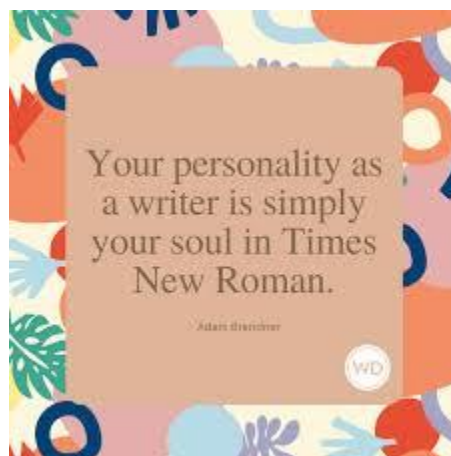


WRITING IN YOUR OWN UNIQUE VOICE



Finding your own voice as a writer is a complex topic accompanied by a multitude of opinions. The young man pictured above looks like he's figured it out. Looks to me as though he's tapped into his heart. And so it must be, your writer's voice is the expression of you in a combination of tone, sentence structure, patterns and perspective. Provided in this albeit brief document, are BIG considerations to set you, the writer, on the road to defining your writer's voice.

This quote below is a great start to keep locked in the vault of your writer's mind:



The one true way to develop your writing voice is to do so naturally and honestly. This takes practice in writing, work as honestly as possible, and write how you would say something. The author is the true and only creator of the characters in the book: you and you alone are the provider of the feelings, emotions, quirks and layers of complexities of each personality in your story.

Write for your readers. The readers want that connection. They want to feel the same as the characters, to see through their eyes. Only the author's voice will give the reader what they crave.



Why spend time of finding your own writing voice?

Voice is the single writing feature in fiction and non-fiction. It affects how your material is received...beginning with the first page. The author sets the mood with voice. The same story could be told in many ways and with varying results. Novels often have many voices. For example, there are the voices of the author, the narrator, and each character.

A writer with a strong voice might write that the villain seethed at his client, baring his teeth, as he leaned in a menacing manner; instead of the villain angrily stared at his client. If feeling stuck, I've heard many webinar leaders recommend a book called: The Emotion Thesaurus: A writer's guide to character expression. It might not be the total solution for a writer, but taking a break from writing to flip through a few pages might get your creative mind flowing again.

Here are some descriptive steps about writing voice:

1. As in other professions such as teaching, counseling and coaching, developing your writer's voice requires you to know yourself. What values do you hold near and dear? How do you manage conflict? Do you want to exaggerate certain personality styles that are familiar to you?
2. How do you notice the world around you? What is your pattern in how you approach others? Yes, always continue reading other's work., but also step away from other people's opinions and stories, and nourish your own stories and experiences.
3. Again, as in many professions, you'll be ahead of the game by being devoted to paying attention. When you notice something, make a note of it. Write it down. This habit can be a fun one to develop. I write favorite words and lines down the moment they pop into my head.

4. Don't worry about mistakes. You'll make them. Someone will point the mistake out to you. Don't stifle your writing by re-working every sentence as soon as you've finished writing it. Trying to clean up every sentence as you go cuts off your process. Keep writing, and leave time for your voice to grow and give your voice permission to show itself.




"I've learned so much from my mistakes,
I've decided to keep making them!"

5. Imagine the reader you are writing for. It can be a productive action step to take to focus your work. Each project, or even each chapter, you can envision your message and what type of reader will appreciate your message the most. Ask yourself, is there an age range for my readership? Is your short story, for example, so specific that you can picture *exactly* who you are writing about because you know this person in real life and therefore you know their character.
6. Think about and be prepared that your 'voice' may change over time, as your tastes, skills and wisdom changes over time. Be patient and allow this process to flow. Embrace it.
7. Be a voracious reader. The influence of others keeps your own process fluid. You may even want to copy others. You can't commit plagiarism, of course, we all know that. This is where developing your own voice comes in. Give it your own spin after doing a mountain of research. For example, my current project involves writing about a fungus in the SW called Valley Fever. There's much available on this topic on the Internet that involves my research. And when I incorporate the frightening experience of my protagonist contracting this disease, it will be in my own voice.

There's a lot of discussion among artists, writers and songwriters about influence and where artists get their ideas. There's even a book written titled: *Steal Like an Artist*. It's a small 6"x6" paperback, filled with thought-provoking tidbits. When you read a passage from an author's book, ask yourself, *'Why do I love this so much?'* And how can I adapt this in my own brilliant way? I remember the first time I read *East of Eden* by John Steinbeck. On a single page in his book, he described a sociopath with piercing detail. I loved it and am grateful that I had the opportunity to read this best seller.

The saying below is something my father told me fifty years ago in his tireless quest to encourage me to obtain a college degree. The same holds true for finishing a novel:



NEVER GIVE UP ON
A DREAM JUST
BECAUSE OF THE
TIME IT WILL TAKE
TO ACCOMPLISH IT.
THE TIME WILL
PASS ANYWAY.

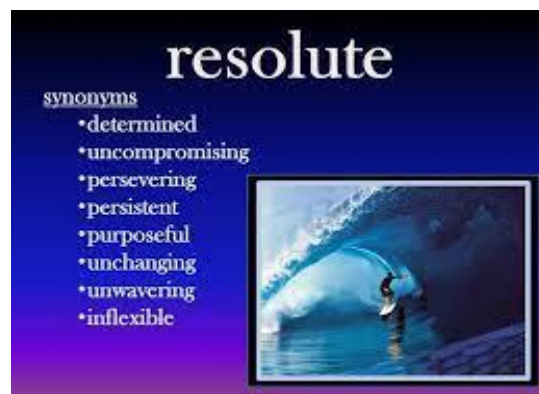
In closing, the clinical social worker in me prefers to tackle my writing projects keeping a holistic approach foremost in my activities.

Here's a few examples of what I'm talking about:

1. Write as much as you can in an organized fashion, but not compulsively. Truly inventive writing cannot be forced.
2. Write more when you feel particularly inspired. In my opinion, it's permissible to take breaks. I don't in any way consider this writer's block, or even being stuck, so don't label yourselves with these gooey words.



3. Breaks are those activities when you take care of yourself. Take a walk or get on the elliptical trainer, or weight lift. All of these activities provide added layers of long-term benefits to your health, not to mention your writing results. And while doing these things, you never have to turn your mind away from the great ideas percolating in your creative mind. A break allows you to re-think what to write, and once you return to your computer, I guarantee you that you'll have a new and refreshed improvement to what you would have written had you not taken the break. I say this even if your break lasts 5-10 minutes, and all you do is walk through the kitchen.
4. Please understand that I am NOT advocating procrastination. I write as often as I can, just as my professors have taught me. That's why it pays to be organized. Complete your outline; research and write your character analysis on each character before you begin writing your novel.
5. Be resolute in your overall mission.



6. When you come up with that perfect phrase, one-liner, or emotional Ah-ha, give yourself a pat on the back.

7. Take a break to stay connected to those who support your writing efforts. These people are priceless. Keep them in your life, and let them know that they matter to you.
8. Time is important, so it's always productive to be organized. But also take the time to include the other things you cherish. I like to try out new recipes, walk my dog so she can socialize with her friends, and eat nutritiously. In other words, your best seller can wait one more month while you take care of you.
9. Finding your own voice in writing also means, quite literally, reading your work out loud. I strongly recommend that you print a hard copy of each chapter and read it out loud to yourself. Trust me, when you do this, you'll find out very quickly what your voice is all about.
10. Re-writing is the essence of writing. After reading a chapter or two out loud, you might decide to place emphasis on a few character traits to give a louder and more emotional voice to that person. Re-writing is a required step. Perhaps a dozen times or more. Accept it, and along the way, ask a trusted friend to read your work when you're ready.
11. Decide ahead of time how much work you plan to put into your novel before turning it over to an editor. The more an editor does, as in developmental editing, the more it will cost you. But know the different options of editing available and write accordingly.



"No WAIT, I'm not quite ready to submit it yet!
Just need to go over it one more time..."

©2010, 2014 Debbie Ridpath Oels, LLC. InkyrToss. Twitter: @inkyrtoss.