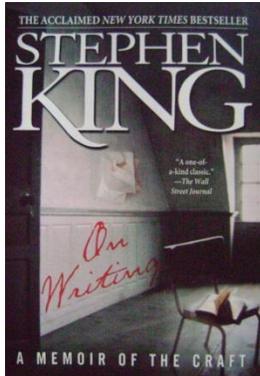


# On Writing

By Stephen King



Stephen King's book, *On Writing*, shows up on every writer's list of must-read books for good reason. This isn't just a book about writing, but also a book about life.

The first third of the book is Mr. King's memoir. I'm always interested in knowing how authors began and evolved, and this didn't disappoint. I loved reading about his hits and misses, his mother and brother, the jobs he had, and how he met Tabitha. Now I feel an even more intense connection to him than I did just by reading his fiction. What struck me the most though, was how Mr. King wrote whenever he could steal away the time to do so. He didn't have some sort of rule that he had to have the time without distractions, he wrote when he could, no matter where he was.

The second portion of the book is about writing itself, and tools needed to write. Vocabulary, grammar, parts of speech, dialogue, layout of paragraphs and beat, all get mention, as does fear. I thought there were interesting observations about fear and what might keep us from writing what we really want to say. It is also without fear that Mr. King says this: "...while it is impossible to make a competent writer out of a bad writer, and while it is equally impossible to make a great writer out of a good one, it *is* possible, with lots of hard work, dedication, and timely help, to make a good writer out of a merely competent one."

The biggest rule is to read a lot and write a lot. What "a lot" is can only be decided by you and your circumstances, but Mr. King lived that ideal when he started, and he still lives that today. He doesn't believe in outlining because the story will write itself. Write whatever you want, then go back and infuse your story with more description, characterization, and imagery. In his edits, he's looking for coherence and resonance and what will satisfy his "Ideal Reader".

Mr. King then talks about his accident in 1999, and the road to recovery. It was a long road, a bumpy road, but he persevered. Another passage that will stay with me is this: "In the end, [writing is] about enriching the lives of those who will read your work, and enriching your own life, as well. It's about getting up, getting well, and getting over."

There are so many great takeaways from this book, and it deserves a place on my bookshelf. Even if you don't read Stephen King's fiction, you may want to read *On Writing*. It's not your classic "how-to" book, but you learn from his experiences and methods, which is valuable.