

Nothing's Good Enough

MASTURA TASNIM



Some days, you'll hate your words. You'll look at them scrawled across a page or styled on a screen and you'll hate them.

Fact is, half of the days you write you won't feel like a writer. Sure, you'll say you're one in CVs and in the corners of files where they ask you to list your favourite ECA (Writing? Yes please). But most days you'll look at that story or this poem or those random notes you take in class and shake your head at how pretentious you sound. As a writer, you're more a fraud, walking around in your characters' skins, pretending to know something others don't. Some days nothing will seem good enough. Other days you'll find the perfect sentence and just know, just know that it has no place in the story you're writing.

But you'll keep writing and eventually someone will say it's great even though you know it's wrong. You'll keep scribbling in your notebook, at the back of your maths copy, on the corner of your exam script, in the back bench and the front seat, in a party, at a funeral, while your parents fight and you fall in love. It will be unrewarding on the better days and frustrating on the worse ones, and it will be always, one hundred percent, absolutely worth it.

Getting the Tone Right

SHUPROVO ARKO



When reading short stories, I personally prefer dialogue being used as scarcely as possible. While an excellent writer uses dialogue effectively, too much of it can lead to it becoming bland and unnecessarily expository. To me what's more important is how you set the tone of your piece, and I find that listening to movie soundtracks while writing really helps with this. Since original scores are composed to accompany and complement scenes (which are basically stories being played out), the results are quickly apparent. The natural flow of the music seeps into the writing and your choice of words is influenced by the overall tone of the score. So for example, if you're going for a more upbeat, ethereal piece, Cliff Martinez's *Drive* soundtrack is perfect or if you're feeling particularly existential then Hans Zimmer's score for *The Thin Red Line* is what you should listen to.

Getting Something Finished is Nice

RAFEE SHAAMS



I remember writing a terrible fantasy novel when I was 14. It was infected with a thousand grammatical errors that, at the time, were oblivious to me. I didn't care. I was happy to have finished a 600 page single-typed manuscript and nothing in the world would've made me embarrassed of it.

Two years later, I went back to it and it did embarrass me. I wanted to burn the whole thing down and forget its very existence. But even then I didn't regret spending all those hours typing away frantically at a story I now find pathetic. It taught me a valuable lesson. I could *finish* something.

I usually begin a story by simply starting to type on the computer without outlining the plot ahead. With short stories, I'm typically done writing the first draft in one sitting. Then I forget about it and start writing something else. When a fair amount of time has passed, I go over the story again and try my best to not get depressed by the barrage of humiliating mistakes I find there.

Underlining sentences that read awkwardly helps a lot. So does drawing boxes on words you don't think perfectly express what you wanted to say. *The Elements of Style* and Fowler's *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* are two books that come in handy a lot.

I believe that if you have the patience to complete a story and you're willing to rewrite it over and over again, then you've got what it takes to write fiction. Editing is a real pain, but it's worth it.

Write Generously

ZOHEB MASHIUR



The most popular advice given to a budding writer: do it for yourself, not for anyone else. It's well-meaning advice but it glorifies a selfish disregard for what the audience wants.

Nine times out of ten you are writing with the intention of being read. Perhaps it's your O Level English essay, or it's a story you're writing to impress your crush. You have an audience in mind, and you must write *for* them.

It pays to think of writing in terms of a transaction. You *want* something from the person you're writing for: full marks, money, admiration, love, etc. In exchange your writing must satisfy *their* wants. Identify what they like. Tailor your output to their tastes. There is no guarantee in the world you'll get that A or that kiss, but you have to do your best to please them.

However, what you should do your best to avoid is writing something *you* don't want to. Anything you aren't happy with will be poor and will not satisfy anyone. Write for yourself, *as well as* for the audience. Never make it a choice between the two.

Living in Your World

MALIYAT ANIQA NOOR



To succeed at building a fictional world, spend as much time as you can in that world. Inhabit it, breathe its air and converse with its people. The more real it is to you, the more real it'll be to your readers.

As much as I love reading and as much it has taught me, other people's fiction pollutes mine. I find myself subconsciously using their structures in my world. What does help with finding inspiration is being present in my present; absorbing the quirky details of reality and weaving them into the fabric of my fantasy.

Finally, take your time with editing. I write my stories in MS Word and save them as pdfs. Then I have Adobe Reader read it out to me. The mechanical voice helps me to spot the grammatical errors and the awkward sentences.

Accept criticism but don't be discouraged because you're not a born writer. No one is. You learn and you write. The fireworks are bound to happen one day, even if by accident.