

Reasons to be Creative – My Relationship With Writing

I'm often asked why I got into creative writing. After all, to head off to university to study, following a successful 34-year career in IT, the juxtaposition is curious. To answer this, I take people back to my first memory of being hooked on what I considered a large tome, *Watership Down* by Richard Adams. I remember sitting down in a quiet corner at every opportunity to continue my journey alongside the rabbits Hazel, Fiver and Bigwig. Even though I was a weedy child, I considered myself having the wily instinctual aspects of Fiver and the leadership potential of Hazel. At that young age, I had no idea about the anthropomorphism within the novel (let alone being able to spell it), yet I use these elements in my writing today. Little did I know then, but it gave me a lifetime of interest in stories and storytelling.

During my life, my reading habits have become quite eclectic, and this has equally had an influence on the breadth of my writing. Authors such as Terry Pratchett, Neil Gaiman, Douglas Adams, Stephen King, Dean Koontz and Lee Child, to name a few, have all had an impact and shaped my style. I do not prescribe to any writing process or method as I can swing from day to day between pantsing (writing by the seat of my pants) to plotting. Often, I'll spin up a new idea completely out of the blue but will find myself at some point 'losing the plot' (excuse the pun) hence, navigating a way forward by switching to plotting.

While my primary focus has been my career, during my downtime I've increasingly put pen to paper, or preferably, fingers to keyboard. I often describe my handwriting as atrocious, and my mother still says to this day that I should have been a doctor with handwriting like that. A couple of years ago, I came across an old report card from secondary school where my English teacher had written, "Trevor tries hard and has made a real effort to improve his handwriting". Ironically, it took me four or five attempts to decipher her scrawl.

This is the primary reason I use technology for most of my creative writing. That, and my extensive IT career, which has embedded technology securely in my psyche. I use a mixture of tools such as Microsoft Office, Scrivener (for larger, more complex novel constructions), Evernote (replacing notepads and my handwriting), Dropbox and cloud storage to replicate and save backups. The other platform I use profusely is Google Chrome, for research. However, that is the proverbial double-edged sword. On the one hand, almost everything you need can be located on the internet if you look hard enough. On the other, a global search engine is probably the worst tool which enables procrastination. Recently, I was researching details on hedgehog highway creations for a script. After 5 minutes had passed, I found myself looking at pages upon pages of humorous hedgehog memes.

Before attending university, I had attempted some poetry, non-fiction and fictional writing, but my views of poetry and poets were that of woolly headed hippies. Likewise, I thought scriptwriters were a bunch of intellectual luvvies and non-fiction writers were dull as dishwater stuffy academics. I now have a fascination with how each of these crafts overlap one another in what could be described as a large Venn diagram. For instance, poetry can teach you concision, fictional writing teaches you narrative structures and plotting, scriptwriting teaches you character development and journeys, while scholarship or non-fictional writing teaches you about influences and approaches to your reading and subsequent writing.

During my career, I had deadlines set by pushy executives or clients. I found that when attending university, the continual flow of deadlines per module has aided my progression and forced me to write, regardless of how I feel. Several authors have posted that to be a writer you must write every day, almost religiously. I recently read Stephen King's writing memoir, 'On Writing' and in there he states that he does set himself deadlines of circa 2000 words per day. However, he goes on to say that he still finds time each day to do

leisurely activities such as family, games and seeing the Red Sox baseball team. In emulation, I am attempting to set my own deadlines in terms of word count per day, regardless of whether I have deliveries for publication or university module entries. This way, I hope to force a continual evolution and output to my writing and, to a comment I made in my university application, become a prolifically published author.

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