

Welcome to the seventh installment of 'Becoming a Better Writer'. An investigation into the art of creativity-in ten easy lessons!

'The Easy Way to Write a Novel'

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Lesson 7:

Why Fiction Matters

There are some strange folks out there who don't like fiction. Or rather, they don't understand its purpose.

Robert Mitchum--otherwise an actor I greatly admire--said he never read fiction because it wasn't true, so there was no point.

To any budding novelist this attitude is as heinous as it is incomprehensible. Unfortunately it is also surprisingly common.

My father for one thinks that novels are too hard to follow so he never bothers with them.

'If it's any good, they'll make a movie out of it,' is one of his favorite lines.

How many times have you heard this?

The implication here is obvious. To non-readers, it's not the writing that's important. It's the story.

Whilst great writing might profoundly impress you or I, most people just want the message, rather than the medium.

People like stories for 4 main reasons:

1. Entertainment
2. Enlightenment
3. Validation
4. To gain hope & salvation

These reasons have been the 'point' of telling and listening to stories since the beginning of time.

As a species, we need them.

They divert our attention from the mundane and take us out of ourselves for a while.

They can show us things we didn't know about ourselves

and others. We may gain valuable new perspectives to help us to better understand our neighbors, foreigners, even our enemies.

We need stories to make us feel better about ourselves--as human beings, as well as personalities. That's why we like to identify with heroes and warriors--indeed, anyone who can show us how to overcome obstacles.

Finally we need stories to help us make sense of life and the world around us.

In real life, there are no beginnings and endings, just infinite sequences.

You know how it is. You listen to the news. Everything is a segment, a teaser, a sample of every day life. Nothing makes sense because there's no structure.

Without the confines that fiction offers us, we are drowning in a bewildering sea of actions and feelings and urges with no meaning.

Stories 'frame' real life into manageable chunks that have tangibility, involvement and purpose, whether for us individually or as a race.

Surely that's what we were placed on this earth to do!

To make sense of who we are and why we are here.

THAT'S why fiction matters!

2004 robparnell

This is the seventh of ten short lessons on 'Becoming a Better Writer'. They arrive weekly. You may unsubscribe at any time--but of course, I'd much prefer if you didn't!

Also, you may like to forward this email to writers and colleagues who might find it interesting, fun and educational. No problem but--no editing please!

Best regards and keep writing.

Don't forget, you can contact me for advice, information and indeed, for any reason at rob@easywaytowrite.com

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PS: Next time, 'Doing It Your Own Way'

Till then, keep well and happy.

Ciao

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