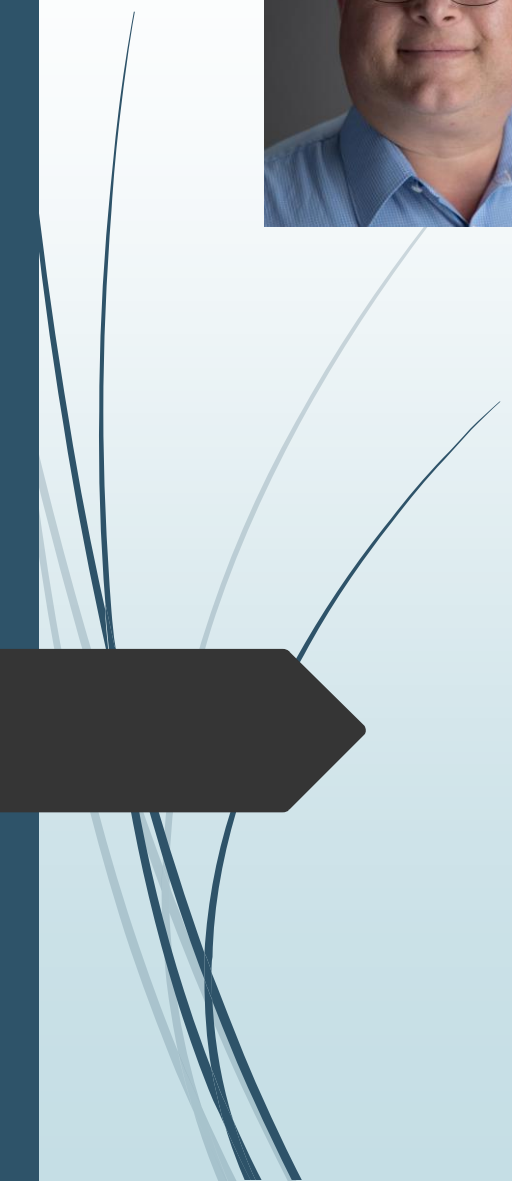
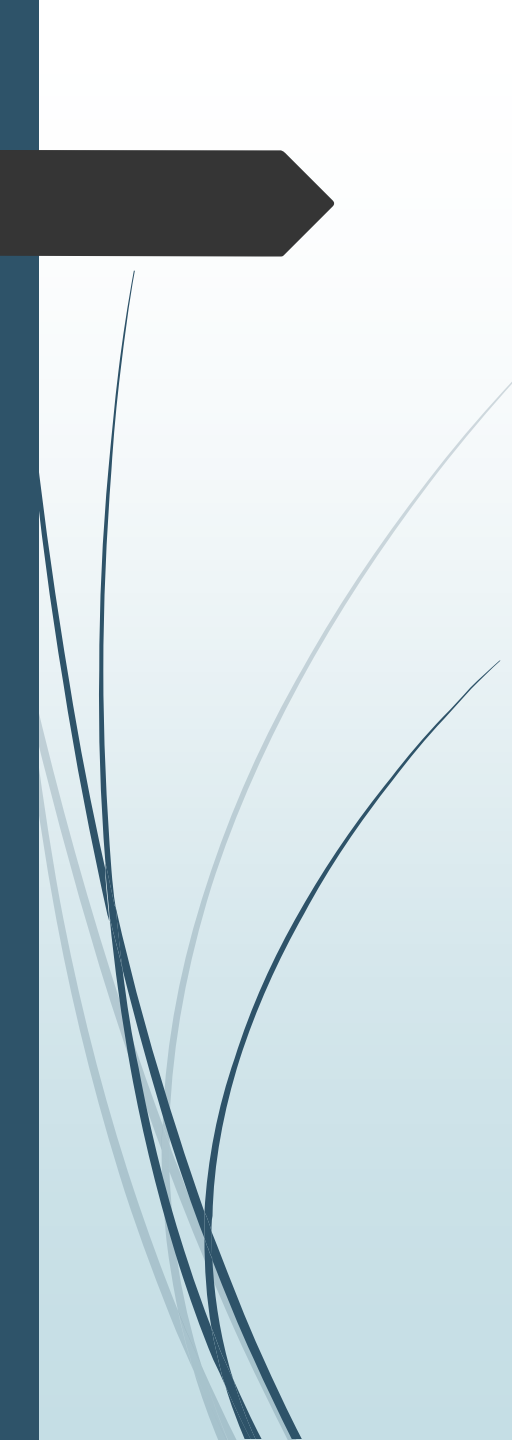




How to Become an Author, Starting Now

David Rodeback

Bear Lake Writers Workshop, October 2026



➤ 1, 4, 2, 18

➤ Snake River HS

➤ Colorado, Pennsylvania, Virginia, upstate New York

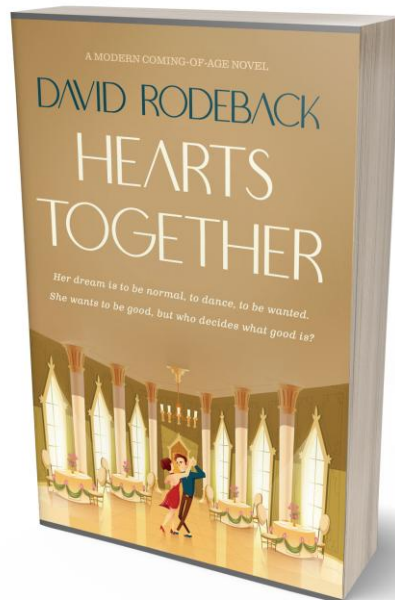
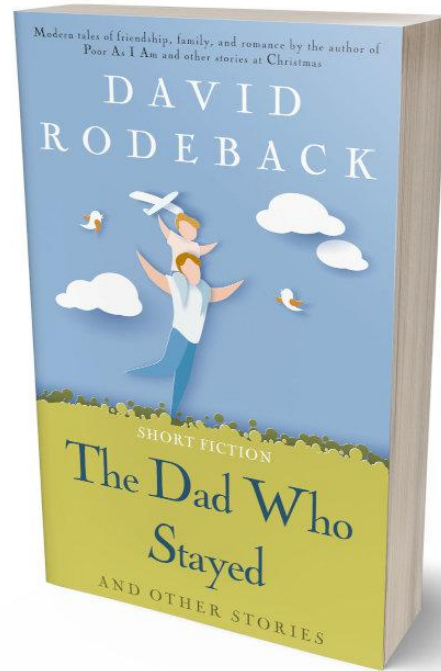
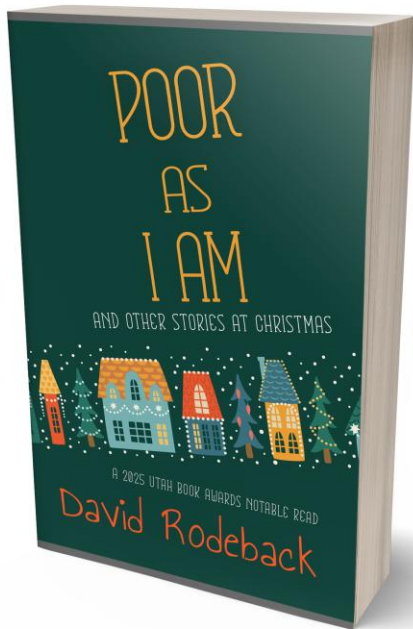
➤ American Fork, Utah; West Valley City

➤ Writing, Russian language, Russian literature

➤ Contemporary, realistic fiction, long and short

➤ Book-length biographical essay

➤ League of Utah Writers 2025 Writer of the Year



American Fork Citizen



HOME AF CITY NEWS SPORTS SCHOOLS BUSINESS ART/CULTURE OPINION OBITUARIES SUBSCRIBE

OPINION

OPINION: This writer and that marching band



Published 2 months ago on June 23, 2025
By AF Citizen



OPINION

COLUMN: "The Lusty Month of May"



Published 3 months ago on May 19, 2025
By AF Citizen

OPINION

OPINION: Poke the algorithms in the eye: Read books in 2025

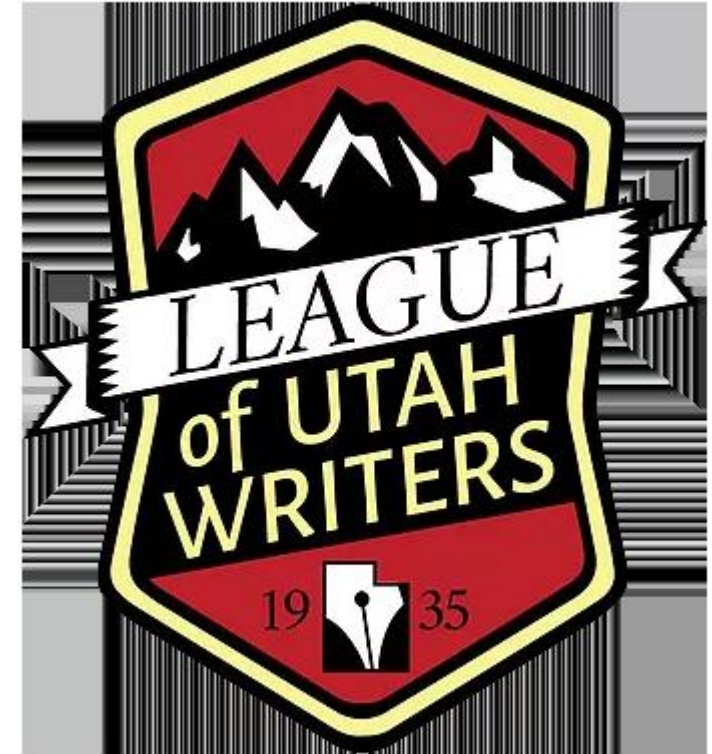
Published 7 months ago on January 12, 2025



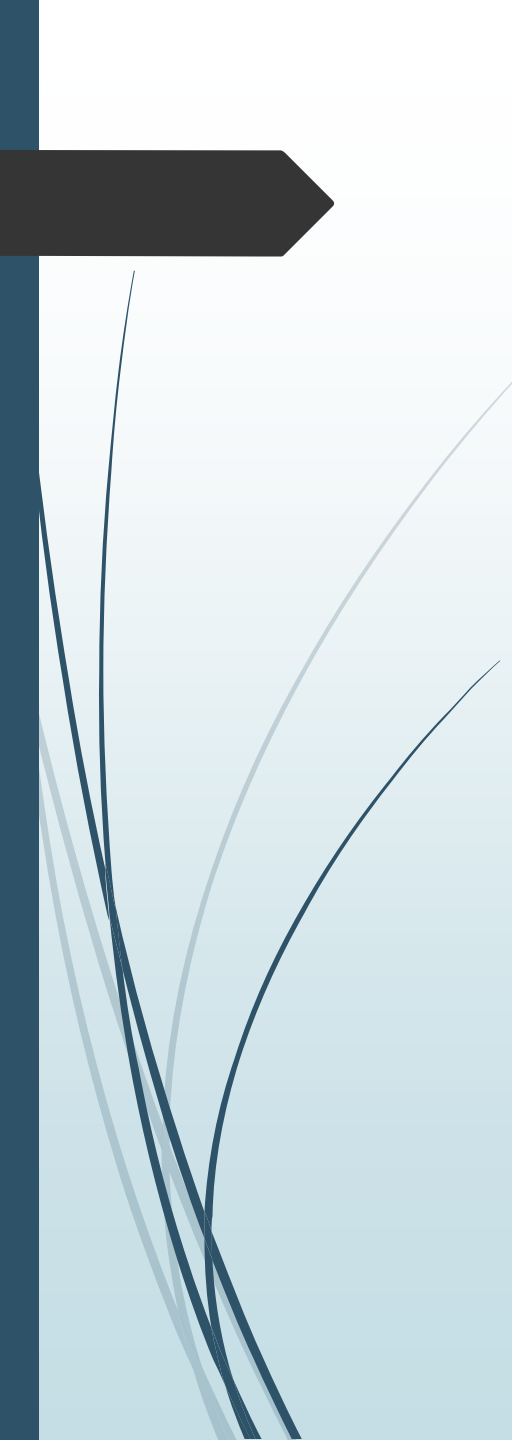


Ask Me about the League of Utah Writers

- The League has 32 chapters around the state and online (some hybrid). They're all different, tailored to meet the needs and interests of their members. You can also join the League without joining a chapter.
- League membership is only \$30 per year (\$10 for students), and \$15 for an additional chapter.
- You don't have to be a Utah resident. The League has members all over the country and a few international members.
- Two conferences for members and non-members:
 - Pre-Quill—one day—April—\$40
 - Quills—four days—early August—member discount
- Publication opportunities in two yearly anthologies and a quarterly literary journal.
- Discounted entry to our spring writing contests—awards announced at Quills—most offer written feedback from professional writers—some offer cash prizes



leagueofutahwriters.com



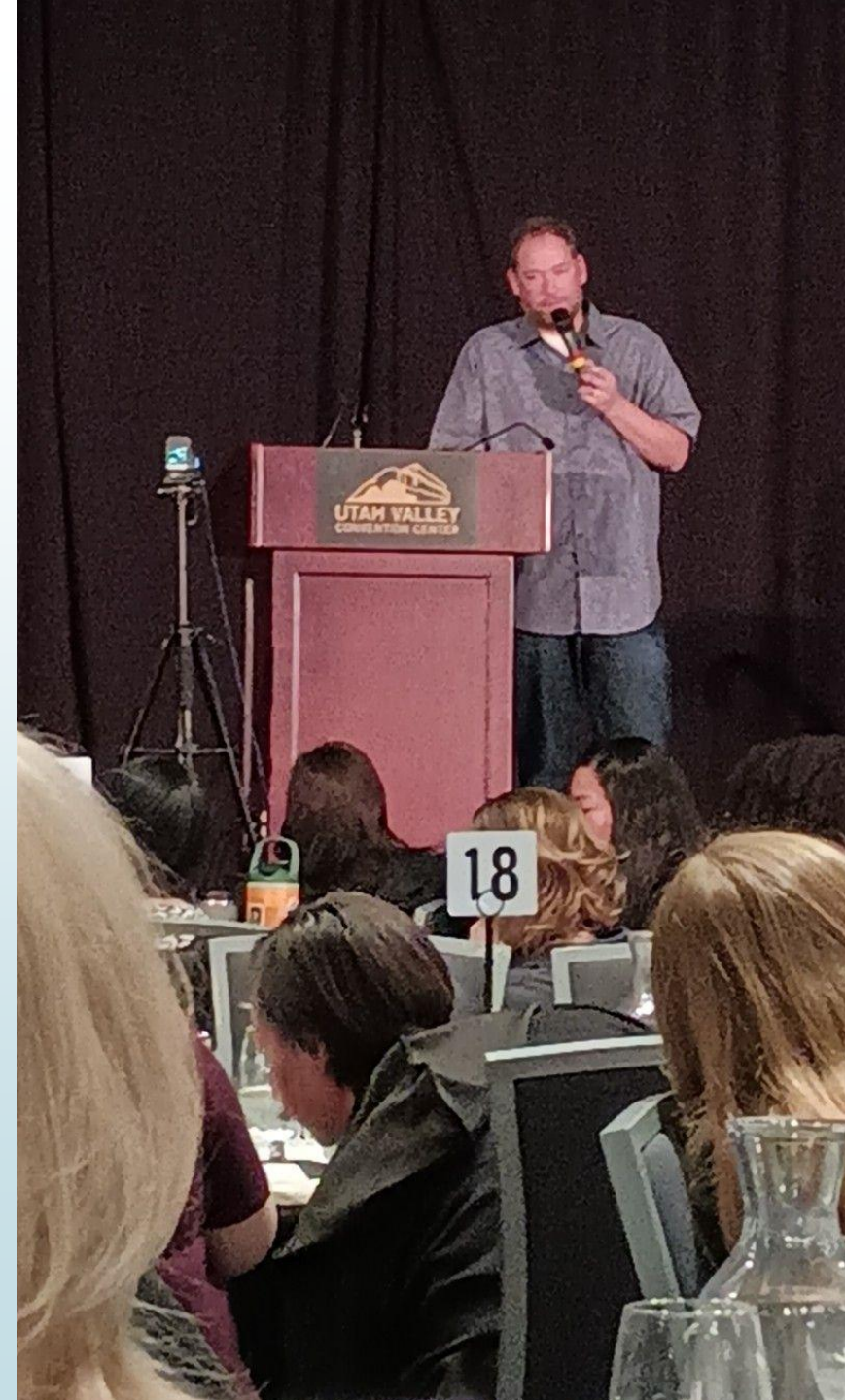
Notes

- This is about becoming an author, not making a living at it. (Most authors don't.)
- Fiction, nonfiction, poetry, etc.
- It's a process, a lifestyle, not a quick fix.
- You're probably already doing most of those things. Keep doing them. They work. They fit together.
- Be yourself.

Brandon Mull

“A man whose superpower is getting boys to stand in line to buy books.”

“I have the same job as Rumpelstilskin.”
Keynote speech at Storymakers 2025



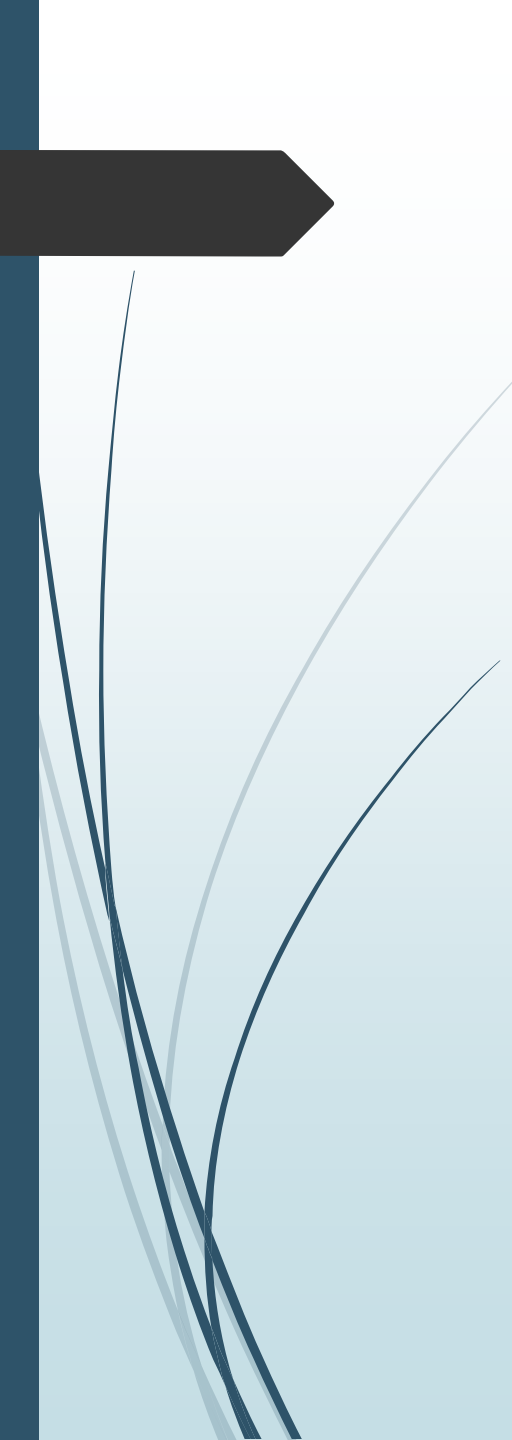


Definitions

People who write are **writers**.

All **authors** are writers.

Not all **writers** are authors.



Definitions cont.

Writers write—perhaps in the form of

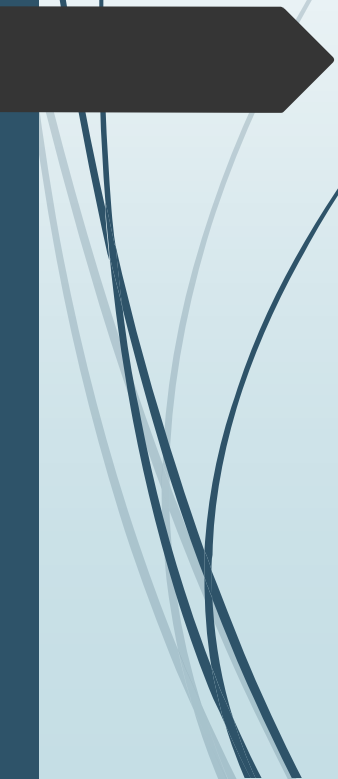
- Letters, journals, web copy, greeting cards, etc.
- Stories, poems, and essays no one ever sees
- Things for others to say or publish under their own names (ghost writer)



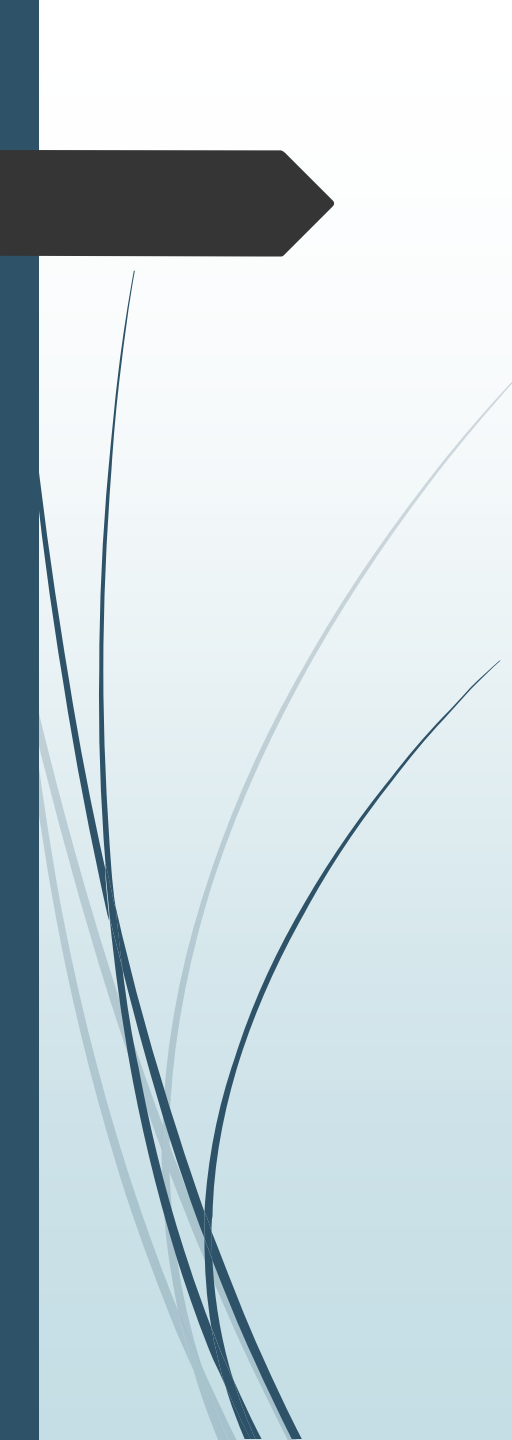
Definitions cont.

Authors write their own words, their own thoughts, their own creations, and publish them to be read or heard by others.

- In books, magazines, pamphlets, online publications
- In some computer games?
- Screenwriters? Playwrights? Columnists? People who write their own speeches?
- Grafitti artists who publish their words on walls, railroad cars, toilet stalls?

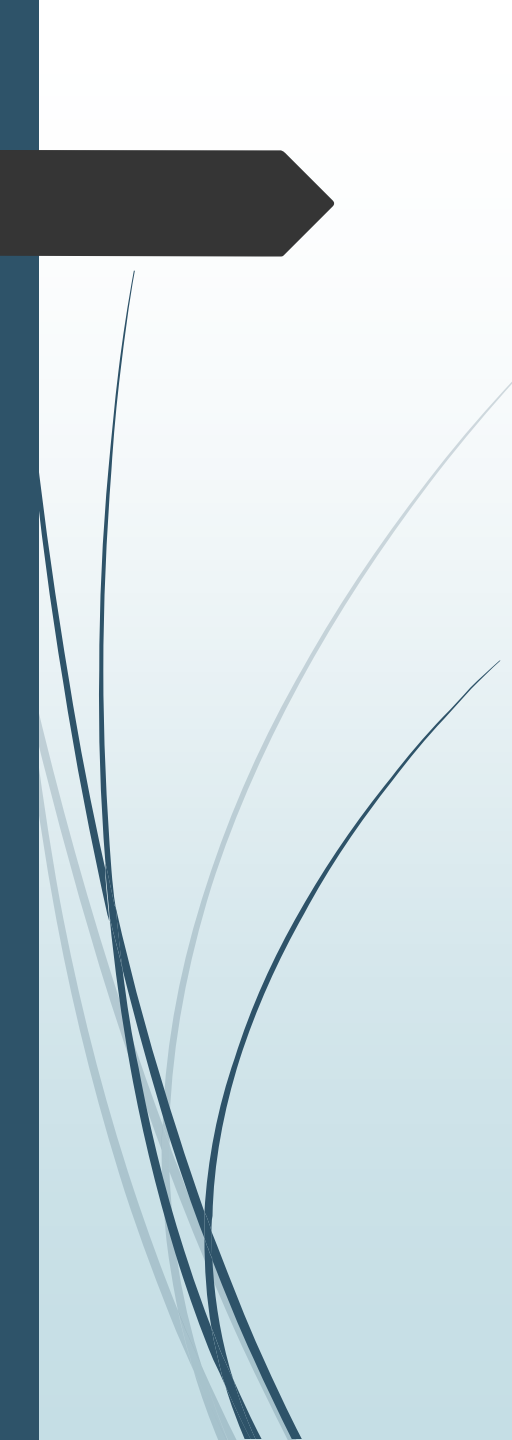


Twelve Things



1. Read, re-read, and keep reading

- Ann Lamott: Immerse yourself in words.
- Read for entertainment, to learn, to feel, to heal.
- When you have to, read for school (and try to enjoy it).
- Read different things sometimes.
- Not everything you read has to be great literature or even well written, but some of it should be.



1. Read (cont.)

- Read aloud a lot, for yourself and for others.
- Read real writing, not summaries or AI-generated versions that are dumbed down so they're easier to read. Your brain deserves the real thing.
- Reread.
 - Read as a reader, then read again as a writer.
 - Re-read after years or decades, to see how you and the story have changed.



(I picked short ones.)

Early Morning Love Poem

Duvet,
you are so groovet,
I'd like to stay under you
all of Tuesdet.

Brian Bilston

Take it as read

one thing
I've learnt
as I've got older

is that literature
lights up life
and makes it smoulder

for beauty
is in the eye
of the book holder

Brian Bilston

AT THE INTERSECTION



Brian Bilston

August 4 · 🌐

The mathematician John Venn was born on this day in 1834. To commemorate the occasion, here's a poem in the form of a Venn diagram.



2. Have a life

- Take risks. Not stupid ones. Many will be small.
- Sooner or later, writing what you need to write will feel like a risk.

Katherine Paterson: “Writers are very private people who run around naked in public.”

- Pay attention. Watch people. Listen. Take notes.
- Laura London on Substack: “No one tells you how much you have to understand to write so little.”



2. Have a life (part 2)

- Go to the theater, a concert, a live sporting event.
- Sit and read a book under a tree on the bank of Lake Tahoe.
- Eat a meal at Donner Pass.
- Eat with your bare hands at the seafood boil.
- Visit a place you've never been, just because you've never been there.
- Plant tomatoes or flowers and see them through the season.

Ann Patchett

“Writing must not be compartmentalized. You don’t step out of the stream of your life to do your work. . . . [W]ho you [are] as a mother, teacher, friend, citizen, activist, and artist [is] all the same person. People like to ask me if writing can be taught, and I say yes. I can teach you how to write a better sentence, how to write dialogue, maybe even how to construct a plot. But I can’t teach you how to have something to say.”

“The Getaway Car: A Practical Memoir About Writing and Life”
in *This Is the Story of a Happy Marriage* (New York: Harper, 2013, pp. 19-60)



THIS IS
THE
STORY
OF A
HAPPY
MARRIAGE

ann patchett

Ann Patchett

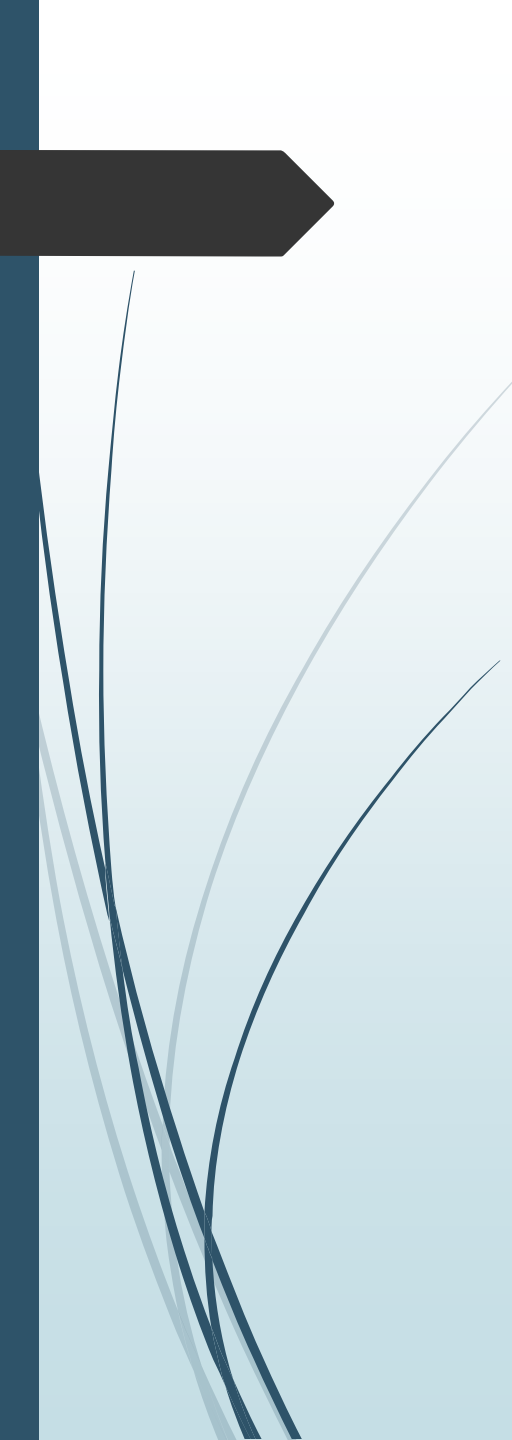
“I am a compost heap, and everything I interact with, every experience I’ve had, gets shoveled onto the heap where it eventually mulches down, is digested and excreted by worms, and rots. It’s from that rich, dark humus, the combination of what you encountered, what you know and what you’ve forgotten, that ideas start to grow.”

“The Getaway Car: A Practical Memoir About Writing and Life”
in *This Is the Story of a Happy Marriage* (New York: Harper, 2013, pp. 19-60)



THIS IS
THE
STORY
OF A
HAPPY
MARRIAGE

ann patchett



3. Learn everything you can about how language works

- As best you can, stay engaged in English class.
 - Carla and I passed notes in Mr. Thomas's class.
 - The sainted Mr. Odell
- Practice diagramming sentences (YouTube!)
- Read aloud
- Read poetry at least sometimes
- Read entire books
- Read the best writing from different authors and different periods.
- Learn a foreign language.
- Write and rewrite.

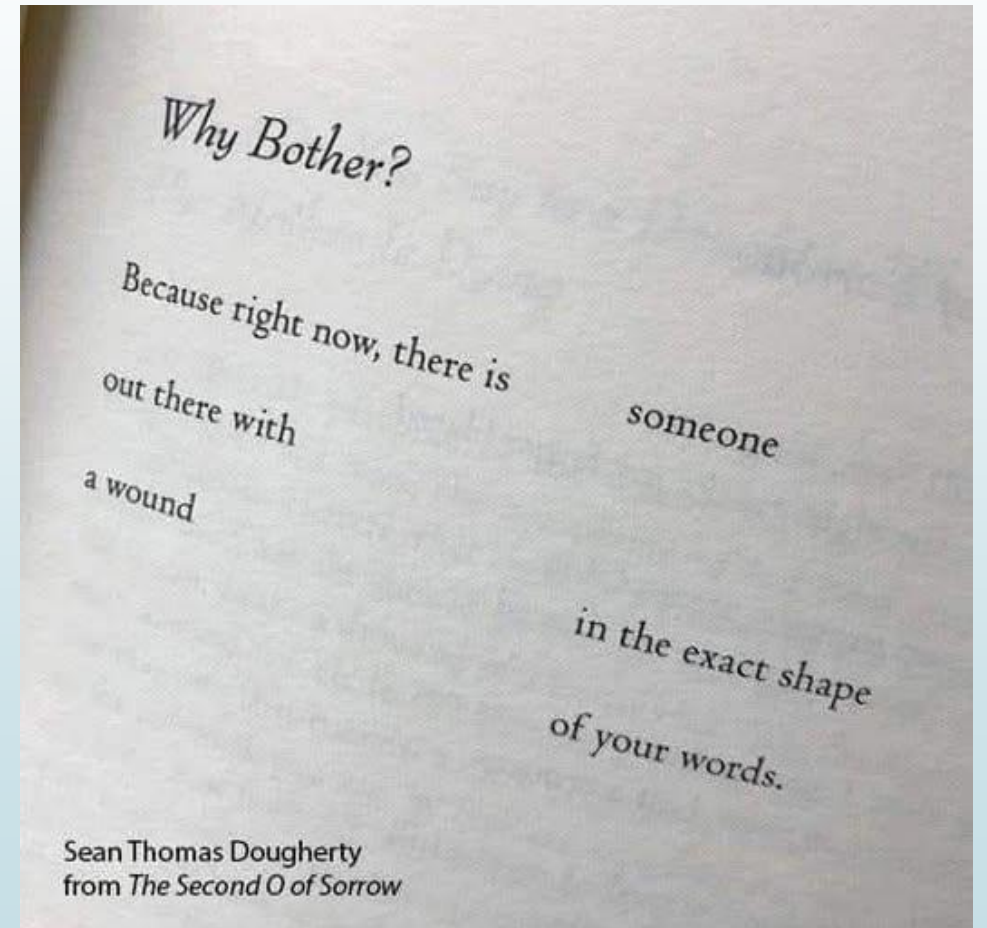


If you were taught to read with a fashionable method called “whole language” instead of phonics (which some think old-fashioned), you’re at a disadvantage. You may want to retrain your brain.

- Learn letter-sound mappings and practice sounding out words (instead of guessing words from shape, first letter, and context).
- Use adult-focused phonics materials to practice decoding words in isolation.
- Learn roots, prefixes, and suffixes (how words are formed).
- Practice spelling, with its sound-to-symbol connections.
- Practice reading aloud.
- Practice diagramming sentences.

4. At least sometimes, write for others to read

- We write differently, more intently, when we have our readers in mind.
- Write to help others feel and understand.





First Draft November 1d

Especially the first draft!

Subscribe



Being a writer means having a story you want the whole world to read, except everyone who knows you.



1.4K



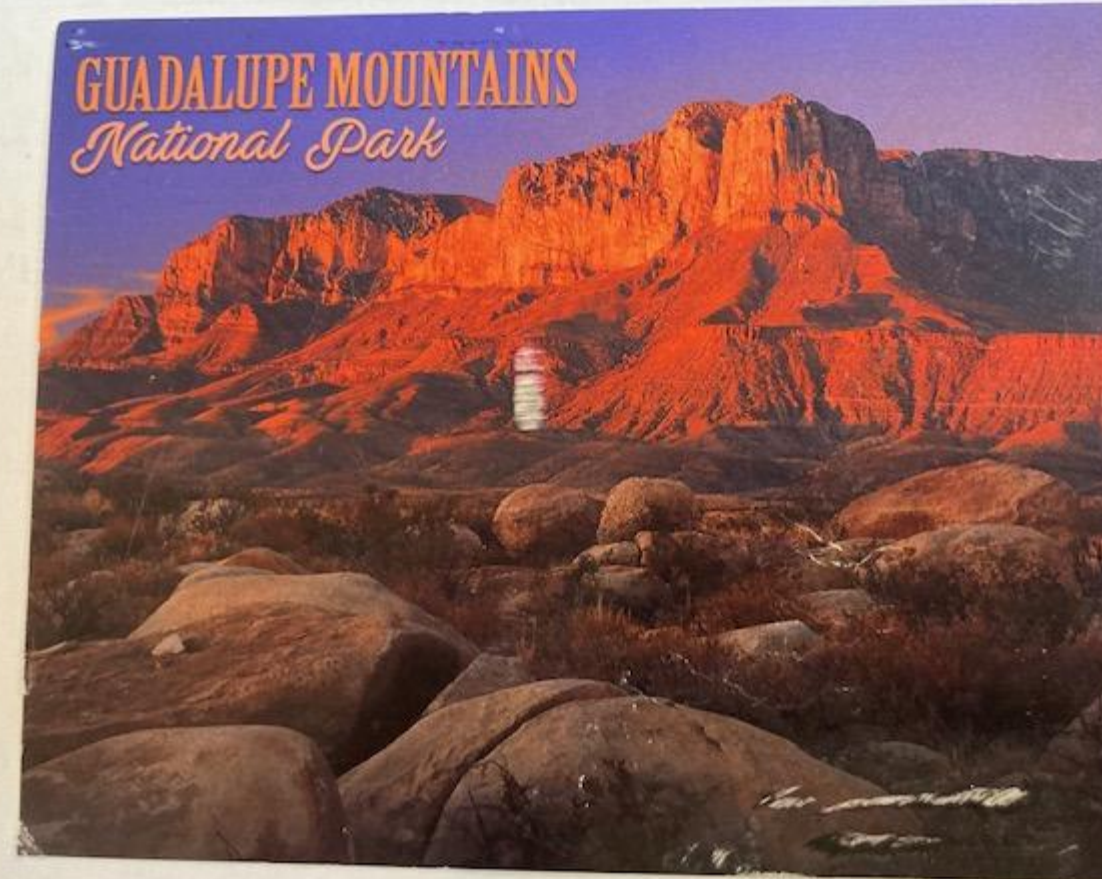
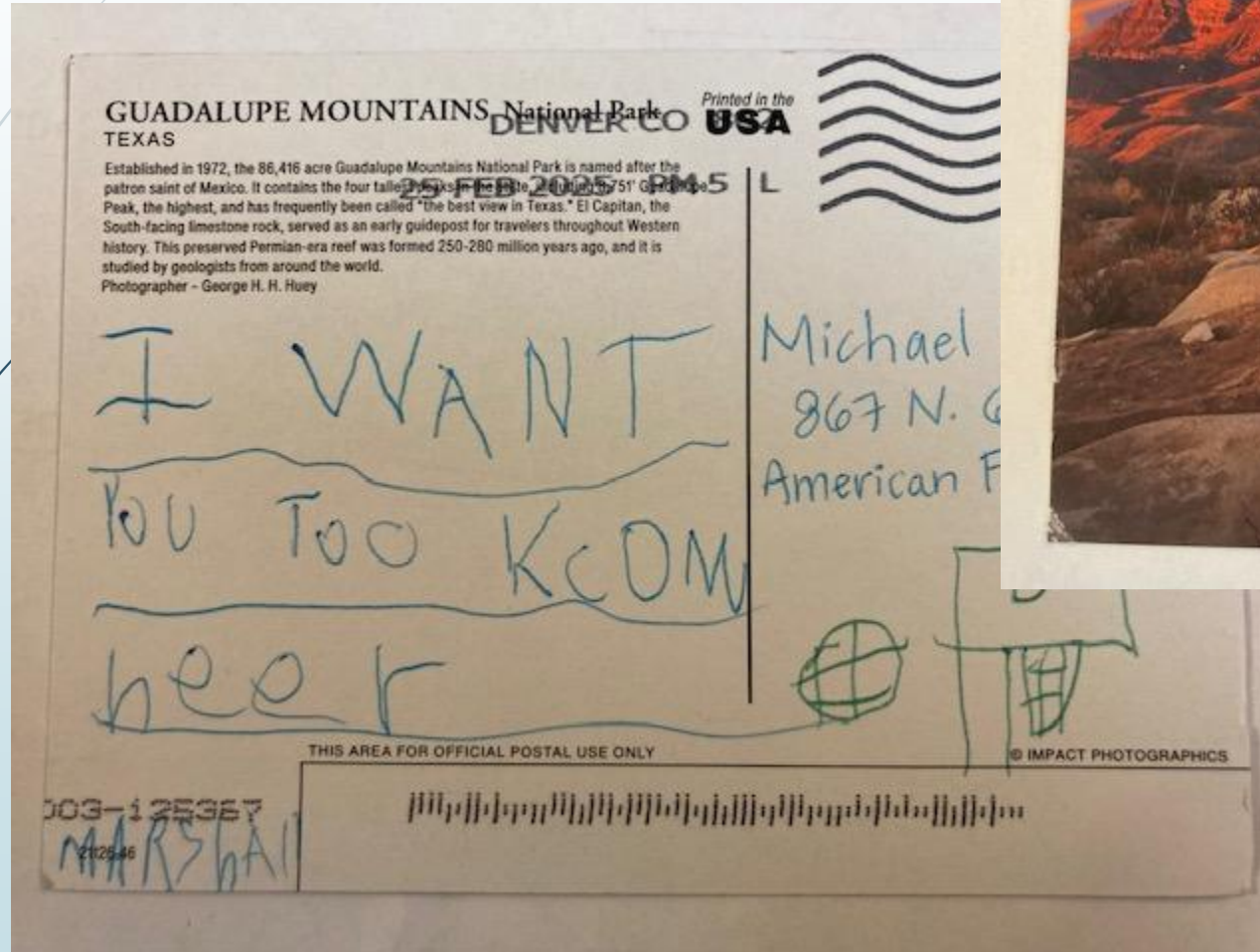
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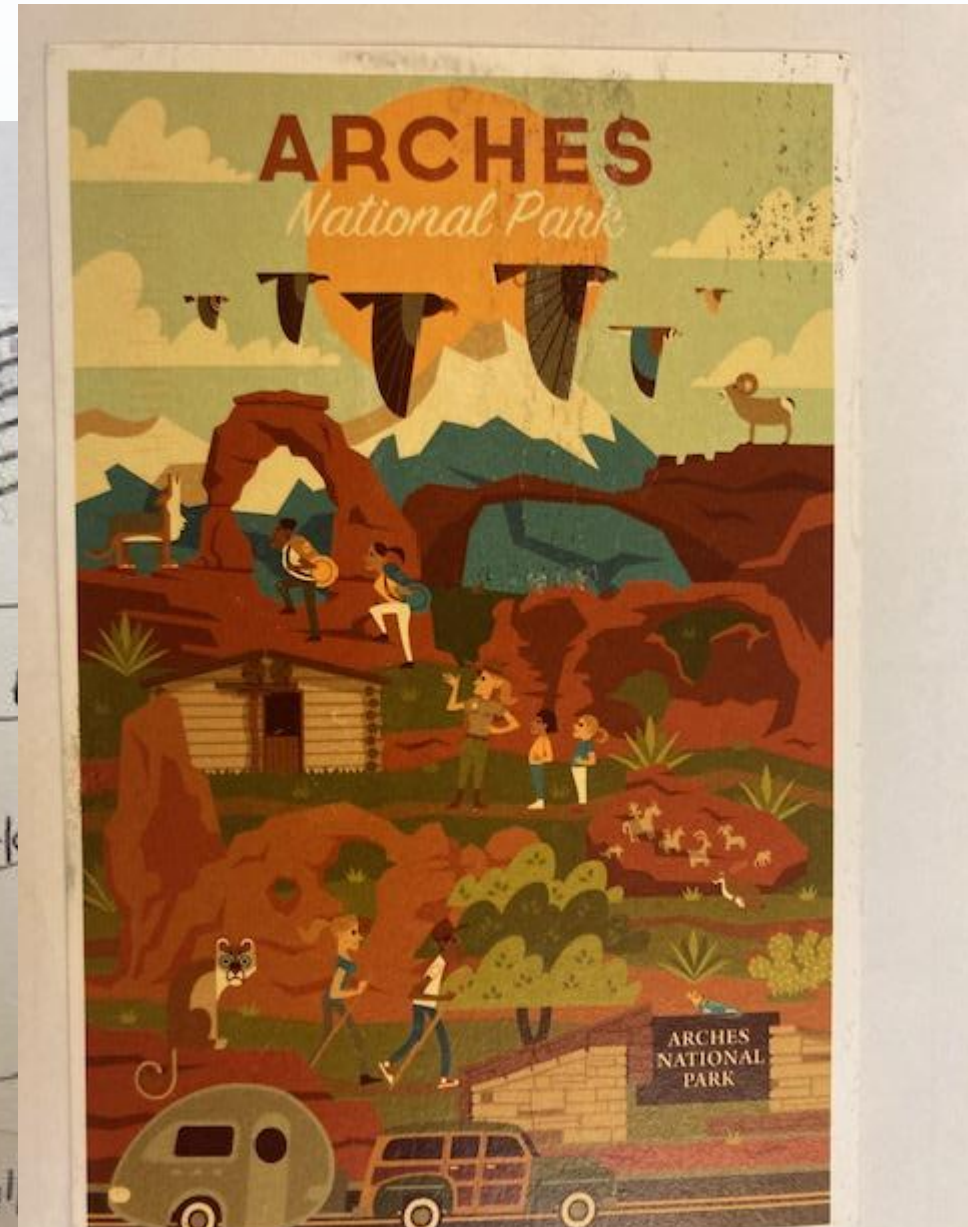
132



Marshall, age 6



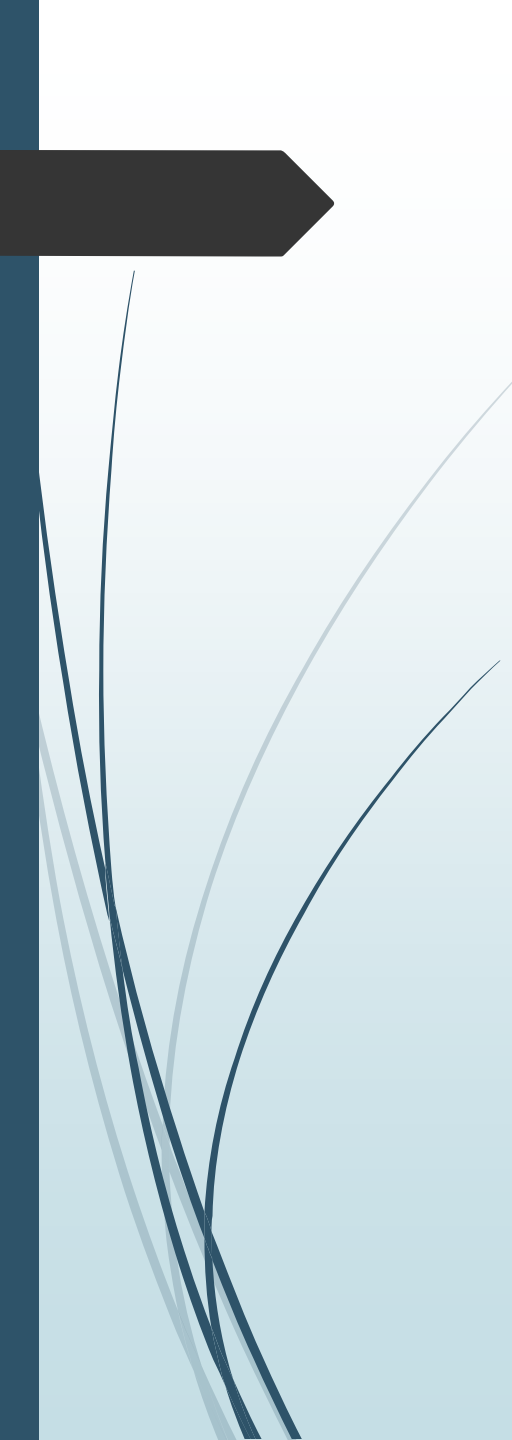
(Write what you know, even if what you know is flatulence?)





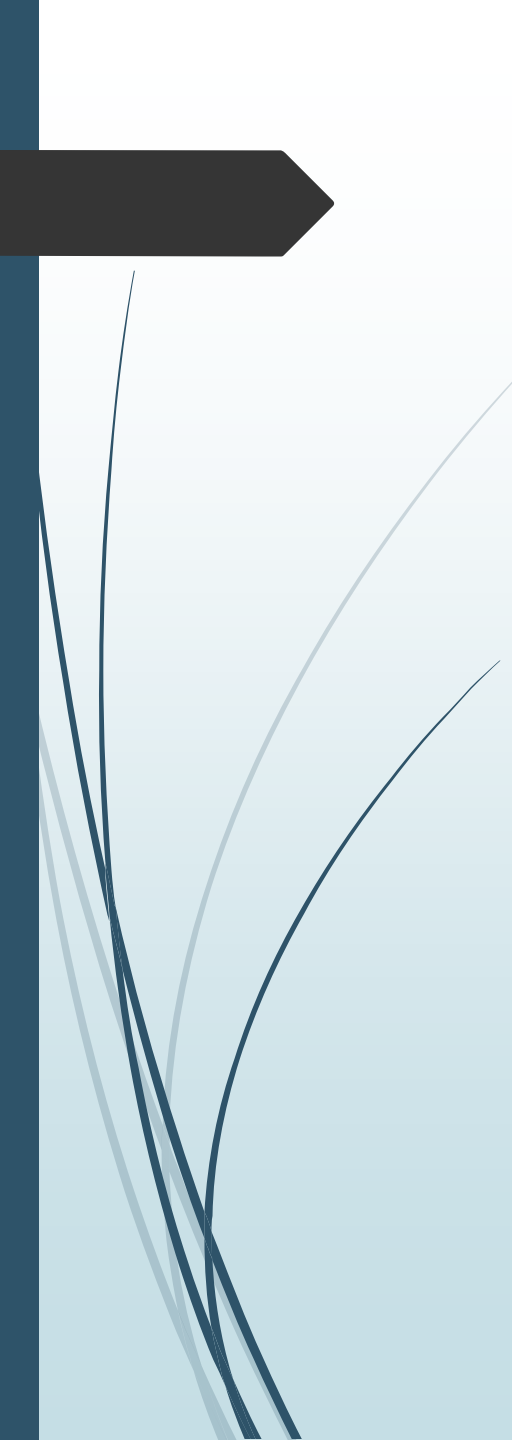
5. Understand that authors never stop learning to write

- Wrote other things, got paid for some, won awards—but when I decided I wanted to write fiction (I was almost 50), I still had to learn to write fiction.
- Take classes. Attend writing conferences. Listen and talk to authors.
- When you can, make sure that each new writing project requires something new from you that you're not good at yet.
- We learn more quickly when we're writing and rewriting.



6. Find some critics who are candid and helpful (yes, it's painful)

- Some readers
- Some writers
- Pay attention, but you're still the author.
- Only candor is helpful (about the good, bad, and ugly).
- Criticize each other's writing, not each other. The goal is to improve our writing.
- Join a critique group or find some critique partners so you can critique others' writing helpfully too. It will help them and make you a better writer.



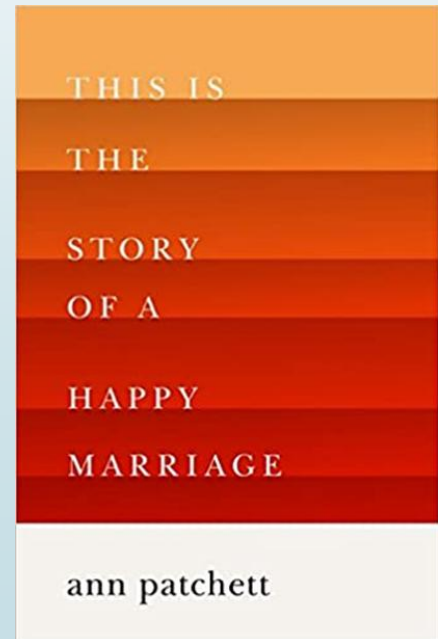
7. Plan on lots of revision and rewriting, plus three or four kinds of editing.

- Nobody should see your first draft. No one wants to.
- Don't judge your own story by your first draft.
- If you never stop revising your stories, you'll never finish them—but any serious writing requires far more revision, far more drafts, than ordinary humans have patience for.
- When it's nearly as good as you can make it, be content with the story you've written, even if it's not the story you wanted to write or wish you could write.
- Write the story you can write. (Some disappointment is normal.)

Ann Patchett

“Imagine running over a butterfly with an SUV. Everything that was beautiful about this living thing—all the color, the light and movement—is gone. What I’m left with is the dry husk of my friend, the broken body chipped, dismantled, and poorly reassembled. Dead. That’s my book.”

“The Getaway Car: A Practical Memoir About Writing and Life”



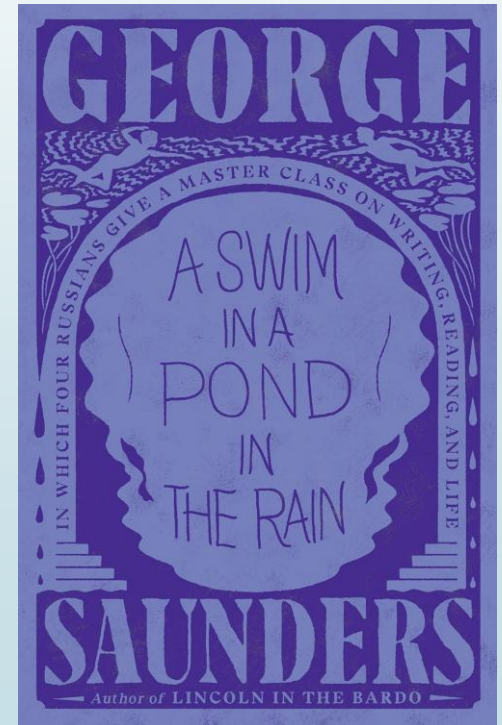
George Saunders

To write a story that works, that moves the reader, is difficult, and most of us can't do it. Even among those who have done it, it mostly can't be done....

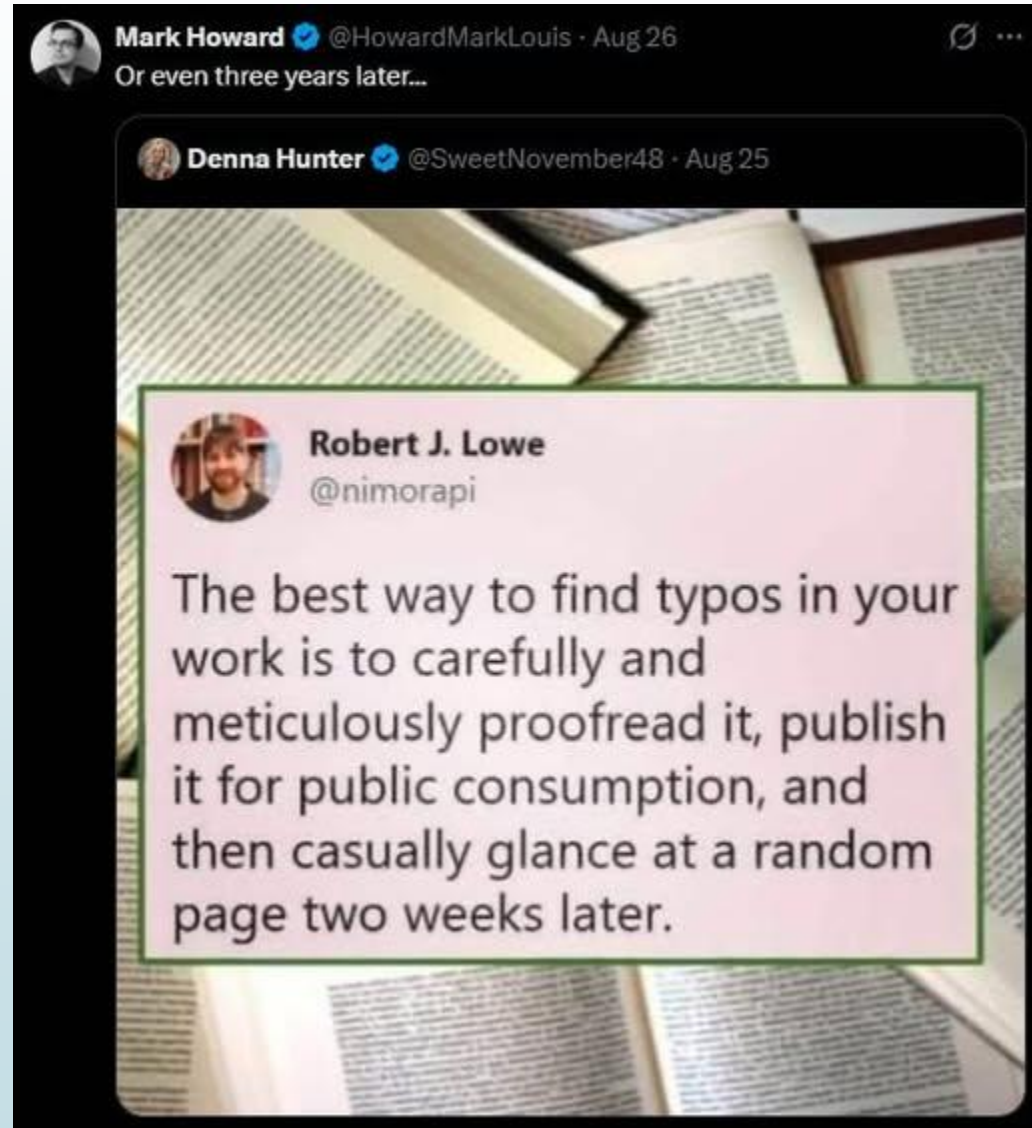
It's hard to get any beauty at all into a story. If and when we do, it might not be the type of beauty we've always dreamed of making. But we have to take whatever beauty we can get, however we can get it.

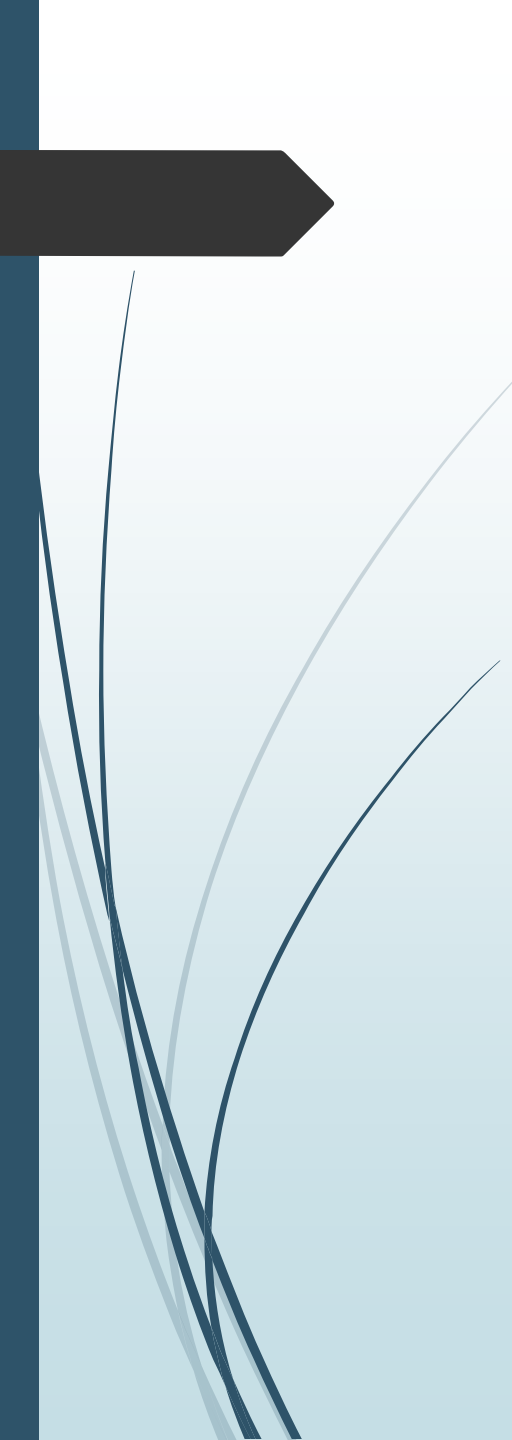
... The kind of story I want to write [is] the kind that stops being writing and starts being life.

But, Lord, it's harder than it looks.



From the Interwebs





8. Remember you're not just making a book to have a book. You're connecting with people.

- Write because you have something to say, not to get your name on the cover of a book or the tagline of a magazine.

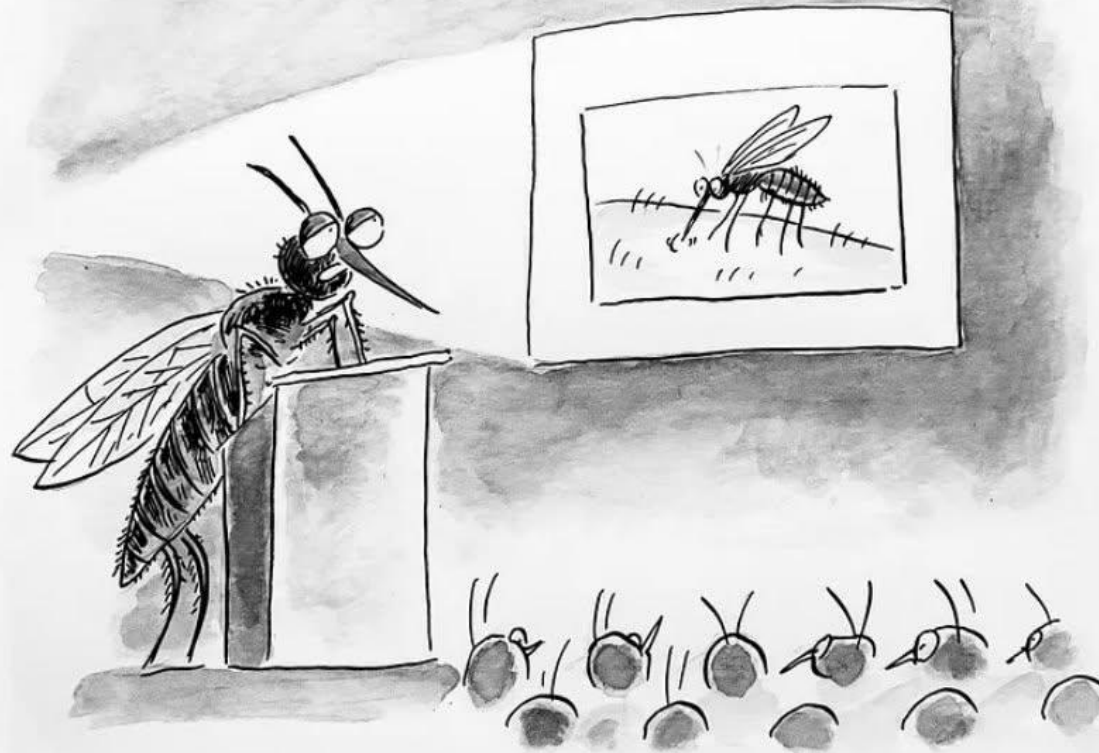
- Inform

- Persuade

- Entertain (some of my Christmas stories)

- Help people, e.g. help them to feel seen

- Change the world (or at least your tiny part of it)



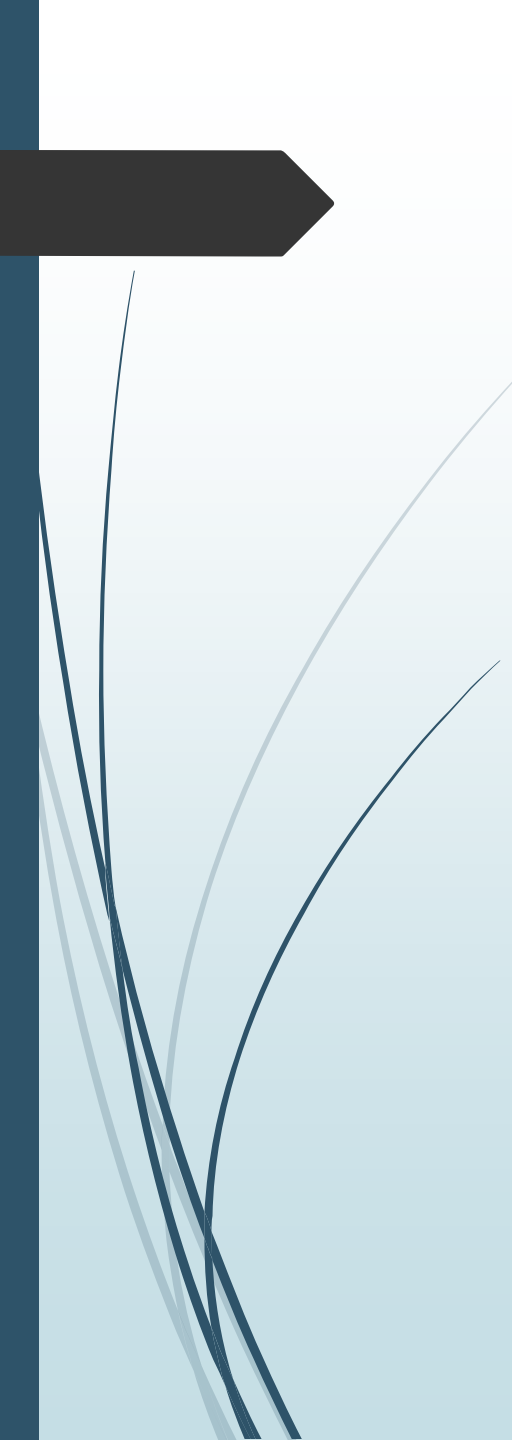
*“As an artist, I judge my work by
the quality of the itch it leaves behind.”*



8. . . . Connecting with people (cont.)

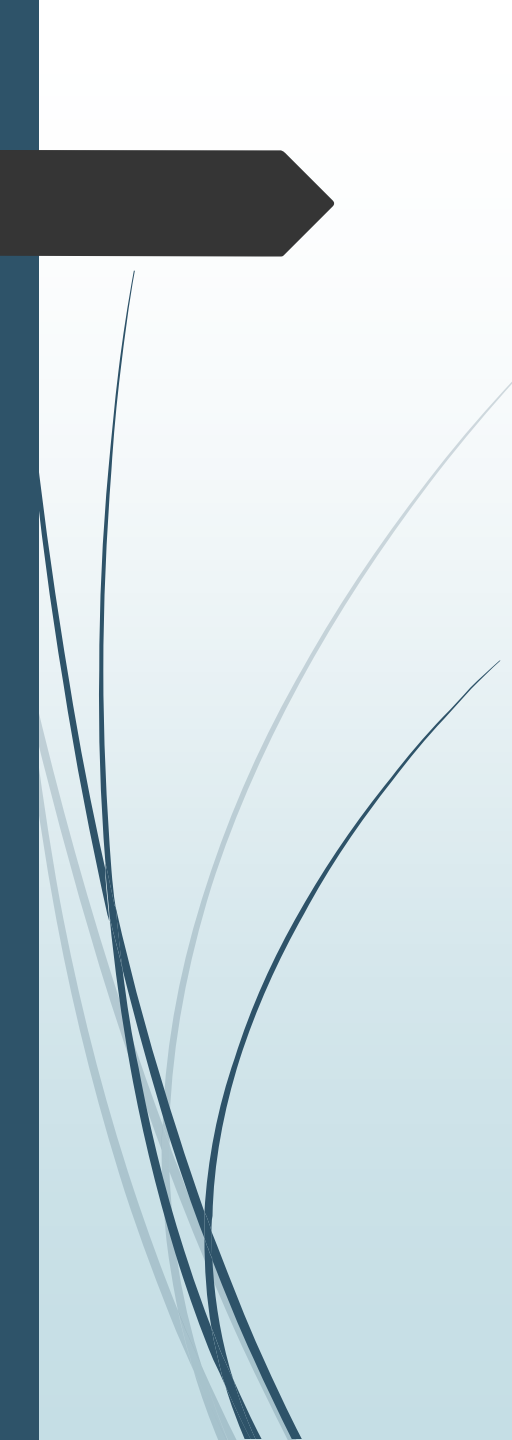
If AI wrote it or rewrote it, you're not the author, even if you wrote the prompt.

(I'm not saying don't use AI as a tool.)



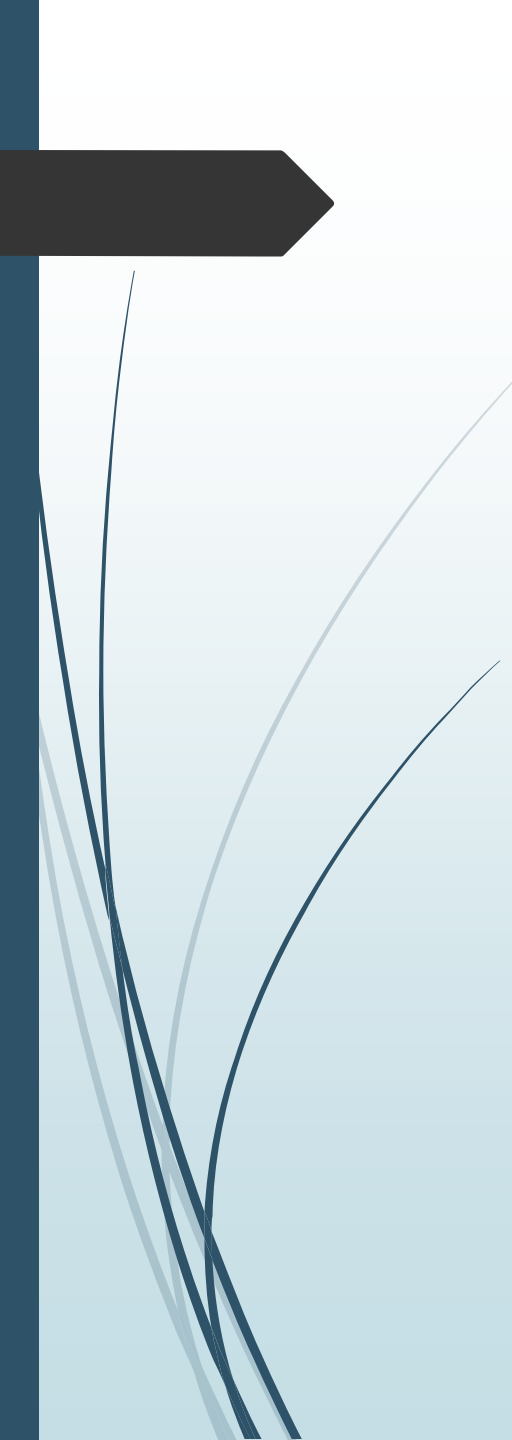
9. Watch for opportunities. Take some of them, even the unexpected ones.

- Submit your short story to an anthology or magazine, even if it's not your masterpiece.
- Enter contests, even if you don't win. (Don't pay extravagant fees.)
- Write something different sometimes.



I write mostly contemporary realism, but I also wander into:

- Mystery
- Sci-fi
- Near-future dystopia
- Romance
- Fantasy
- Magic realism
- Horror (or at least scary)
- Poetry



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- **Mystery**
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- **Magic realism**
- **Horror (or at least scary)**
- **Poetry**

The Weather

Salt Lake Telegram

HOME Edition

24 KILLED IN BUS CRASH

Wreckage and Driver in Worst Traffic Tragedy in Utah's History



RACING TRAIN HITS
VEHICLE CARRYING
42 JORDAN PUPILS

18 Children Seriously Hurt; Tragedy Occurs in Snow Storm Near Midvale

PHOTO STORY ON PAGE EIGHT

WHERE FAST FREIGHT SCHOOL BUS COLLIDED NEAR MIDVALE

Official photograph shows front of locomotive with front of school bus wrapped around its front

OFFICIAL LIST OF IDENTIFIED DEAD

Edward H. Soren, driver of bus, killed in wreck.

DRIVER OF EL-FATED BUS

Edward H. Soren, Riverton ... Died in wreck.

Six Agencies Launch Probe

Blood Investigating Crash Personally

December Opens With Storm; Death, Injury Follow in Wake

Precipitation Figures Exceed Normal to Brighten 1939 Water Prospects



FROM THE PRODUCERS OF **CHAMPIONS OF THE WEST**

EYES WITH PRIDE

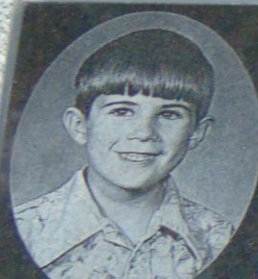
MONDAY MAY 19TH | 5:00^{PM} | 7:00^{PM}

AMERICAN FORK HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

F R E E A D M I S S I O N



(center inscription)



Cory Wride

Born September 28, 1969.
Raised in American Fork,
played in our community
parks, and attended our
churches and schools.



Boys play loudly at courage, conquering
imaginary enemies in glorious battle.
They do not know that, when they are
men and foes are real, their courage will
likely be quiet and their glory too often
found in ultimate sacrifice, willing
but unsought. In the shadow of such
sacrifice, it is for us, beyond our
weeping, to remember the boy, honor
the man, and forgive the foe.



Sgt. Cory Wride

Utah County Deputy Sheriff,
died January 30, 2014.
He gave the ultimate
sacrifice while serving
his community.





10. Be a friend to other writers

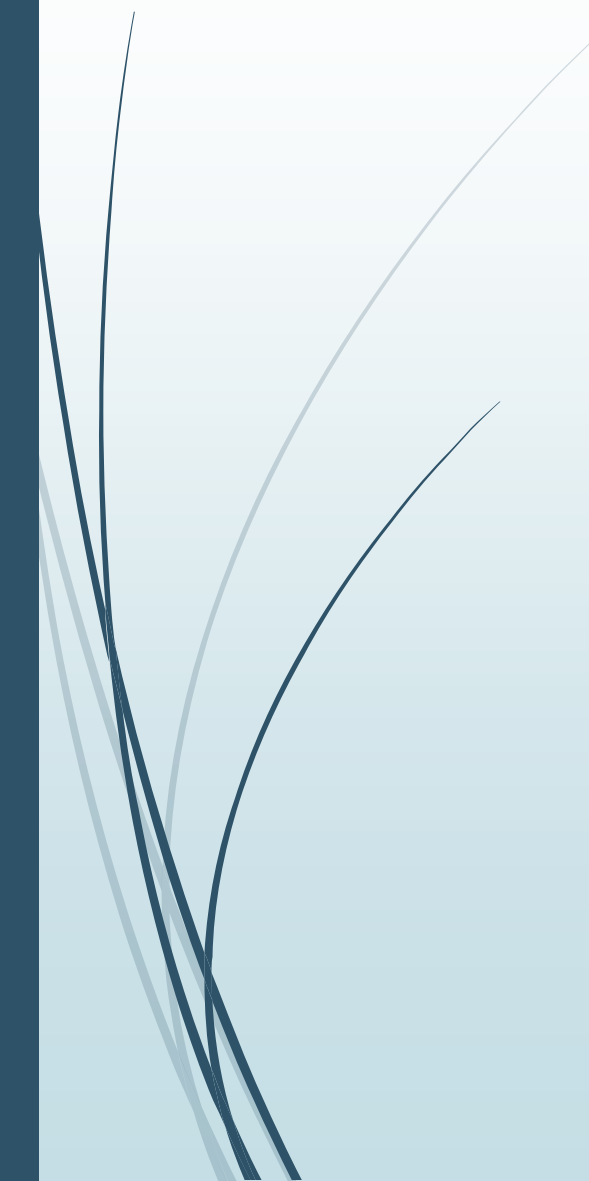
- Find ways to connect with other writers.
 - Help them when you can.
 - Let them help you.
 - Dragging other writers down won't help you rise. (It will actually hurt.)
 - You're probably an introvert. Give it time.
 - Example: the authors of two anthologies.
- 



“

The unpayable debt that I owe to [C. S. Lewis] was not ‘influence’ as it is ordinarily understood, but sheer encouragement. He was for long my only audience. Only from him did I ever get the idea that my ‘stuff’ could be more than a private hobby. But for his interest and unceasing eagerness for more I should never have brought The L. of the R. to a conclusion.

J. R. R. Tolkien





HUMANITY THROUGH A LENS



UTAH'S BEST POETRY & PROSE 2026

DAVID RODEBACK

HEARTS TOGETHER



David Rodeback

POOR AS I AM - AND OTHER STORIES AT CHRISTMAS



David Rodeback

The Dad Who Stayed and other stories



LUCKY PENNY

write where you belong

2023 LIW ANTHOLOGY

WE ARE DANGEROUS



UTAH'S BEST POETRY & PROSE 2023

SHADOWED HOURGLASS

Lost and Found

METAMORPHOSIS

LIW PRESS

LIW PRESS

Utah Young University 1989



TANKED

KELLY FAE WILSON

Tandem Press

Lord Harcourt's Heist



Gigi Lynn

Dear Lord Wycliffe



Gigi Lynn

Brothers' Tangle



Gigi Lynn

An Honorable Man



Gigi Lynn

The Secrets We Keep

Gigi Lynn

The Lies We Tell

Gigi Lynn

The Masks We Wear

Gigi Lynn

Edited by Gary J. Schmitt

Edited by Gary J. Schmitt

Rise of the Revisionists

AEI

DEFINING SKILL IN SELLING

M. TIM WELCH



Vol. 23, No. 2

CORNELL INTERNATIONAL LAW JOURNAL

Pages 187-404 Symposium 1993

11. Be yourself

- Don't try to be anyone else.
- Tell your stories the best way you can.
- You'll make a human connection with the reader.
- Write the book you can write, not the book you wish you could write.
- Imposter syndrome
 - Katherine Paterson
 - Writer of the Year
- Katherine Paterson: "It's scary to lay your guts out on the page. Someone will sneer."





Lucas James

Jul 22

substack

Writing gets lighter the moment you stop trying to prove you're a writer.

You don't have to earn your place with complicated sentences or literary references. Just tell the story as honestly as you can. Readers trust sincerity far more than sophistication.



“Stop trying to write like a ‘serious’ author. The world has enough stiff, self-important writing. Loosen up. Make a joke. Break a rule. Start a sentence with “and.” Great writing isn’t about sounding like literature—it’s about sounding like life. And life is messy, chaotic, and alive. Let your pages breathe.”

Lucas James on Substack

12. Write



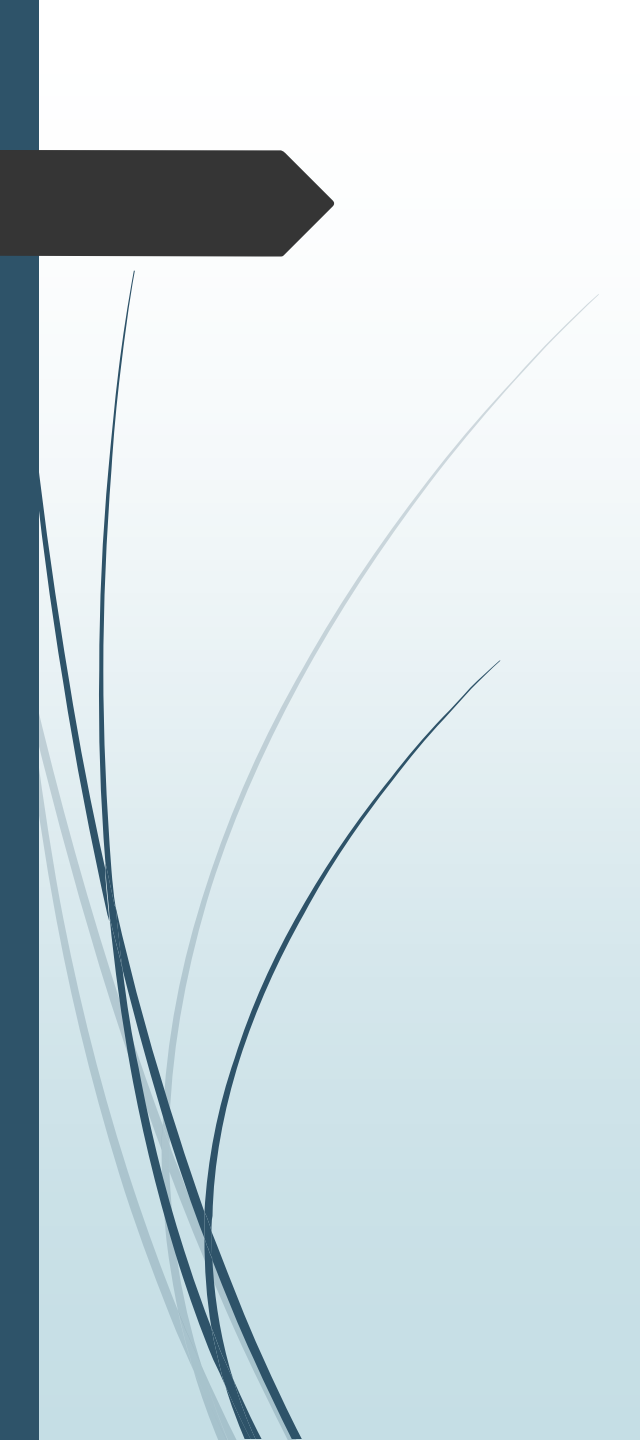
ANNE LAMOTT ✓

@ANNELAMOTT

How to write: want to. Stop not writing. Sit down and think of one story you MIGHT be able to tell badly. Take a stab at it. Blurt it out on paper. Go back and take out the boring or showoffy parts. Don't give up on it! Listen for what it is trying to tell you.(It knows things.)

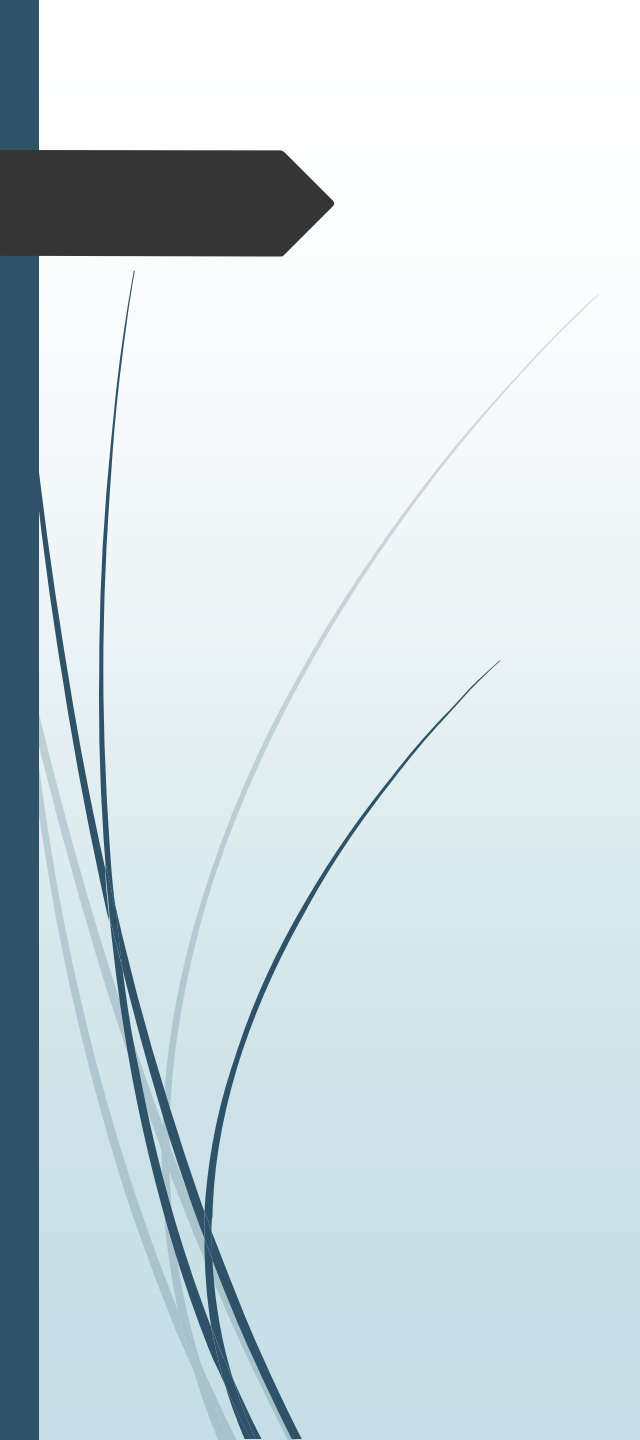
11:40 AM · 12/19/22





“Stop forcing theme. You don’t have to know your ‘message’ before you start. Write the story. The meaning will reveal itself through the cracks. Theme isn’t nailed on—it’s uncovered. Let the story breathe, and it will whisper back.”

Lucas James



“Write before you’re ready.”

—Anne Lamott

“To try to be brave is to be brave.”

—George MacDonald



Partly Personal

(one of the things authors can do)

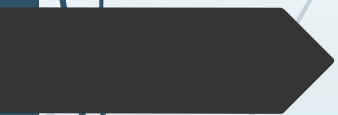
“ Blessed are they who see
beautiful things
in humble places
where other people
see nothing. ”

— *Camille Pissarro*





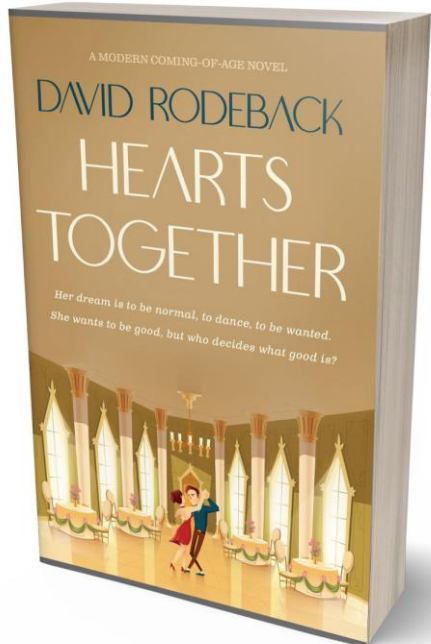
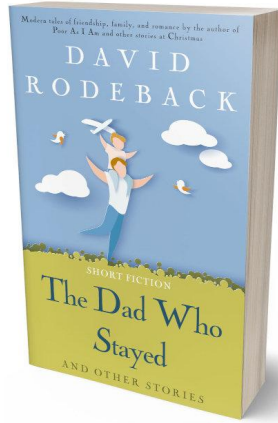
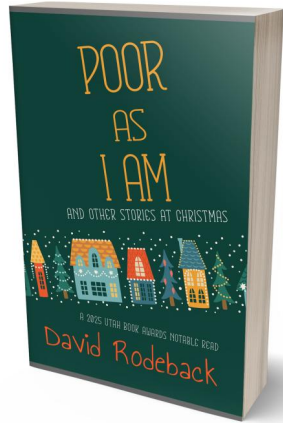
Thank you!



~~Q&A~~ ASK ME **ANYTHING**

Where to find me and my books*

*besides tonight's author signing and book sale



E-mail: **author@davidrodeback.com**

Facebook: **authorDavidRodeback**

Slides: **davidrodeback.com/bear-lake**

Newsletter: Sign up at **davidrodeback.com**

60EastPress.com
(my press imprint)

books2read.com/david-rodeback/
(all the places to buy them online)

