

Bird by Bird

Anne Lamott

Part One - Writing

"Don't worry about doing it well yet, though. Just start getting it down"

"You try to sit down at approximately the same time everyday. This is how you train your unconscious to kick in for you creatively"

"Books help us understand who we are and how we are to behave. They show us what community and friendship mean; they show us how to live and die"

"It [one inch picture frame] reminds me that all I have to do is to write down as much as I can see through a one-inch picture frame"

"You just have to see two or three feet ahead of you. This is right up there with the best advice about writing, or life, I have ever heard"

"Now, practically even better news than that of short assignments is the idea of shitty first drafts. All good writers write them"

"Almost all good writing begins with terrible first efforts. You need to start somewhere"

"Besides, perfectionism will ruin your writing, blocking in vetivene's and playfulness and life force"

"Writing a first draft is very much like watching a Polaroid develop. You can't - and, in fact, you're not supposed to - know exactly what the picture is going to look like until it has finished developing"

"Plot grows out of character"

"Drama is the way of holding the reader's attention. The base formula for drama is setup, buildup, payoff - just like a joke"

"She [Alice Adams] said that sometimes she uses a formula when writing a short story, which goes ABDCE, for Action, Background, Development, Climax, and Ending"

"How do you know you're done? You just do"

Part Two - The Writing Frame of Mind

"Writing is about learning to pay attention and to communicate what is going on"

"To be a good writer, you not only need to to write a great deal but you have to care"

"Writing is about hypnotizing yourself into believing in yourself, getting some work done, then unhypnotizing yourself and going over the material coldly"

"If you are not careful, station KFFD [K-Fucked] will paly in your head twenty-four hours a day, nonstop, in stereo"

"You love to get things quiet in your head so you can hear your characters and let them guide your story"

Part Three - Help Along the Way

"Still, I believe in lists and I believe in taking notes, and I believe in index cards for doing both"

"If it feels natural, if it helps you to remember, take notes. It's not cheating"

"There are enormous number of people out there with invaluable information to share with you, and all you have to do is pick up the phone"

"At some point, you want some feedback. You want other people to read it. You want to know what they think"

"I don't think you have time to waste not writing because you are afraid you won't be good enough at it"

"Writers block is going to happen to you. You will read what little you've written and see with absolute clarity that it is total dog shit"

Part Four - Publication - and Other Reasons to Write

"It helped me to see that it is natural to take on someone else's style, that it's a prop that you use for a while until you have to give it back"

"Annie Dillard has said that day by day you have to give the work before you all the best stuff you have, not saving up for latter projects"

Part Five - The Last Class

"Becoming a writer is about becoming conscious"

"You simply keep putting down one damn word after the other, as you hear them, as they come to you"

Links to resources

Goodreads: https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/12543.Bird_by_Bird

Buy the book on Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1786898551>

Buy the book on Blackwell's: <https://blackwells.co.uk/bookshop/product/Bird-by-Bird-by-Anne-Lamott/9781786898555>