So while our art cannot, as we wish it could, save us from wars, privation, envy, greed, old age, or death, it can revitalize us amidst it all.

—Ray Bradbury

There was no crime in unconscious plagiarism; that I committed it everyday, that he committed it everyday, that every man alive on earth who writes or speaks commits it every day and not merely once or twice but every time he open his mouth... there is nothing of our own in it except some slight change born of our temperament, character, environment, teachings and associations.

—Mark Twain

My books have all been very deeply felt. You don't spend eight years of your life working on a trendy knockoff. In that sense I've been serious. But I don't do lots of things that other serious writers do. I don't write book reviews. I don't sit on panels about the state of the novel. I don't go to writer conferences. I don't teach writing seminars. I don't hang out at Yaddo or MacDowell. I'm not concerned with my reputation as a writer and where I stand relative to other writers. I'm not competitive or professionally ambitious. I don't think about my work and my career in an overarching or systematic way. I don't think about myself, as I think most writers do, as progressing toward some ideal of greatness. There's no grand plan. All I know is that I write the books I want to write. All that other stuff is meaningless to me.

—Bret Easton Ellis

There is no editor whom I wouldn't cheerfully fry in oil.

—Ezra Pound

You learn best by reading a lot and writing a lot, and the most valuable lessons of all are the ones you teach yourself.

—Stephen King

People who cannot put strings of sentences together in good order cannot think. An educational system that does not teach the technology of writing is preventing thought.

—Richard Mitchell

Dear editor: It's a damn good story. If you have any comments, write them on the back of a check.

—Erle Stanley Gardner

All abilities are paid for with disabilities....insight into one area involves blind spots in another. I could not have done what I have done as a writer had I been a gifted mathematician or physicist.

—William S. Burroughs

I knew how words worked in the way that some boys knew how engines worked.

—Jeanette Winterson

Wanting to meet an author because you like his work is like wanting to meet a duck because you like pâté.

—Margaret Atwood

Writers, like teeth, are divided into incisors and grinders.

—Walter Bagehot

William Faulkner walks into a bar.
Bartender: Why the long phrase?

—Unknown

Real artists are not nice people; all their best feelings go into their work, and life has the residue.

—W. H. Auden

If we don't show anyone, we're free to write anything.

—Allen Ginsberg

You don't have to be an intellectual to write, you just have to wonder about things and want to know.

—Barry Hannah

Thackeray had to pay to publish *Vanity Fair*. Sterne had to pay to publish *Tristram Shandy*. Defoe had to pay to publish *Moll Flanders*.

—David Markson

Roget's trollop.

—Sylvia Plath's name for herself when wordy.

I've seen academic life destroy the best writers of my generation.

—Susan Sontag

There are no new ideas. There are only new ways of making them felt.

—Audre Lorde

'I'm on deadline' can get you out of things... Whatever kind of work you do, it's always cooler to be on deadline.

—Terry McDonell

There is a huge misconception that you need motivation to get started. It's completely wrong. You need to start, where you are, how you are... start. You need to start, to get motivation.

—Denzel Washington

Unnecessary piecemealization...occurs when 'English' or 'language arts' courses are divided into separately taught subjects. Teaching reading, literature, grammar, writing, punctuation, and spelling as separate disciplines detracts from the real point—learning how to get good stuff out of books and thinking, talking, and writing about what is read.

—Eric W. Johnson

It's none of their business that you have to learn how to write. Let them think you were born that way.

—Ernest Hemingway

Learning to write may be part of learning to read. For all I know, writing comes out of a superior devotion to reading.

—Eudora Welty

Share your knowledge. It is a way to achieve immortality.

—Dalai Lama XIV

You'll never reach perfection because there's always room for improvement.

—Hlovate

Students learn to write well through frequent practice. A well-structured assignment has a meaningful topic, a clear sense of purpose, and a real audience. Good writing assignments are often an extension of class reading, discussion, and activities; not isolated exercises.

An effective writing lesson contains these elements:

- **Brainstorming:** Students think and talk about their topics. They collect information and ideas, frequently much more than they will finally use. They sort through their ideas to organize and clarify what they want to say.
- **Composing:** Students compose a first draft. This part is typically time-consuming and hard, even for very good writers.
- **Revising:** Students re-read what they have written, sometimes collecting responses from teachers, classmates, parents, and others. The most useful teacher response to an early draft focuses on what students are trying to say, not the mechanics of writing. Teachers can help most by asking for clarification, commenting on vivid expressions or fresh ideas, and suggesting ways to support the main thrust of the writing. Students can then consider the feedback and decide how to use it to improve the next draft.
- **Editing:** Students then need to check their final version for spelling, grammar, punctuation, other written mechanics, and legibility.

Prompt feedback from teachers on written assignments is important. Students are most likely to write competently when schools routinely require writing in all subject areas, not just in English class.

—*U. S. Department of
Education—What
Works*

Writers are a savage breed....If you want life-long friendship and selfless camaraderie, join the army and learn to kill. If you want a lifetime of temporary alliances with peers who will glory in your every failure, write novels.

—Robert Galbraith

When you wish to instruct, be brief; that men's [children's] minds take in quickly what you say, learn its lesson, and retain it faithfully. Every word that is unnecessary only pours over the side of a brimming mind.

—Marcus Tullius Cicero

You have to resign yourself to the fact that you waste a lot of trees before you write anything you really like, and that's just the way it is. It's like learning an instrument, you've got to be prepared for hitting wrong notes occasionally, or quite a lot, cause I wrote an awful lot before I wrote anything I was really happy with. And read a lot. Reading really helps. Read anything you can get your hands on.

—J. K. Rowling

At one time I thought the most important thing was talent. I think now that—the young man or the young woman must possess or teach himself, train himself, in infinite patience, which is to try and to try and to try until it comes right. He must train himself in ruthless intolerance. That is, to throw away anything that is false no matter how much he might love that page or that paragraph. The most important thing is insight, that is...curiosity to wonder, to mull, and to muse why it is that man does what he does. And if you have that, then I don't think the talent makes much difference, whether you've got that or not.

—William Faulkner

Only a generation of readers will spawn a generation of writers.

—Steven Spielberg

Researchers...dispel the myth that, for most of the children in poverty, academically challenging work in mathematics and literacy should be postponed until they are 'ready'—that is, until they have acquired full mastery of basic skills. Although such students are often lacking in certain basic skills, they can acquire these skills the same time that they gain advanced skills (which provide a broader, more meaningful context for learning 'the basics.')

—Michael S. Knapp,
Patricia M.
Shields, and
Brenda J. Turnbull

Thank goodness I was never sent to school; it would have rubbed off some of the originality.

—Beatrix Potter

It was much easier and more exciting to start out as a playwright than as a novelist. A playwright could write a hundred pages in a few weeks, most of which were white space, and it would last two hours on stage, and on Sunday Kenneth Tynan would devote a quarter of a page of *The Observer* to it, even if you were a completely unknown person and the play had no scenery.

—Tom Stoppard

Academics are forced to write in language no one can understand so that they get tenure. They have to say 'discourse', not 'talk'. Knowledge that is not accessible is not helpful.

—Gloria Steinem

An editor...is a person...who wields a wicked blue pencil, indulges in delightful tête-à-têtes with successful authors, and draws a fabulous salary for being a thoroughgoing tyrant and autocrat.

—Hazel Miller

By the time I was fourteen the nail in my wall would no longer support the weight of the rejection slips impaled upon it. I replaced the nail with a spike and went on writing.

—Stephen King

The *Queen's Gambit* has been viewed by 62 million people. The producer, Allan Scott, is on *BBC News* talking about how it took 30 years, with 9 rewrites, and every studio he showed it to said that no one would be interested in chess. PLEASE PERSEVERE WITH THAT THING YOU'RE MAKING.

—Internet Meme

Novelists are in the education business, really, but they're not teaching you times tables, they are teaching you responsiveness and morality and to make nuanced judgments. And really to just make the planet look a bit richer when you go out into the street.

—Martin Amis

The act of writing tames our feelings of chaos and pain.

—J. M. Coetzee

Writing (the actual writing, not the fear of not being able to write whatever I'm trying to get out of me), I love. I love the flow that comes when you accept that it's impossible to be perfect and manage to aim for generous and authentic, and manage to get some terribly flawed words on the page. And then if you're incredibly lucky, as I have been, that authenticity resonates for some people as meaningful, and it feeds your family and it changes your life.

—Tara Miele

Jobs that get romanticized get romanticized. I grew up in a house with a writer parent, so for me it was always just a job. Something that paid the bills.

—Julia Hart

With educated people, I suppose, punctuation is a matter of rule; with me it is a matter of feeling. But I must say I have a great respect for the semicolon; it's a useful little chap.

—Abraham Lincoln

I don't want to do the type of writing where I recite biography, parentage and education. I want to rise up from the words on the page and do something, hurt someone.

—Don DeLillo

Start now.
Start where you are.
Start with fear.
Start with pain.
Start with doubt.
Start with hands shaking.
Start with voice trembling.
Just start.

—Internet Meme

Your first podcast will be awful.
Your first video will be awful.
Your first article will be awful.
Your first art will be awful.
Your first photo will be awful.
Your first game will be awful.
But you can't make your 50th without making your first.
So get it over with, and make it.

—Internet Meme

What separates artists from ex-artists is that those who challenge their fears, continue; those who don't, quit. Each step in the artmaking process puts that issue to the test.

—David Bayles

The real world has its limits; the imaginary world is infinite.

—Jean-Jacques Rousseau

A writer writes not because he is educated but because he is driven by the need to communicate. Behind the need to communicate is the need to share. Behind the need to share is the need to be understood. The writer wants to be understood much more than he wants to be respected or praised or even loved.

—Leo Rosten

Anybody who writes a book is an optimist. First of all, they think they're going to finish it. Second, they think somebody's going to publish it. Third, they think somebody's going to read it. Fourth, they think somebody's going to like it. How optimistic is that?

—Margaret Atwood

If you're feeling worried about how little you've achieved, remember that Bram Stoker didn't write Dracula until he was 50, and Dracula didn't kill anyone until he was dead.

—Charlie Dinkin

The most powerful productivity tool every invented is simply the word 'no.'
—Internet Meme

In literature there is no periphery and no center; there are only writers. The problem is not geographic but rather numeric. In the 19th century there were at least thirty literary geniuses in Russia, Germany, France, England and the United States. Today we are lucky if there are five writers of that caliber in the whole world...Where does one find good literature today? Mostly in third world countries, because adversity, isolation, combat provide good working conditions. It is harder to be a good writer in a so-called civilized country, in the so-called democracies.
—Antonio Lobo Antunes

The music, paintings, sculptures, and books of the world are mirrors in which people see versions of themselves.
—Simon Van Booy

How is it done? By not doing. By dreaming insistently. By performing our daily duties but living, simultaneously, in the imagination. Travelling far and wide, in the geography of our minds. Conquering like Caesar, amid the blaring trumpets of our reverie...Feeling everything in every way, not in the flesh, which always tires, but in the imagination.
—Fernando Pessoa

A team of researchers, led by Ravi Mehta of the *University of Illinois* at Urbana-Champaign, found that those exposed to moderate noise levels (seventy decibels) performed better on a creative-thinking exam than those exposed to either high levels of noise or complete silence. Moderate noise, Mehta believes, allows us to enter a state of distracted, or diffused, focus. Again, the ideal state for creative breakthroughs.
—Eric Weiner

People will be most creative when they feel motivated primarily by the interest, enjoyment, challenge and satisfaction of the work itself... and not by external pressures or rewards.
— Dr. Teresa Amabile

Your grammar is crucial to your image, brand, and reputation. It reflects upon your level of intelligence, education, experience, upbringing, and native geography. Poor grammar can totally bomb a job interview, make someone delete your email request, cause people to judge you behind your back, or dismiss you as being a poor communicator. It is all preventable!
—Susan C. Young

Traditionally, student journalism has offered both showcase and motivation for student writing. It has motivated improved writing, careful questioning, effective research, and critical analysis. It has made communication skills more than classroom exercises.

We believe that a revitalized program of journalistic writing, supported by appropriate coursework, is one effective response to problems of literacy. We believe, further, that revitalized student newspapers, magazines, and broadcast news programs, appropriately directed by skilled and enthusiastic advisers, are logical components of such a program....Journalistic writing courses...should count as English courses and satisfy English writing requirements.

—*Association for
Education in
Journalism and
Mass
Communications*

How to cook crack and clean a crab.
Step One: Use commas.

—Internet Meme

I have a passion for teaching kids to become readers, to become comfortable with a book, not daunted. Books shouldn't be daunting, they should be funny, exciting and wonderful; and learning to be a reader gives a terrific advantage.

—Roald Dahl

All writers are curious. Whether we're examining the events of our own lives, or researching a topic for a nonfiction piece, or want to tell a story of an imaginary person, the curiosity behind the questions of how and why something happened or could happen is what drives writers to put pen to paper.

—Amy Jones

ROOT CAUSES OF WRITER'S BLOCK

Lack of Inspiration: Your creative well is dry and you need an infusion of inspiration.

Fear: The inner critic is stomping on your dreams and manipulating you.

Life Circumstances: Sometimes life happens, and it can take us away from writing for a time.

—Michael La Ronn

Story is everywhere. You can take the most mundane occurrence and, if you know how to say it, you can say it in such a way that it creates a beautiful or a funny or a touching story. Just look everywhere.

—Cassandra Lipp

No joy in the writer, no joy in the reader.

—Josh Sippie

Today's art isn't always driven by what's 'good' but by what will sell. Books that win award after award may not reach the readers they deserve. We may retain our desire to make amazing things while knowing what's amazing is not always what is popular.

—Elis Aaron

Compare the list of 2020 Pulitzer Prize-winning books to a list of 2020 bestsellers: There is no overlap.

—Dana Shavin

A story opens with a protagonist anchored in time and place, who has a goal and a motivation, but confronts obstacles and barriers on the journey to the goal. At the end of the story, something must have changed in the inner or outer life of the hero. That's the archetypal story arc in Western culture.

—Melissa Fay Greene

Writing is so solitary. It's so vulnerable. The vision is yours. The very words are yours. And if you aren't getting positive feedback, or any feedback, it can make the isolation that much harsher. Add to that when loved ones can't see your progress, and they ask things like, 'Why are you doing this? What are the odds of actually 'making it?''

Kara Quinn Rea

Envy is a vocational hazard for most writers. It festers in one's mind, distracting one from one's own work, at its most virulent even capable of rousing the sufferer from asleep to brood over another's triumph.

—Bonnie Friedman

The monkey-mind chatter of perfectionism can be interrupted with a simple mantra: it's good enough. It helps to know that even 'successful' writers feel inadequate, that while perfection dogs their process, it doesn't stop them. Done is better than perfect.

—Linda Lowen

I stopped calling rejections 'rejections' and started calling them 'reminders' to submit elsewhere.

—Wendy Fox

Writer's block? I don't get it. I get busy.

—Yi Shun Lai

I see rejection as one step closer to an acceptance because I know it's par for the course and so much of a numbers game.

—Sannon Luders-
Manuel

Each of us is our own most loyal reader. If you love what you write, someone else will too.

—Anthony Bongiorno

Creatives bathe in self-doubt. My self-doubt sparks when I've just read a piece that catches me by the collar—shaking my head, thinking, 'Wow, I wish I could write like that!' instead of analyzing WHY the work works.

—Meredith C. Kurz

If there's a book out there that you want to read, but it isn't written yet, it's your job to write it.

—Toni Morrison

It took me years to learn to sit at my desk for more than two minutes at a time, to put up with the solitude and the terror of failure, and the godawful silence and the white paper.

—Erica Jong

Death might appear to destroy the meaning in our lives, but in fact it is the very source of our creativity...Death is the engine that keeps us running, giving us the motivation to achieve, learn, love, and create.

—Caitlin Doughty

In 1849, after retiring from medicine and science, the 70-year-old [Peter Mark Roget] turned to words, a passion that harked back to his childhood, when he had filled a notebook with English translations of Latin vocabulary and then classified them into subject areas. Roget's early passion never dissipated: In his mid-20s, during off hours, the young doctor compiled a list of some 15,000 words—a 'little collection,' he later called it, that, although 'scanty and imperfect,' had helped him in his writing over the years....Roget assembled his words into six overarching categories, including 'matter,' 'intellect' and 'volition.' Roget's work echoed the organizational principles of Carl Linnaeus, the pioneering 18th century taxonomist. Neither a dictionary nor simply a collection of similar words, Roget had sorted and classified all human knowledge.

—Claudia Kalb

A lot of what catches fire in the news cycle doesn't withstand the two years of baking that a book takes to come to the surface.

—Liz Parker

You learn to write by writing, and by reading and thinking about how writers have created their characters and invented their stories. If you are not a reader, don't even think about being a writer.

—Jean M. Auel

In highly specialized technical fields, soft-skills are critical to the career path. A survey the American Enterprise Institute conducted last year found that nearly half of workers in science, technology, engineering and math fields thought that good writing and communication skills were extremely important and around 70% said the same regarding critical thinking skills. At the same time, less than 40% of these workers said that high level math, analytical or computer skills were extremely important.

—Brent Orrell

Poor spellers have the hardest time noticing when they don't know how to spell a word and therefore need a rule. And that may be the single largest difference between good spellers and bad spellers: good spellers have a...built-in monitoring function, so they immediately notice misspelled words.

—Lauren B. Resnick

Date a girl who reads because you deserve it. You deserve a girl who can give you the most colorful life imaginable. If you can only give her monotony, and stale hours and half-baked proposals, then you're better off alone. If you want the world and the worlds beyond it, date a girl who reads.

Or better yet, date a girl who writes.

—Rosemarie Urquico

Perhaps I write for no one. Perhaps for the same person children are writing for when they scrawl their names in the snow.

—Margaret Atwood

You fail only if you stop writing.

—Ray Bradbury

My book was rejected by more than 40 publishers. And guess what? The sun still came up the next day, I got back on my laptop, and started writing another book. I learned that I can fail and still have the strength to try again....I started submitting everything, everywhere. Because I already failed on a grand scale, tiny failures like getting a story rejected don't hurt as much. In 2020, I was getting about one rejection every four days. Never giving up and keeping my expectations low helped me enormously.

—Elizabeth Gonzalez
James

Only 1% of the population are ambidextrous and can write with both hands.
—Internet Meme

50% of academic papers are never read by anyone other than their authors, reviewers and editors.

—*factourism.com*

Families and friends tie writing to publishing and believe that any amount of the former without the latter is a waste of time and energy....No one asks a beginner swimmer when exactly they'll begin competing. To enjoy swimming is reason enough to swim. To enjoy writing should be reason enough to write.

—Nicki Porter

A story is the moment after which a character's life is never the same.

—Elizabeth Bowen

I believe that children in this country need a more robust literary diet than they are getting. ...It does not hurt them to read about good and evil, love and hate, life and death. Nor do I think they should read only about things that they understand. '...a man's reach should exceed his grasp.' So should a child's. For myself, I will never talk down to, or draw down to, children.

—Barbara Cooney

I have felt compelled to write things down since I was five years old....Keepers of private notebooks are a different breed altogether, lonely and resistant rearrangers of things, anxious malcontents, children afflicted apparently at birth with some pre-sentiment of loss.

—Joan Didion

Talent must be a fanatical mistress. She's beautiful; when you're with her, people watch you, they notice. But she bangs on your door at odd hours, and she disappears for long stretches, and she has no patience for the rest of your existence; your wife, your children, your friends. She is the most thrilling evening of your week, but some day she will leave you for good. One night, after she's been gone for years, you will see her on the arm of a younger man, and she will pretend not to recognize you.

—David Benioff

Books, the children of the brain.

—Jonathan Swift