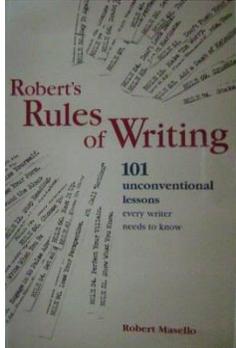


Robert's Rules of Writing

By Robert Masello



What intrigued me enough to buy this book is the tagline: 101 unconventional lessons every writer needs to know.

Unconventional? I'm hooked! The Preface also created a strong draw because Mr. Masello says that the reader "may want to duke it out" with him over some of rules. There are some of these so-called "unconventional" rules that I've heard before, and some that made me question Mr. Masello's sanity, but if I really thought about what he said, most of the time I agree with the rules.

For example, Rule 9. We hear about our writing muse all the time, and I'm always productive *when she appears*. But Mr. Masello suggests that we lose the muse. Why? Because the muse comes whenever you take action and actually write. I thought about all the times I waited for inspiration to hit and stared at my computer. The staring inevitably turns into endless games of Spider Solitaire, and before I know it, I have to move on to other tasks. No writing done. The last time I struggled (which was yesterday), I decided to just write, and guess who showed up to the party?

Likewise, Rule 82 made me stop to think. I love it when the writing flows and seems to pour out of me. But this rule warns us to be careful. It might be legitimate inspiration, but it may also be the result of something we just saw or read, or may be cliché and predictable because it's been done before. Truly original ideas are getting more and more difficult to find, so this rule makes complete sense to me.

My favorite rule is the last one—and I don't mean Rule 101. You'll have to read the book to see what it is.

Mr. Masello has written a great book that challenges what I think I know about writing. Some of the rules are definitely unconventional, but I would tell you to take the time to reflect on what he's saying and see if you don't find some truth to it. For me, certain unconventional rules will now be conventional.