

You as a Writer

~as easy as 1~2~3~

“Looking back, I imagine I was always writing. Twaddle it was too. But better far write twaddle or anything, anything, than nothing at all.” ~Katherine Mansfield

“To write is to write is to write is to write is to write is to write is to write is to write is to write.”

~Gertrude Stein (she who is famous for “A rose is a rose is a rose”)

“Writing s easy; all you do is sit staring at a blank sheet of paper until the drops of blood form on your forehead/”

~Gene Fowler

“If we had to say what writing is, we would define it essentially as an act of courage.” Cynthia Ozick

“How can you write if you can’t cry?” ~Ring Lardner (famous American humorist)

“A poem is never a put-up job so to speak. It begins as a lump in the throat, a sense of wrong, a homesickness, a love sickness. It is never a thought to begin with.” ~Robert Frost

“My purpose is to entertain myself first and other people secondly.” ~John D. McDonald

Before we go further, write your own “quote” about writing here. _____

We will share several of these, then see a few DVD clips from famous writers discussing themselves as writers. You will need to get a sheet of paper on which to jot down significant points to remember. Attach your finished note page to this handout when you are finished.

1. Now, I hope at least one of these insights from authors relates to something you feel or believe, and that you can begin freely thinking and writing about yourself as a writer. I’ll offer some class time to begin writing. If you need a bit of a nudge, consider some or all of the following about your writing:
 - a. Past history—first memories, best memories, worst memories about you as a writer
 - b. Feelings—How do you feel when you write various things? Have you written any pieces you were proud of or that made a difference? Have you experienced any disasters in writing?
 - c. How has writing changed for you since you were a beginning writer? Where is it now? When do you write? What do you write? Where do you write? How might writing fit into your future?
2. Next share your rough draft with at least two people—friends, classmates, parents, siblings—who can give you some good feedback in the following areas. They should write their comments on your draft and sign their names.
 - a. What did you like best in this writing? (for example, what was well worded, what did you relate to, etc.)
 - b. What in the piece should be expanded with more examples or description?
 - c. Is the beginning effective or does it need attention?
 - d. Make a specific suggestion to the writer about style, organization, diction, grammar, etc.
3. Now it’s time to go over these suggestions, rewrite a bit, then do your editing using the **Having a Writing Conference With Yourself** editing sheet. Then you are ready to type your final copy. Be sure to make a good title for the piece. Here is what I want you to remember about titles (and you’ll have one for each piece of writing, please):

“A good title should be like a good metaphor; it should intrigue without being too baffling or too obvious.”

~Walker Percy

Your piece will ultimately become part of Wanna Piece of Me and the Antholio and will be due no later than _____

The poem on the back, “Writing Workshop,” expresses how I want you to approach writing drafts and editing them. Let’s read it and discuss what it means to you. You may memorize it for extra credit (and for your soul’s pleasure).

Writing Workshop



Try to think of your first draft as a creek in flood time
roaring out of banks.
There's been a night storm on your mind's headwaters
so writing comes trash-filled
tumbling
full of chicken coops, barbed wire,
tin shed roofs scraping down over rocks.
It's tearing along through trees on either bank
dropping fertilizer sacks and two-by-fours in branches.
It's swirling and standing out in bottom land

Now you work with it until it drops
every tin can and bottle
and runs clear again between its banks.
Of course, you'll want to leave a few surprises,
so the reader, out in your writing
like a trout fisherman in waders
rounds a bend
and comes on a piano
lodged high
in the forks of a sycamore



~adapted from a poem by Jim W. Miller

And from now on, I want editing and revising to become inextricably linked to what you consider writing. This poem offers a metaphor and image of you as a writer. Try to see yourself in the middle of this image, and in the middle of your writing and editing. Here it is for you in a rhyming nutshell:

“Remove the debris,
but keep the piano in the tree”

Always be sure you see that pile of removed debris and be sure you can identify your “piano in the tree” before you even think of turning in a final copy of writing.