

# Plight of the Writer

Writing is a challenge: plain and simple. Crafting a piece of art from nothing but words is akin to receiving an intricate piece of equipment which arrives disassembled and the instructions are nowhere to be found in the box. The goal of setting your words in a perfectly placed pattern and then getting it in front of people is similar to trying to force water to flow uphill.

The long process initially begins with the sprouting of an idea. Mine seem to hit the strongest when I am in the shower, obviously without paper; or in a business meeting when I'm bored with whatever the speaker is saying, but jotting an outline in the crowd is difficult when you appear to be the only idiot taking notes.

Once the idea builds into an urge of significant proportion, the wannabe writer is then moved to confront the daunting sight of the blank page. Grabbing those little thought clouds floating inside your head and converting them to written words is a huge step. I have not yet been able to get my hands to write as fast as my brain seems to be able to find then lose ideas.

Building those sometime random words into coherent sentences and paragraphs is a task undertaken only by the most driven. If the writer can keep this up long enough to complete an idea, instruction or tale, then the real challenge of editing begins. I find the melding of my random thoughts and words compiled on paper over the course of months and years to be the most harrowing and stressful part of writing.

The next step in the process is to walk the plank and plunge into shark infested waters by inviting others to view, proofread and critique your work. This is when you learn whether the ideas you have moved from your mind onto paper can be successfully interpreted back into something similar by the reader's mind. This is also where you get slapped by the reality that your spelling and grammar aren't quite up to the level you'd hoped before handing out proof copies of your work.

From the friends and family members who eagerly volunteered to help, you may receive a 15-20% response from those who actually followed through with the task. The writer must now incorporate their corrections and suggestions, then slog back through the entire project once again to thoroughly refine the product.

Having reached the point of completion, you are now ready to present your work to the world. There is an initial high at feeling such an incredible sense of personal accomplishment; but this is soon followed by a sudden crash as you realize that hollow left in your schedule and in your life. The project you dedicated so much of your time and energy has left the desktop and is now on the bookshelves. There is a vacancy in your schedule and in your mind as the project which once consumed you has now moved onto a different stage of life. The care and

pampering is no longer necessary as the product has matured and is now prepared to stand alone in this cruel world. Many writers attempt to fill the void by delving headlong into a new project, scribbling notes for a possible sequel or dedicating their newfound time to marketing the finished product. Either of these options or a combination thereof is an acceptable response.

Stand clear of the stampede of friends and family who will surely rush to support this effort to which you have dedicated so much of your life and on which you have toiled for countless hours over the course of several years. Don't be surprised when the crowds don't form. It is a sad lesson of experienced artists that oftentimes the people closest turn out to be the very least supportive. I do not know why it works out like that. I'd like to think that if a friend or relative authored an essay, book or novel that I'd have a sincere interest in reading it and congratulating him or her on the accomplishment. Maybe those who are not equally inspired don't realize the extreme effort that such an achievement requires. I mean, if someone told me that he had written a book on his lunch break, then I'd probably not think much of the effort or expect much to result. Of course, in my case it could very well be that those who know me best feel that they've already heard too much of what I have to say.

Trying to encourage people you know to proofread or support your completed work is an effort in futility. Most will express interest at having learned that you've been published, but when you inquire as to whether they've read it and what they thought, they will almost always revert to the tired old response: "I'd love to...are you going give me a copy?" Other frequent questions you'll hear are: "How many pages is it?" and "How much money did you make?" At this point you should politely extract yourself from the conversation as you've stumbled across an obvious non-reader. Only if they question the subject matter or your motivation for writing will you detect a grain of sincere interest. Too often people trapped on the outside of our creative circle will assume it's all about the money, and telling them it's not only causes them to speculate further about both your sanity and financial situation. It comes down to a respect for toil and effort, as well as an expression of support.

A writer will write only because he or she feels compelled to do so. It is a rare individual who can actually make money or a decent living by these means. The drive erupts from within and once organized on paper the only real reward is the personal achievement of having accomplished something most people on this planet will never endeavor. Do not expect a flood of adoration and recognition from others, but always be joyous when someone takes notice or offers praise. One spark is all it takes to start a roaring fire. Most of you who undertake this calling will have to collaterally serve as your own flint: write for yourself alone.

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