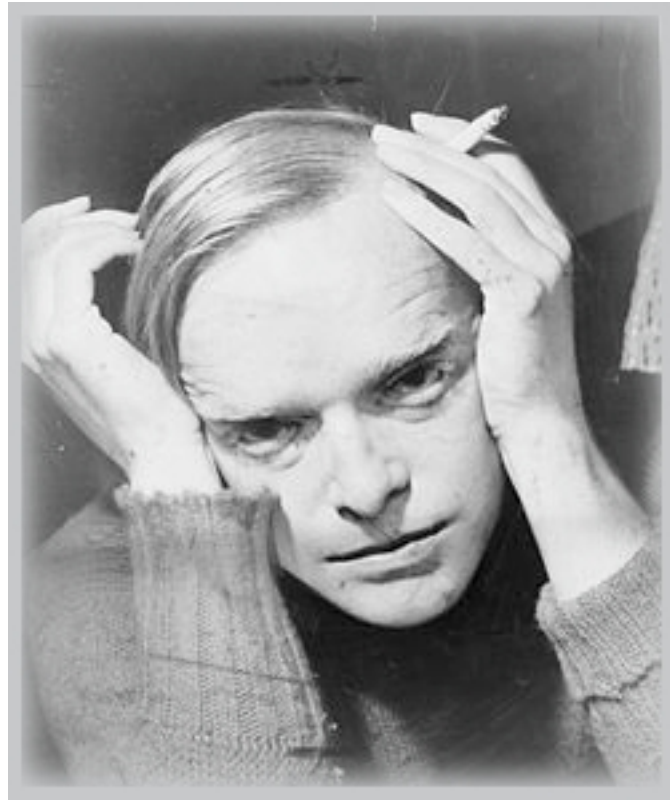


## 20 Acclaimed Authors and Their Unique Writing Rituals

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Most literary types agree that a definitive, personalized ritual performed before, during or after a writing session forms one of the absolutely essential components of creating innovative, effective works. These obviously vary from author to author, and even similar methods come with their own unique variances. Regardless of whether or not one hopes to pen a future Pulitzer winner or simply finish his or her [homework](#), forging a comfortable writing routine serves as an excellent means of bolstering creativity, relaxing, clearing the mind and — most importantly — encouraging productivity. While some of the following strategies may not exactly work for everyone, they still provide a keen insight into some of the literary sphere's most notable, impressive minds.



1. [Victor Hugo let it all hang out.](#): According to *The New Yorker*, the celebrated author of *Les Misérables* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* forced himself to write and stave off procrastination by stripping down. His valet was instructed to find the sneakiest hiding place possible and place his clothing inside. Hugo hoped this ritual would prevent him from leaving home and encourage tighter focus on the task at hand.
2. [C.S. Lewis kept a tight schedule.](#): When it came to writing his beloved novels, essays and novel-length philosophical works, C.S. Lewis kept an incredibly obsessive schedule. He allowed himself short, periodic breaks, but otherwise planned every minute of every day in order to maximize productivity. A rigid series of rules dictated everything from appropriate times to take a beer to when visitors were allowed to stop over.
3. [Benjamin Franklin got wet.](#): Though not fully verified, many believe the famous American statesman was the first to import a bathtub into the United States. A consummate inventor, Benjamin Franklin appreciated and studied it as a marvel of engineering and innovation, but the lovely bit of porcelain provided him with more than just a piqued scientific curiosity. When it came time to read and write, much of the Renaissance man's time was spent soaking in a leisurely bath.
4. [Haruki Murakami stays healthy.](#): Much like C.S. Lewis, the celebrated *Wind-Up Bird Chronicles* and *Norwegian Wood* scribe keeps himself creative by staying on a stringent schedule. Haruki Murakami's afternoons are devoted to keeping his body as healthy, active and fit as his mind. Exercise involves a 10-kilometer run, a 1500-meter swim or some combination of both. Such a ritual, he claims, grants him the mental clarity and physical stamina to hammer out thick novels.
5. [William Wordsworth consulted man's best friend.](#): Great English Romantic poet William Wordsworth composed several odes to his faithful canine companion. Though anecdotal, some think the Poet Laureate would write while taking regular constitutions with the dog in tow. He would recite ideas out loud, and any met with barking or agitation was taken as a sign that revision was necessary.

6. **W.B. Yeats went on autopilot.:** Along with his wife George, the renowned Irish poet and playwright found inspiration in the mystic arts, infusing them into more than just his works' content. Though the process of automatic writing understandably dredges up its fair share of skepticism and scrutiny, W.B. Yeats employed it in earnest. The controversial procedure involves giving in to the subconscious (or, for the more mystic-minded, the spiritual realm) and immediately writing down whatever comes to mind. No revisions, no pausing to think. Just the simple act of putting pen to paper and letting creativity flow.
7. **Vladimir Nabokov just couldn't sit down.:** While writing the classic *Lolita* (and other works, of course), author Vladimir Nabokov launched into the day's work standing up. His study boasted a "lovely old-fashioned lectern" of which he was very proud, and he greatly preferred starting from there than his armchair or desk. However, Nabokov did admit that his legs did grow tired in such a position, but only then would he retire to one of the comparatively more leisurely options. He also preferred index cards to notebooks and legal pads, as their structure allowed him to easily move scenes around as he saw fit.
8. **Toni Morrison can't see the light.:** As the mother of three children, this Nobel and Pulitzer-winning author didn't always have the time to sit down and write. Toni Morrison eventually disciplined herself to wake up before dawn, brew up a strong, delicious pot of coffee and get productive. Even after her kids grew up and moved out, she continued on in the exact same pattern. Watching the sun rise is an added perk that stimulates her imagination.
9. **Philip Roth stays on his feet.:** Standing burns many more calories than sitting, and decorated author Philip Roth — much like Vladimir Nabokov — prefers this physical calibration when writing. In addition to this healthy habit, he also pushes himself to walk half a mile for every page he completes. Despite age starting to plague his body, Roth continues this ritual to benefit both body and mind. As with Haruki Murakami, he believes that clarity and creativity come when all facets of a person operate in peak condition.
10. **Gertrude Stein indulged in Godiva.:** Allegedly, the modernist maven and pivotal figure in the "lost generation" of creative American expats after World War I frequently took to her car when inspiration struck. She would park her Ford, famously nicknamed "Godiva," somewhere and begin firing off poetry while staying put in the driver's seat. Something about the vehicle inspired Gertrude Stein and provided a space conducive to her legendary creativity and literary innovation.
11. **George Sand got down to business.:** Amantine Aurore Lucile Dupin, who wrote under the pen name of George Sand, participated in a nearly two-year affair with fellow literati member Alfred de Musset. Apparently, their sexual escapades charged her up to the point she'd move straight from bed to desk after finishing a session. de Musset himself found this boundless energy highly impressive.
12. **Truman Capote got horizontal.:** Regardless of whether or not he used a typewriter or decided to go longhand, the author of such notable works as *In Cold Blood* and *Breakfast at Tiffany's* opted to write from either his comfortable bed or cozy couch. He proudly referred to himself as "a horizontal writer," and often took tea, coffee or drinks while in repose as well. Capote's first two drafts were usually written out by hand, then switched to a typewriter for the third.
13. **T.S. Eliot let it all go to his head.:** T.S. Eliot didn't go so far as to purposely infect himself with colds, but he was probably one of the only people on the planet to ever welcome them. He found that writing while so afflicted greatly helped him concoct unique, gruff voices either for different characters or in the creation of harsher scenes.
14. **Alexandre Dumas kept the doctor away.:** Like Toni Morrison, Alexandre Dumas of *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Cristo* fame enjoyed rising early and greeting the day with a personalized ritual. Rather than enjoying a piping hot cup of coffee, however, he preferred taking an apple to the Arc de Triomphe. At 7 AM every morning, Dumas noshed his nourishing breakfast and watched the people of Paris tend to their own unique routines.
15. **Honore de Balzac gave himself the jitters.:** Any discussions regarding the renowned writer's legendary coffee consumption posit his daily intake anywhere from 50 to 300 cups a day. No doubt he certainly consumed more than most people — Honore de Balzac infamously died of health problems related to caffeine poisoning — but many of the estimates are more than a little arbitrary. Turkish and Parisian blends particularly piqued his fancy, providing him with enough fuel to keep him writing throughout the evening and on into the night.

16. **Henrik Ibsen made war, not love.:** Playwright Henrik Ibsen, famous for his progressive values in works such as *A Doll's House*, really knew how to keep his enemies closer. An oil paint portrait of his polar opposite and fellow writer August Strindberg hung on his wall as a constant, intimidating reminder to always push himself. Any slacking would give his rival even more fodder for accusations, snide remarks and critical and commercial success. Ibsen even referred to the painting as "Madness Incipient."
17. **Demosthenes goes in halves.:** Considered one of the greatest statesmen and orators in ancient Greece, Demosthenes took a very unique approach to self-motivation. When it came time to study, write and work on overcoming his speech impediment, he would shave the hair off one side of his head. As much as he yearned to travel and explore his homeland, Demosthenes knew the importance of educating and perfecting himself. Forcing himself to look silly kept him indoors and concentrating on what he needed versus what he wanted.
18. **Warren Ellis works sideways.:** Not every writer necessarily works chronologically. Some, like the aforementioned Vladimir Nabokov, prefer penning bits and pieces before merging them together. Author of the grotesquely hilarious *Crooked Little Vein* (and plenty of comic book series) Warren Ellis begins his stories somewhere in the midpoint. From there, he works a little bit towards the start and a little bit towards the ending until his manuscript is complete. This strategy seems to work pretty well — he claims he rarely has to write more than one draft.
19. **Maya Angelou keeps it classy.:** Following the success of her autobiographical *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, America's former Poet Laureate established for herself a luxurious, elaborate writing ritual. After waking up at 5 AM, she heads to a nearby hotel with legal pads, a bottle of sherry, a deck of playing cards, a Bible and *Roget's Thesaurus*. Per her instructions, hotel staff members have removed all the art and photos from the room's walls. Before leaving in the afternoon, Angelou usually completes between 10 and 12 pages during her stay, which she edits later that evening.
20. **Jonathan Safran Foer likes to watch.:** A blank sheet of paper once belonging to Isaac Bashevis Singer greatly inspires the acclaimed author of *Everything is Illuminated*. It sits framed in his living room, and he stares at it constantly whenever the need for inspiration strikes. The unorthodox exercise challenges his imagination, pushing Foer to discover words and concepts that could've one day spread across the paper. Not content with only Singer's possessions, he began asking many of his favorite writers for blank sheets of their typing paper in order to expand the possibilities and further stimulate the mind.

## A Book Inside - How to Write and Publish a Book

How to Write a Fiction, Non-Fiction Book, or Novel, find a Publisher or Publishing Option, and Market Your Book for Free. Tips and Expert Advice.

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