

To Those Who Fear Writing

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Writing can be a scary, scary business. Many unpublished writers assume that they are alone in these fears and if only they get a book published the self-doubts and will go away. It is refreshing (and perhaps also disheartening) to know that this is not the case. Almost all writers, published and unpublished, seem to struggle with writing anxiety. Maybe you don't believe me. Here are some quotes from great authors.

A Fear of Writing...

"You need a certain amount of nerve to be a writer, an almost physical nerve, the kind you need to walk a log across a river." Margaret Atwood

"I write in terror. I have to talk myself into bravery with every sentence, sometimes every syllable." Cynthia Ozick

"I admire anybody who has the guts to write anything at all." E.B. White

"All my life, I've been frightened at the moment I sit down to write." Gabriel Garcia Marquez

"I suffer as always from the fear of putting down the first line. It is amazing the terrors, the magics, the prayers, the straightening shyness that assails one." John Steinbeck.

"The awful thing about the first sentence of any book, is that as soon as you've written it you realize this piece of work is not going to be the great thing you envision. It can't be." Tom Wolfe

When you come to accept that anxiety is a part of the game, as much as daydreaming and revision, then the terror becomes easier. As soon as you realize that at any moment there are probably hundreds of other writers biting their fingernails, pacing in circles and getting up to go to the bathroom when their bladders are empty, you feel less alone and less ridiculous for fearing the activity you claim to love. When you realize that the fact that you are filled with dread is no more a comment on your writing ability than the color of your hair, it will be easier for you to push past it, jam your rear in the chair and write. Now go write.