

Why Does A Writer Write?

Who knows where a thought takes you. For a writer this is where the fun begins.

The coffee shop was an easy walk from the house. I savored the early autumn air laden with aromas of the harvest. The vegetable stand was flowing with squash, corn, peppers, and so many tomatoes.

"Maggie, here." Andi, a fellow writer, waved from the corner table for two. I nodded and strolled toward the order counter.

Latte in hand, I took my seat, "What's up?"

"Stuck and the article is due next Wednesday. I've edited the piece so much it is no more than pieces on the floor." We talked on about the theme and lede and nut graf, words of the writer's trade. It happens to every writer, the muse plays hide and seek with your creative thought. You sit with blank paper before you and fingers play with a pen desperately wanting to move ink across the page.

"Andi, why do you write?" The question came from the place all thought dwells, where the first threads of a story lie. She looked past me trying to catch a thread. I saw the "Gotcha," and she began to weave.

"It began in grammar school in penmanship class learning curvature writing. I could feel my thoughts being born. I marveled that with simply pencil and paper I could share myself with others." I smiled and nodded.

I too like to write by hand. Handwriting involves my physical body as well as my mental and spiritual self. It begins low, deep inside. As the thought rises, my mind and hand say, "It's time." I quickly search for pen and paper with orderly blue lines to hold the thoughts that float from the ether of my soul to stand in line waiting their turn to come to life on the page.

I feel the effect as my hand moves across the page, the ink connecting with the paper magically forming words. The pen's point, integrating what is inside me and what wants life. I experience the sensation as the thought moves from my mind through my arm to my fingers and form a single stroke, up and down, I; followed by, an a; then an m. Am. A sentence, known to the

world is born, "I am." As I write, the whole matters little to the power in creating the letter, the word, the sentence. I cherish the act, the art, of writing.

The art involves all of my senses. I hear the ink scratch on the paper. I smell the paper's blankness grow into fullness. I see purpose in the words written. Most of all I sense myself. When you read another's writing you experience all of the writer. How could this whole experience ever be lived using any other form?

I ponder these last six months focused on the craft of writing. The workshops I find full of opinions, so much so that it has tainted my love and desire to write. One instructor detests ... ellipses. Yet Ursula Le Guin uses it profusely in her Earthsea novels. Another comments "I wanted more description here." Well, that's a trick when the computer limits my assignment to 500 words. Terminology of ledes and nut grafs, or is it grape nuts, that summarize what you are going to say, in those 500 words, in two sentences. This is to let the reader determine whether they want to read all the words. Heck, the whole essay is only 500 words for heaven's sake!

I get it, craft is important. Yo Yo Ma and Picasso are known artists for their command of the craft. I would beg to guess this mastery is founded in their sustained love and passion for their art. This is what I have relegated to the corner lately, my desire to write fueled by my love to give life to my thoughts free of structure, other than their own.

Coming out of my trance, I return to Andi's dilemma.

"Again, Andi, why do you write?" and again she weaves the threads of thought.

"Because writing is how I claim my place with the world. Alone at my desk the only person that matters in what I write is me." And with that came the ah-ha.

"That's it. I so want this new editor to like my work that I've been writing for her – not me."

With that we sat quietly sipping our tea. Andi weaving new threads for her article, me lost in the curves of my m's and g's.