

sonya hartnett

Thursday's Child

Do you get writer's block?

- I'm not certain what writer's block actually is ... a lack of plot ideas? An inability to find the right word? A lack of desire to write? Every writer suffers from all of those things at one time or another, I guess. But I try not to get too bothered by things like that - they always pass with time, and you eventually start working again. I prefer the word 'resting' to 'blocked'.

What do you do about it?

- I sit patiently and wait until it goes away. I walk the dog, mess about in the garden, go out, see things. I take my mind off the problem and the problem eventually goes away.

What inspires you to write?

- I can only write about things that interest me: every few years I find myself becoming interested in different subjects - Tasmanian tigers, the Great Depression, twinship - and sooner or later I start to write about it. I don't know, exactly, what gets me interested in these subjects in the first place - it's like they are all lined up in my brain, each one waiting its turn to become the focus of my thoughts, and when I've finished with it a new idea moves along to take its place.

Do you write every day?

- When I'm actually working on a book I will work on it all day, every day, until it is finished. When I'm not working on a book, I will scarcely even lift a pen.

<http://www.penguin.com.au/authors/author-author-profile.cfm?AuthorId=0000000821>

steven herrick

thanks for your email. I'll try and answer your questions...

no, i don't get writers block, because i tend to write about things i know and care about, therefore it is a (relatively) simple matter of recalling those incidents/memories/locations/etc that i wish to write about.

For children, I tend to write about things that happen in my family - everyday events that occur at home, or at school that my own two children tell me about. often, i exaggerate, or "colour" these events , but essentially they are things that could happen, and no doubt do happen, in every family.

For young adults, i tend to write verse-novels that tell stories about characters that i have created and placed in a location that i know about. so while the characters may be fictional (although often they have "bits" of me in them!), the location where most of the incidents in the story occur are real, and places i have been and am familiar with. No, i don't write everyday - i tend to write in "blocks" - i try and write monday to friday between October to February (not the school holidays!!!) - i can generally write a book during this period - the rest of the year i spend lots of time performing in schools throughout australia, and editing the book i wrote during oct-feb.

<http://www.acay.com.au/~sherrick>

libby gleeson

A difficult one to answer - I don't really believe in writers' block. I think it's a convenient excuse for the hard part of writing - ie creativity is not some divine gift - it's hard work and some ideas come more easily than other and some have to be wrestled with for months and sometimes years. Having said that, there are times which are much harder than others and then I go away and read, read, read!

I don't know what inspires me to write - it's who I am and what I do - I am a writer. Given that, everything is material.

Yes I try to write every day!

(When I'm not talking about writing which I have to do today - hence haste!) I'm off to Sydney Uni to talk picture books.

<http://www.libbygleeson.com.au/links.html>

geoffrey mcskimming

Do you get 'Writer's Block?

> > >> NO, NOT REALLY WRITER'S BLOCK, BUT SOMETIMES I HAVE TROUBLE WORKING

> OUT THE ORDER TO PUT THE ACTION...CAIRO JIM AND HIS FRIENDS (AND ENEMIES)

> TEND TO TAKE ON A LIFE OF THEIR OWN, AND SOMETIMES THEY ALL WANT TO BE ON THE PAGE AT THE ONE TIME!

> > >> What do you do about it? (do you have some techniques that stimulate your creative juices)

> > >> OFTEN I GO FOR A LONG WALK OR LISTEN TO SOME MUSIC OR RE-READ WHAT'S HAPPENED IN THE PREVIOUS FEW CHAPTERS. USUALLY ONE OF THESE THINGS HELPS.

> > >> What inspires you to write?

> > >> WORDS, WORDS, WORDS. AND HISTORY AND HUMOUR (ESPECIALLY SICK PUNS)

> AND ALL THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PLACES AND LOST KNOWLEDGE THAT CAIRO JIM, DORIS AND BRENDA THE WONDER CAMEL UNRAVEL.

> > >> Do you write everyday?

> YES, BUT SOMETIMES NOT AS MUCH AS I WOULD LIKE! AND I'M ALWAYS MAKING NOTES FOR THE CHAPTERS TO COME.

<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/GeoffreyMcSkimming/CairoJimGMcS.html>

dyan blacklock

- Publisher Omnibus Books

1. I would have said no, I never have writer's block, but lately I think I do!
2. What I do about it is to make myself write every day anyway. If I concentrate on a task, eg, describing my desk, my friends, people I have noticed on the street that day, etc. then I can build pictures which help me to relax and find a way into a story. Usually I decide at the start that I am not trying to write a story though, just practicing the art of writing.
3. Hearing a story from a friend, listening to other people's conversations in the street, reading books, watching TV, newspapers - all these things can provide inspiration for a story. Memory, however, is probably my greatest source of stories.
4. In my job as publisher at Omnibus Books I certainly do write every day. Mostly it's for and about other people though. At home I try to write each day, even if its only for an hour.

morris gleitzman

Do you get 'Writer's Block? NOT REALLY. STORY PROBLEMS SOMETIMES TAKE A WHILE TO GET SOLVED, BUT I THINK TRUE WRITER'S BLOCK IS PROBABLY MORE TO DO WITH THE WRITER THAN THE STORY. THERE ARE A MILLION REASONS WHY AN INDIVIDUAL'S WRITING PROCESS MIGHT GET BLOCKED. FOR THE BEGINNER, THE TOUGHEST THING IS GETTING STARTED WHILE WRESTLING SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH ISSUES OF CRAFT AND FEAR.

What do you do about it? (do you have some techniques that stimulate your creative juices) SLEEP ON IT. REMIND MYSELF WHAT THE STORY IS ACTUALLY ABOUT. LISTEN TO THE CHARACTER. GO TO THE MOVIES.

What inspires you to write? THE DESIRE THAT MY CHARACTERS' VOICES BE HEARD.

Do you write everyday? WHILE I'M WRITING A BOOK, YES. BETWEEN BOOKS, NO. SOME DAYS I JUST ANSWER QUESTIONNAIRES. GOOD LUCK WITH THE ARTICLE. MG.

<http://www.morrisgleitzman.com/>

james moloney

Do you get 'Writer's Block'?

I have never really suffered from writer's block. As I understand it, Writer's Block is a loss of self-confidence in one's writing. I think it comes when writers put too much pressure on themselves to write material of the highest standard all the time. Maybe they have been richly praised for earlier works in a way they don't feel they deserve and therefore, they become afraid that they will be heavily criticized just for publishing a good but not great piece.

I am careful to take praise cautiously because it can quickly turn to criticism. Also, when I write, I know that the first draft is not the end of the process. I can make it better as I go. My ideas take time to formulate, even after I have planned a story and begun writing it. Therefore, I never feel that the words coming out have to be "wonderful" at any given time.

What do you do about it? (do you have some techniques that stimulate your creative juices)

Though never blocked, I do become frustrated with stories that seem mediocre. The solution is to leave them alone for a few weeks. Hard to do, I must say. But when you return, you can often see what is wrong.

(Try telling that to a class of Year 9s - It's okay, Sir, I'll just leave this story a few weeks and hand it in a month overdue)

What inspires you to write?

There is a certain amount of ego involved in writing. Publishing work, either narrative or non-fiction means putting yourself out there for others to judge, your inner most beliefs and hopes (if you have been honest) I wouldn't do it if I didn't think people (mostly kids) were reading and responding personally to what I had to say. That's inspiration.

Do you write everyday?

I write every day (Monday to Friday) when I am not "on tour" ie. visiting a school or conference to speak or conduct workshops. I do write on weekends when family commitments permit though usually for a few hours only and usually when a book is demanding my attention. On the whole weekends are for family, taking kids to sport etc. On "work" days I often start at 5.00 am and finish at 3.00 pm when I pick up my kids from school. I aim for a 40 hour week at "work" and this discipline helps me get the words on the page (screen)

<http://www.home.gil.com.au/~cbcqld/james.htm>

tohby riddle

Do you get 'Writer's Block'?

In some ways I do — in that there are definitely periods where I'm unproductive or unable to produce something. But I sometimes feel that what we call Writer's Block is really a case of wanting to write at the wrong time — like trying to grow flowers in winter. However, when the time is right then it's probably a matter of how much persistence is needed in order to make progress. In this instance Writer's Block might just be insufficient persistence.

What do you do about it? (do you have some techniques that stimulate your creative juices)

Sometimes, I find the best thing is to do nothing and feel okay about it. Busyness is often overrated. As a constant state it is not always appropriate. Writer's just need to be good. And that might mean needing periods of fallow or repose in order to bear fruit again. To add to that, good ideas and their gestation periods aren't always obedient to the deadlines and schedules of an impatient world. I suppose it's a matter of knowing when to act and when not to. For myself I rarely stop looking for inspiration and keep a notebook with me at all times. If I feel really stuck I might go to a great bookshop, take a walk, talk to inspiring friends, or leaf through the books of my favourite writers/artists/thinkers. At other times it's just absolutely necessary to stay at your desk! Again, persistence is all important. As is suspending judgement on what you are creating in order to allow it to freely flower.

What inspires you to write?

The thought of something different, unusual or just plain compelling. When an idea arrives it is exciting, like finding a new frontier to explore and chart. The challenge being to try to capture this idea through words, pictures or both. And that in doing so, something that didn't exist before comes into existence!

Do you write everyday?

I probably make brief notes and scribble images just about everyday, but actual writing or creating final artwork only makes up short intense periods of each year.

http://www.penguin.com.au/CATALOG/F_CATALOG.CFM

moya simons

Do you get `Writer's Block?' What do you do about it?

All writers have times when for one reason or another they don't feel like writing. Occasionally, this happens to me. My response is to `go with the flow'. If I don't feel like writing I don't write. I start to read. I find this feeds my mind and helps gets the creative juices going. I might do this for anything up to a month. Curl up with a book and enjoy someone else's story. Mostly I try not to get concerned if I am not getting ideas for stories. Stories work best for me when I am relaxed. As I write humorous stories it is particularly important to feel relaxed and happy when I write (I can't write funny stories if I'm not feeling good about myself). If I'm low on ideas I also go for long walks; play the piano, go to the movies. In other words, I don't panic. I don't allow myself to feel that I'll never get another good idea.

What inspires you to write

I think writers are always seeing the story of life around them. When I go out anywhere I find that I'm studying life and making up stories. Perhaps it is a person with an unusual face sitting near me in a bus, or maybe it's some small incident that many people would overlook. For instance, I was once walking near Bondi Beach Primary School (actually, my old primary school). Outside a telephone booth I saw a pair of children's shoes. They were side by side, and seemed to be waiting for their owner to come back. I looked then found all these fanciful thoughts coming into my mind. Perhaps there was a child wearing those shoes but I couldn't see her. She was invisible. Perhaps the shoes were magic. Whoever put them on would gain special powers. Now my guess is that many people walking past the shoes would probably not have noticed them, but writers have this creative way at looking at the world. When I was a child I was always checking under the bed and in the wardrobe for monsters. I used to think there really was a man in the moon and that he watched me through my window. I was scared but eventually decided he was okay and began to speak to him. My mother used to come into my bedroom while I was having these long conversations with the man in the moon. A lot of children have vivid imaginations and may do exactly what I did when I was a child. The child who grows up to be

a writer continues to have a great imagination and is always looking around thinking `What if ...? So I don't talk to the man in the moon any more but I do wonder what it would be like if there really was a man in the moon and instead of talking to him I'll sit down and write about him.

Do you write everyday?

Most of the time I only write when I feel like writing. Now, sometimes this might be every day (usually not more than 3-4 hours at a time). I usually write best first thing in the morning. I don't write any more at night because I go to bed thinking about my story and that's it. I like awake for hours plotting and planning. So it's easier to get up about 6.0 and start then.

<http://www.writearound.com.au/stuff/authors/simons.html>

dave lockett

1) No. Not yet. I do sometimes suffer from writer's reluctance, which is different, and I have been stopped in my tracks when my characters refuse to do as I tell them, but that's my own critical filters at work, and it just has to be worked around.

2) Whenever I can't get on for some reason, but desperately need to, I write a trashy exploitative sex scene between whatever characters I have on stage at the time. This is always ludicrous and outrageous enough to shock me into action.

3) If I didn't tell stories, I'd go crazy.

4) Yes. Something, at any rate. I have no wordage targets, though. I tried to set the traditional one (a thousand words a day) and found that the result was garbage. Now I write until I reach a break. Or until I fall asleep at three in the am. Or until I can't think of another thing to write.

<http://www.scholastic.com.au/Profiles/index.asp>

markus zusak

Do you get 'Writer's Block'?

The closest I come to getting Writer's Block is rejecting something over and over because I can't get it right. Often, I'm being too hard on myself so I just concentrate on getting something down and forget about editing until later. Often, you come back to something and time away from it helps it to be fresher and you find yourself reading for enjoyment, rather than worrying about too many little things.

What do you do about it? (do you have some techniques that stimulate your creative juices)

I re-watch my favourite movies most of the time, or go out to see something. Movies usually give me time to think over what I'm doing, and with movies I've already seen countless times, I tune in and out from both the movie and my ideas. Even recently, I re-watched The Agony and the Ecstasy and Before Sunrise - two of my all time favourites. Apart from that, I might do some exercise, sleep or go out and wander around. Sooner or later, though, I'll have to write something. Once past the opening sentences, I find I'm happiest when I'm writing. By far.

What inspires you to write?

There are more stories in my head than I can write at any one time. Ideas are the easy part, though. Turning them into good writing is something else altogether. It's the stories that give me the desire to write, but I'm also inspired by certain songs, movies and books. In general, I try not to read too much when I write. Firstly, I find it hard to concentrate on reading when I'm working on something, and secondly, there's a danger of reading something and thinking, "God, I can never write something as good as THAT!" For me, the main inspiration is seeing the finished product - transforming the ideas into words.

Do you write everyday?

In one sense, no. I don't have a timetable or anything like that. But I feel like I'm a writer everyday. The stories are always with me. Different versions. New scenes. Lately, I'm writing for a few hours in the morning and a few in the afternoon\evening. This can vary, however. Sometimes, getting sick helps - if you have a bad cough and can't sleep, you can stay up for hours writing...

<http://www.scholastic.com.au/Profiles/index.asp>

janeen brian

1. Do you get writer's block?

I've come to understand that the way writers operate, their ways of gleaning and developing ideas, their means of overcoming 'sticky patches' are so different, that I'm not surprised when I hear one writer say, 'I never have writer's block,' and others, who admit it happens for them.

It is also unpredictable.

Yes, I get writer's block. But I am never sure when or if, it will occur. There are no real clues to it suddenly appearing. It is like a shut down. Like all nerve endings cease to operate. There's a fear too, that if you press on, it might lead you on a different path; it might set you off on a train of thoughts which you sense won't work well. Writer's block is frustration. It is a message. A strong, undeniable message. It has power. It is individual how you deal with it. Or whether even it will allow itself to be dealt with – at the time you choose.

Writer's block can be a psychological power-play!

2. What do you do about it?

I'm aware it can happen when my planning hasn't activated enough thoughts – or I sense my own boredom with what I'm writing.

I use several strategies. The first, however, is to acknowledge it. Not to begin having self-doubts, but to trust that this is only a stile to climb over - because it can unsettle.

As I said, earlier, we writers operate in such different ways –some will muse about the *block* in their head, let their mind mull over the strands, or the goal not being achieved. For me, I need paper and a pen. I use brainstorming. I jot ideas down; I have to see them, have to write them, have to watch to see if something sparks off a thought; it has to be in front of me. I am visual, and I have to accept that often I don't know what is going on in my head until I put it down. I give my mind free access to tell me the most stupid, outrageous, and foolish things and wait until something clicks, or I feel a funny feeling in my stomach, a physical reaction that this could be a way or climbing the stile, of hurdling the block.

Often, if I've reached that point, I tease myself. I don't return to the piece of writing. I have the key, but I don't put it in the lock just yet. I let it wait until it builds up its own sense of momentum. Then I'm excited when I return to the work. Then the slipping past the block is easier.

Of course, going for walks or listening to music, will help. The brain de-activates, softens, allows shy, new thoughts to wander about.

3. What inspires you to write?

The fact that I can. That I can create. That writing is limitless, finite. That there is a reason to live and be excited about living, particularly in the sensory aspects. I love the sound and shape of words, whether mine or others. That no matter how many ways you say or write a word, there are millions of other ways to use it; to sharpen, to excite, to tantalise, to give the listener or reader a feeling, special only to them.

I am excited by colour, nature, patterns, people's mannerisms and recycling.

The fact that everything that happens in my life can be reworked, recycled into a story, a poem or a play adds value to all my experiences.

4. Do you write every day?

I write every single day. I write a diary. I write stories, poems, plays and articles – mainly for children, but also for adults. My day, as a professional writer, begins about 8.30 – 9.00am – usually attending to emails, administration etc. Then I begin. I usually work on two or three pieces at a time ; or I'm manoeuvred to slot in more urgent rewrites or proof readings or illustration checkings by publishers. I like to be efficient with my day. Well balanced. But anything can change. I may be at a publisher's meeting, out workshopping with school children, out researching etc.

But best of all, is when I begin in the morning, have lots of cups of tea, and keep writing, undisturbed, until lunchtime. After lunch, I may choose to write something different, or continue with the same work, or if writer's block has happened, or if I'm tired, I may read some inspirational writing magazines or some poetry. My day is always full of words.

<http://www.writearound.com.au/stuff/authors/brian.html>