

Making a Writer out of You

By Craig Lock

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Creative Writing Course <http://www.nzenterprise.com/writer/creative.html>

I hope that the following article (which is one of the first lessons on our Online Creative Writing Course) may be informative and helpful to your ezine readers or on your web site.

It was written for the off-line world, but the principles can be applied in "cyberspace and the real world".

I share what I know, so that others may grow".

MAKING A WRITER OUT OF YOU -

WHAT DO WE NEED TO GET STARTED IN WRITING?

by Craig Lock

THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Anyone with reasonable literary skills can write, but not many people can write really well. Yet we all have the opportunity to use this means of expressing our creative energy. You don't need much: no money - only time and IMAGINATION. To start writing, all you need is a place, a pen, paper and an idea (which comes through the amazing power of the human mind).

Firstly, work habits: Organise yourself (my big difficulty in all areas of life!). Decide WHERE you want to write. Which room will enable you to concentrate and lift your spirits the most? I find writing outdoors enables me to be most relaxed and therefore at my most creative.

THEN

Allocate a few hours a day when you won't be disturbed. Then stick to it with total COMMITMENT (remember the qualities of a writer from lesson one?).

What other tools are there to help you?

The local library, dictionaries, like a Thesaurus. What's that? And especially, a dictionary of quotations. Can you start a sentence with an "and"? All of these resources are extremely helpful to a writer. I find the local library especially helpful. Get to know your way around, to find out where things are. Using this resource saves a great deal of time and frustration...and most of all, money - not having to buy books ("El cheaposkate", like me). I am constantly using the facilities of the excellent HB Williams Memorial Library here in Gisborne.

What other resources are easily available?

Dictionaries: Such as the Oxford Dictionaries of Quotations. They'll always come in handy when you're looking for a good quote. Incidentally, good grammar and punctuation, together with presentation, is very important in getting published. I cover more on this subject in subsequent lessons. As my English teacher at school said, READ, READ, READ.

It develops vocabulary (another nice long word).

Typewriter or Word Processor?

Once you've got this clear in your mind, ie. place, time, tools (like pen and paper), later comes the decisions about whether to buy a typewriter, word processor or computer.

Word processors and computers make life so much easier for writers: you can quickly rewrite by moving words around or simply cutting them out altogether. They even have a spell check for those not too confident in this area.

All writers continually revise their work many times to make the words flow better (don't say 'continually' and 'many times' - they mean the same thing!).

Do you need one?

If you want to be published, no editor will consider handwritten work, so you will need to make that decision someday. If you want to write purely for your own pleasure, no "hassle"! My simple advice is to take your time regarding purchasing decisions. Don't rush out and buy now, but wait and see how your writing develops. Perhaps you have an old typewriter in the attic to start on, or you may be able to borrow one from a friend in the meantime ("cheapskate"). This advice is based on what I did. Start off with a typewriter, because all your work should be typed - unless you're writing purely for yourself. Later you can progress to a

word processor,
if you really get caught up in the writing 'bug'. I bought
my word processor just before I left work after being
made redundant as a Life Assurance Manager. It was
the best investment I have ever made in my life! Then
I progressed to learning computers. This was no easy
task for me, but now working every day with
one, I've become quite good (even if I say so myself!).
However, I still use my word processor to work in the
hot sun outside.
Hedonistic sun freak!

What other tips are there?...

- * Keep a work diary of your projects underway -
keeps one on track.
- * Also keep a record of your writing expenses - for the tax
man. Any expenditure you incur in producing income
from your writing is usually deductible from your taxable
income. I'm sounding like an accountant now - sorry!
More on this subject in a later lesson.
- * Have a clippings file of things that interest you . . .
because those are the things you are likely to write
about some day in the future. I keep them on about ten
different subjects, from stress to the South
African economy (which leads to more stress!).
- * Handy! Keep a note book handy by your bed. We
often get our most creative ideas whilst sleeping when
the mind is relaxed. I used to wake up with a great
idea in the middle of the night. EUREKA! ... but by
morning it was forgotten. You can even use a small
tape recorder. I have resorted to taking my
dictaphone. I get lots of funny looks, but at least it
stops me having to turn back before I forget my
inspirational thought for the day.

GETTING STARTED

Now we have all the tools, time to get started. I believe
the best training for new writers is to write as often and
as much as you can. So write about ANYTHING that
tickles your fancy. It doesn't matter, as long as you
WRITE.

It is practice and experience (and life experiences)
that counts. As the tourist in New York asked : "How
do I get to Carnegie Hall?" and the cabbie replied:
"Practice, mate (or the Yankee equivalent of this
New Zealand and Australian expression), practice,
practice."

When I look at my first manuscripts, I can clearly see how much my writing has improved in the last six years. At least I think so!

What else can you write about?

(Can I end a sentence with a "preppie"?)

* Write letters. This is becoming a forgotten art.

* You could also keep a daily diary, or journal. Write about your thoughts, your feelings, your daily experiences, your hopes your fears, your dreams. Doing this regularly hones your writing skills.

* You can take courses at universities, colleges, polytechnics, or this one. As well as the course content, I think that writing courses have a definite social function; because they keep you in touch with other like-minded people... and always remember writing is such a solitary occupation.

Hope I'm still a little bit sane then, after all these years writing in solitary 'confinement'!

Happy writing and stay sane

Craig Lock

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<http://www.nzenterprise.com/writer/creative.html>

The various books* that I "felt inspired to write" are available at:

<http://www.novelty-gift.com/>

and

<http://www.bridgeniche.com>

(FREE chapters)

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