



Keep a Slovenly, Headlong, Impulsive, Honest Diary

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Now this is an inevitable truth: whatever you write will reveal your personality, and whatever you ARE will show through your writing.

The main thing is to discover the real You, not the bogus, literary You who get "A" in your English courses.

If you do not know what this means now, write a true, slovenly, impulsive, honest diary every day of your life, and you will.

And you must in time learn to write from your true self not only in your letters and diary, but in fiction. "For a lie is even more annoying in a story than in conversation," said Chekhov.

Unless you are a very clear-sighted and introspective person, this is a long discipline. The way to do it, Dostoevsky said: "Never, never lie to yourself. Don't lie to others, but least of all to yourself. What do you really care about and love? Who are you?" And one of the very worst, self-murdering lies that people tell to themselves is that they are no good and have no gift and nothing important to say.

Don't be afraid of writing bad, mawkish stories for that will show you many things about yourself.

That is why I think it is good to keep a diary. I don't mean a "had lunch" diary. But do this: write every day, or as often as you possibly can, as fast and carelessly as you possibly can, without reading it again, anything you happened to have thought, seen or felt the day before...

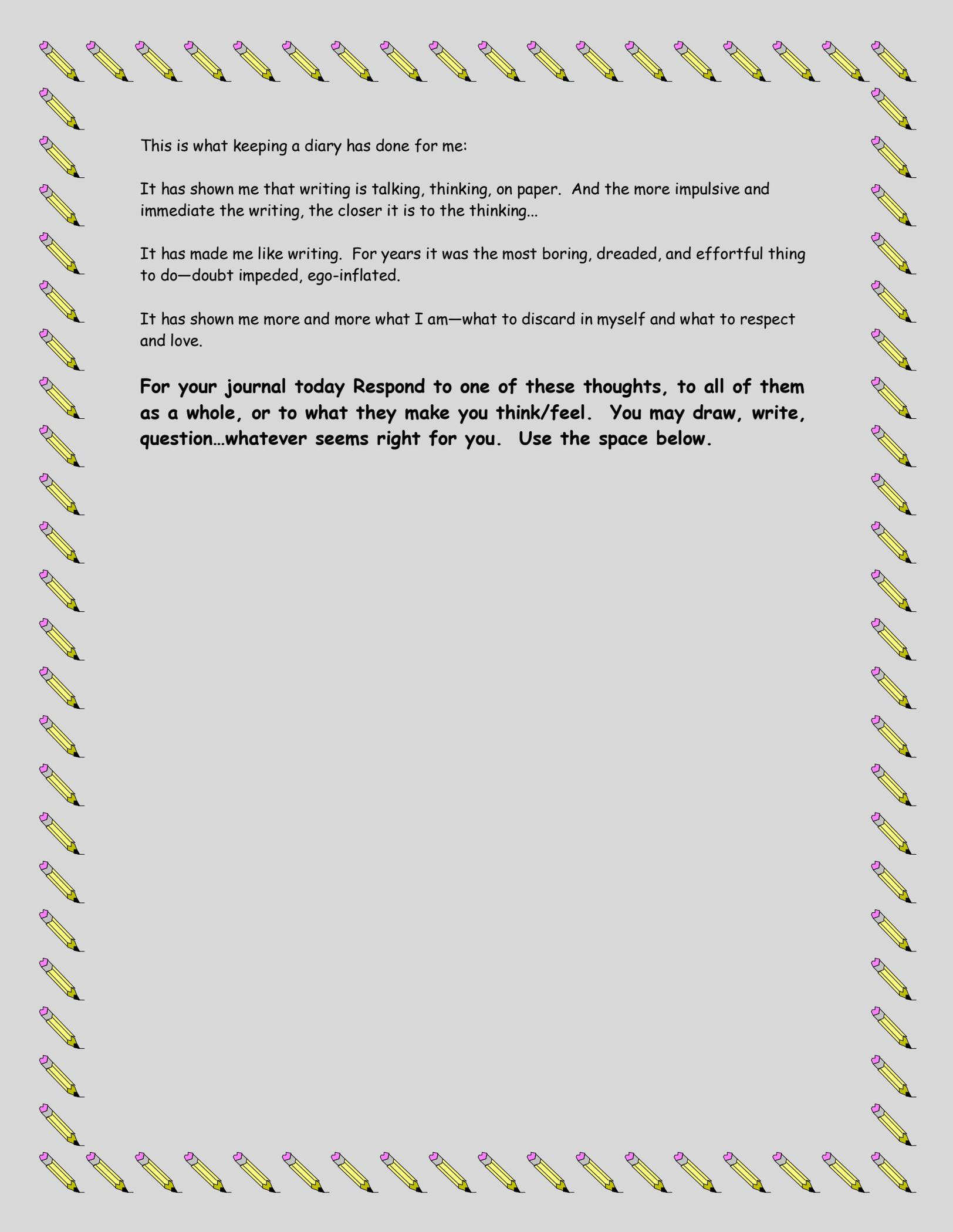
You will see that what you have written with the most slovenly freedom—in those parts there will be vitality, brilliance, beauty.

By being so careless, by taking it off on paper as fast as you can, you will not write what is dutiful and boring to you...

The secret of being interesting is to move along as fast as the mind of the reader (or listener) can take it in... That is why it is good to read your writing aloud to yourself. As soon as your voice drags, cross that part out...

In your diary, if you write fast, as though you vomited your thoughts on paper, you will touch only those things that interest you. You will skip from peak to peak...

Another reason for writing a diary is to discover that the ideas in you are an inexhaustible fountain.



This is what keeping a diary has done for me:

It has shown me that writing is talking, thinking, on paper. And the more impulsive and immediate the writing, the closer it is to the thinking...

It has made me like writing. For years it was the most boring, dreaded, and effortful thing to do—doubt impeded, ego-inflated.

It has shown me more and more what I am—what to discard in myself and what to respect and love.

For your journal today Respond to one of these thoughts, to all of them as a whole, or to what they make you think/feel. You may draw, write, question...whatever seems right for you. Use the space below.