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Come in...and be captivated...

Writers' Craft Box

What this section is intended to do:
Give writers suggested hints, resources, and advice.

How to use: Pick and choose what you feel is most helpful and derive inspiration from it- most importantly, **HAVE FUN!**

What a Writers' Craft Box is: Say you're doing an art project and you want to spice it up a bit. You reach into a seemingly bottomless box full of colorful art/craft supplies and choose only the things that speak to you. You take only what you need to feel that you've fully expressed yourself. Then, you go about doing your individual project adding just the right amount of everything you've chosen until you reach a product that suits you completely. So, this is on that concept. Reach in, find the things that inspire you, use the tools



"Arts and Crafts" N.M.B Copyright 2008

that get your writing going and see it as fulfilling your self-expression as opposed to following rules.

Writing is art and art is supposed to be fun, relaxing, healing and nurturing. It's all work and it's all play at the same time. A Writers' Craft Box is whatever your imagination needs it to be- a lifeboat, the spark of an idea, a strike of metaphorical lightning, a reminder, or simply the recommendation of a good book. Feel free to sit back and break out the crayons. Coloring outside the lines is heartily encouraged.

Essays

Craft Box Contributor Bio- Author, editor, writing coach, and spiritual counselor, Noelle Sterne writes fiction and nonfiction and has published over 300 pieces in print and online venues, including *Writer's Digest*, *The Writer*, *Women on Writing*, *Funds for Writers*, and *Transformation Magazine*. Her monthly column, "Bloom Where You're Writing," appears in *Coffeehouse for Writers*. With a PhD from Columbia University, for over 28 years Noelle has helped doctoral candidates complete their dissertations (finally) and is completing a psychological-spiritual handbook.

In her book *Trust Your Life: Forgive Yourself and Go After Your Dreams* (Unity Books; one of ten best 2011 ebooks), she draws examples from her practice and other aspects of life to help writers and others release regrets, relabel their past, and reach their lifelong yearnings. See Noelle's website: www.trustyourlifenow.com.

With *Trust Your Life*, Noelle appears in the Unity Books 2013 “Summer of Self-Discovery” on Goodreads with two other authors of positive messages for discussions and free webcasts:

<http://www.unity.org/publications/unity-books/summer-reading-series>

<http://www.goodreads.com/group/show/100799-unity-books>

See also Noelle’s blog on *Author Magazine*’s “Authors’ Blog,” in which she explores writing, creativity, and spirituality:

<http://authormagazineonline.wordpress.com/>

Courageous Cutting

by Noelle Sterne

Sometimes we hate what we write and easily trash it. Other times, we can’t bear to relinquish it. Even though we may modestly deprecate our writing aloud to others, most of us are secretly captivated by most of what we write. But for effective and salable work, I’ve learned that we must trade over-attachment for prudent detachment and learn to survey our work with less parental pride and more outsider objectivity.

To do so takes discipline and practice. What parent can bear to throw out any of the baby’s prized creations, from the first preschool finger paintings to college short stories? Yet that’s what we must do with our work—weed, pare, and discard.

Heartless? Maybe, but essential if you want your work to radiate polish and professionalism. Novelist D. M. Thomas says, “The process of writing demands, above all, a degree of calmness, of distance. The audience may weep, but the singer must not.”[1]

This “distance” is one of the hardest skills for a writer to acquire. Not that we aren’t supposed to admire, like, be satisfied with, proud of, or happy about what we write. But there’s a real difference between such feelings and excessive love of our own words.

Many writers recognize and advise against this self-enchancement. Over two hundred years ago, the eighteenth-century literary critic and author Samuel Johnson admonishes, “Read over your compositions, and wherever you meet with a passage which you think is particularly fine, strike it out.”[2] In

more recent times, in a *Writer's Market* essay, Gloria Burke counsels, “Be ruthless if a sentence doesn't seem to fit. No matter how creative your words may sound, don't clutch them to your bosom. If they don't belong, get rid of them.”[3]

Therapists and writers Jean and Veryl Rosenbaum in *The Writer's Survival Guide* clarify the psychological side:

Some authors love their creations too much, and they can't believe anyone could fail to appreciate the beauty of their style. This is narcissistic, thinking everything you do is perfect just because it's yours. [4]

William Faulkner gets right to the point: “Kill your darlings.”[5]

So, the message is undeniable. If you love it, cut it.

Maybe your first reaction is to groan. And probably your second is a series of slightly panicked questions: “How do I detect too much love? How do I know what to cut? How do I develop that critical eye?” Well, I've discovered three major warning signs of a hopeless—and self-defeating—infatuation with your own words. These signs are gleaned from my own embarrassed experience and those of other red-faced writers:

1. Your body tells you.
2. Your mind protests.
3. Your emotions blind you.

These three responses apply to any kind of writing, from letters to lists to poems to tomes, and they'll help you recognize your own enthralled fixations.

1. Your body tells you.

As you look at a word, phrase, sentence, or paragraph in one of your pieces, almost unconsciously you stop. Something doesn't feel right. In *Writing and Illustrating Children's Books for Publication*, Bertha Amoss and Eric Suben call this the instinct that “sets off a bell” in your head.[6] Other writers suffer more dramatic visceral reactions: a sense of malaise, a slight nausea, a moment of dizziness, a sudden sweat, a throbbing pulse.

If these symptoms aren't enough to alert you, take this little test.

- Do you already feel depressed, mourning the loss of this passage?
- When you contemplate cutting this part, do you cry, scream, and pound your desk instead of the keyboard?
- Do you have an irresistible urge to run for the brownies?

Listen to your body. It's telling you, first, that the passage needs work, and second, that you're too invested in it. Swallow hard, soothe your forehead with a cool wet cloth, and face it. It's time to cut.

2. Your mind protests.

The moment you begin to toy with the idea of cutting that passage, your mind loudly objects. It defends, reasons, and rationalizes. To ourselves or anyone who will listen, we usually verbalize our outrage in one of several ways:

- a) "The piece needs this passage! It's explanatory, descriptive, lyrical, mood-setting, eloquent, graphic, moving, exciting, powerful..."
- b) "It proves my genius!"
- c) "When my old English teacher reads this, she'll eat her red pencil!"

And finally,

- d) "Look at all the drafts I've labored through, all the thesaurus pages I've scoured, all the coffee and cookies I've consumed! Look at how hard I've worked!"

No matter how logical and reasonable these defenses seem, they aren't. The first reaction is unfounded rationalization and shows the extremes of your runaway ardor. The second is childish, a cousin of the Rosenbaums' observation about our lurking narcissism. And it's every novice writer's ultimate fantasy—you'll be acclaimed, applauded, and rewarded by the world without having to pay your dues.

The third exclamation is ineffective petulant revenge. Your old English teacher may or may not even remember you but certainly doesn't believe

you or your writing were treated unfairly. And if that teacher ever did read your piece with this passage in it, I guarantee the red pencil would go into instant action.

The fourth retaliation here is a self-righteous victim's. If you really want to be rational, admit that no reader—parent, partner, friend, editor—cares how much time, effort, and calories you've put in. All they care about is how the final product grabs them, what it shows them, and how much it makes them want to keep reading. Besides, as you may have learned, to sacrifice product to process just isn't what writing is about.

3. Your emotions blind you.

This condition is a little more subtle than the others but points as surely to the need to cut. When, in your ill-fated romance, you're still captivated by those words your body and mind have already signaled as offending, you may love the passage for the wrong reasons. You know this but still balk and will go to astonishing lengths to hold onto your love:

- Have you already started an angry letter to the top writing magazine denouncing the rigidity of writing rules?
- Would you gladly rewrite your entire piece to preserve this passage?
- Would you throw out everything but the passage and start something completely new around it?

If you're wildly nodding in the affirmative to any of these questions, you're in trouble.

You've been swept up in an idolizing haze, blinded to the lover's flaws. Precisely because you've worked so hard, you can't admit that this passage is awkward, wordy, overwritten, repetitive, obvious, forced, self-conscious, cute, contradictory to the tone, or just not necessary. If love really blinds you, you may not admit that the adored words don't even say what you mean.

I speak from sad experience. Recently, ready to email an essay to a chosen editor, as I rechecked my contact information at the top of the piece, I glanced at the opening sentence. Having reworked it countless times over many weeks, I was particularly enamored by its witty originality and sparkling alliteration. Only then, as I stared in shock, did it dawn that this

all-important sentence said the exact opposite of what I wanted to convey!

First I cursed. Next I raged. Then I rationalized. Finally, I sighed, resigning myself, and with anguished heart bid the sentence a teary and inevitable adieu. For the next two hours I rewrote the entire first paragraph.

As my heart mended, I became better able to distinguish these body-mind-emotions touchstones for breaking with a too-loved passage. As you reach greater comfort with them, you too will become a courageous, if still sorrowful, cutter. Here are some suggestions to help you ease the pain of parting, comfort your soul, and get you through the night.

1. Save the passage. Put it in a file labeled “Lost Loves,” “Deleted Darlings,” “Cut But Not Forgotten,” or something equally bittersweet.
2. Tell yourself—repeatedly—how much better your piece is without the passage.
3. Compliment yourself—extravagantly—for being such a tough and incisive editor. Think how proud your mother would be, and your old English teacher.
4. Walk out and leave the piece alone, at least for a day. You’re not abandoning it but resting your brain and letting your subconscious simmer without interference. As Gloria Burke advises, “Put the piece away for a few days, then take it out and psyche yourself up by saying, ‘I’m going to look at this with fresh eyes.’”^[7] It’s eternally mysterious how and why this works. But to leave what we’re immersed in and go do something entirely different gives us the distance and objectivity we need to become courageous cutters.
5. If the hole left by cutting still seems unfillable, or you can’t nudge out a decent transition, just start writing. I promise, what emerges will be usable in this or another piece. Sometimes, just to get going, I retype the previous sentence or paragraph. Then I intone two of my favorite lines by the American poet Richard Wilbur:

*Step off assuredly into the blank of your mind.
Something will come to you.*^[8]

Even if you’re convinced that what comes out is bilge, keep writing. Soon you’ll cut this too and the right words will surface.

6. To reduce future traumas of passionate obsession, read good literature. Notice the conciseness and freshness.
7. And read less than the best literature(!) Observe the flaws, and write down the clichés and other candidates for cutting. This list should help you spot them in your own current work and avoid them in later drafts.
8. With your new sensitivity, you can now read your manuscripts with a more critical eye. Amoss and Suben recommend, as you may have read before, combing your pieces for overused adjectives, stock phrases, “wordy, boring explanations,” and adverbs that don’t convey anything new.[9]
9. Praise yourself—highly—for having finally developed that precious and elusive faculty all writers covet, editorial distance.
10. If you’re still mourning your lost love, keep in mind that someday, somewhere, in some enchanted work time, that rejected passage may reappear. As you revise another piece, it may float into your head, and you’ll rapturously find that, with only the slightest adjustment, your old love will turn out to be exactly what you needed. Think of the reunion!

So take heart. Practice distancing yourself from your work, and you’ll develop that needed mix of editorial ruthlessness and intuitive creativity that heralds a polished piece. You’ll critique, delete, and revise with fewer pangs of emotional separation, debilitating tantrums, and caloric outrages. As you listen to your inner heartfelt messages, you’ll become your own best editor and employ courageous and tolerable cutting to create finer, more professional work. You’ll increase the likelihood of acceptances, and most important, produce work of which you can be justly proud.

Endnotes

1. D. M. Thomas, “On Literary Celebrity,” *New York Times Magazine*, June 13, 1982, p. 29.
2. Samuel Johnson, in *Quotationary*, ed. Leonard Roy Frank (New York: Random House, 2001), p. 956.
3. Gloria Burke, “The Four R’s of Freelancing: Refocus, Rework, Rewrite, and Recycle,” 2003 *Writer’s Market*, ed. Kathryn Struckel Brogan (Cincinnati: Writer’s Digest Books, 2002), p. 33.
4. Jean Rosenbaum and Veryl Rosenbaum, *The Writer’s Survival Guide*

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5. William Faulker, quoted in *The Web's Most Humongous Collection of Writing Quotes*, <http://home.earthlink.net/~wallinger/quotes.html#ordeal>
 6. Bertha Amoss and Eric Suben, *Writing and Illustrating Children's Books for Publication: Two Perspectives* (Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 1995), p. 96.
 7. Burke, "The Four R's of Freelancing," p. 33.
 8. Richard Wilbur, "Walking to Sleep," in *Walking to Sleep, New Poems and Translations* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1969), p. 1, lines 3-4.
 9. Amoss and Suben, p. 47.

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Craft Box Contributor Bio- Carol Smallwood's books include *Women on Poetry: Writing, Revising, Publishing and Teaching*, foreword by Molly Peacock (McFarland, 2012) on the *Poets & Writers Magazine* list of *Best Books for Writers*; *Writing After Retirement: Tips by Successful Retired Writers* (Scarecrow Press, 2014).

A Matter of Tone

by Carol Smallwood

Tone is the how the writer's attitude toward their subject and reader is conveyed. It can be serious, ironic, formal, playful, personal and many others expressed through meter, sentence structure, symbolism, omission, repetition, and other techniques. When writing for an academic publisher, one does not use words we would in informal phone conversations with close friends. Each locality has places known only to that setting and using the connotations associated with it would mean nothing to an outsider. We easily recognize accents and the word choice we use as writers conveys much about place. How observant we are depends on how we choose to tune in as readers just like we do as listeners or observers: we know that if people are questioned about an accident, they will see different details, thereby telling the story differently.

Tone is subterranean, it is deeply a part of us as writers and readers, so maybe it should not be that surprising it isn't easy to pinpoint.

When someone tells us something nasty in a pleasing way, we tend to forget the words and remember their smiles, but when there are only words to go by, we must go by the words the writer has chosen to put on the page. Words can convey irony, anger, humor, affection, sadness, resentment—a whole range of human emotions—but only if the reader hears them in the mind's ear. Tone is illusive, intuitive and personal; it's as if by osmosis we interpret words. Perhaps that's why when we write online we insert smiling or sad faces to express ourselves and guide the reader.

Often what we read has both negative and positive tones, and figuring out the mix creates the richness of a work; like real life, things are usually a combination of good and bad, happy and sad.

Marilynne Robinson, the winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2005 for *Gilead*, is one of the modern masters of tone—I listen to every subtle change every bit as much as to dialogue and narration. Her tone is haunting, exquisite. John Galsworthy, who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1932, is another master. What reader can't revel in the tone set in the first sentence of his award-winning, *The Forsyte Saga*: "Those privileged to be present at a family festival of the Forsytes have seen that charming and instructive sight—an upper middle-class family in full plumage." His tone, his subtleness, keeps readers coming back to him; each reading of his plays, short stories, novels, and essays brings out nuances depending on your own mindset at the time.

Great writers can convey great truths in the most subtle of tones, and we often don't 'get them' until we are ready, mature enough, or become more aware as readers. Once we 'see' them, we wonder how we ever missed them.

In the story "Silver Blaze," by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the police inspector asked Sherlock Holmes:

"Is there any point to which you would wish to draw my attention?"

"To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time."

"The dog did nothing in the night-time."

"That was the curious incident," remarked Sherlock Holmes.

Tone is like that to me; what is excluded is as important as what is included, or as Zona Gale in "Modern Prose," *Man and His World Volume Nine: Art and the Worth-While* wrote: "The unexpressed, then, is always of greater value than the expressed." This is of course, echoed in Hemingway's famous iceberg. In *Death in the Afternoon*, Hemingway outlined his theory of omission: "If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of the iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water. The writer who omits things because he does not know them only makes hollow places in his writing."

In an art class in college, we collected swatches of color by cutting them out of magazines and putting all the reds, blues, greens, and such together. The exercise made me aware of the vast difference within one color. Before, red was red, blue was blue pretty much, but once all the variations were collected in piles, it made me much more aware of the subtle variety in color. Color (like music) has tones; words have tones. It is a basic for any writer. As a reader, see how other writers master it and make it work for you.

Exercise: Write a dialogue between a teenage son wanting to use the family car Friday night and the mother who has doubts; the son's appeal begins with: "You trust me, don't you?" Experiment with tone by altering the motivations and emotions behind each character's purpose. Is the mother angry or simply concerned? Does her son want the car for an honest reason or one he knows his family wouldn't approve of? How do these factors affect the way they stress their side of the disagreement? Use the setting to implement a setting of tone through details- light, color, facial expressions, background noise...

Exercise: Observe the next clerk who serves you. How do they convey what they feel towards you, their job, themselves (bored, shy, tired, dirty nails, lisping words; smile reminds you of your first boyfriend)? Turn these clues into words that reflect tone and use them to depict a fictional clerk that you insert into one of your short stories to interact with a protagonist in an added scene.

Writing a Way Through It: Writing as a Cathartic Medium

Here we talk with Chilmark Workshop founder Nancy Slonim Aronie. We first had the pleasure of interviewing her for our debut issue in the summer of 2008. We intersperse favorite quotes from that interview with the current Q&A focusing on healing through writing.

*Aronie is the author of Writing From the Heart. She received the Derek Bok Teacher of the Year award for the three years she taught writing at Harvard University. She has been a commentator for National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*. She teaches the Chilmark Writing Workshop on Martha's Vineyard.*

1) In our original interview from summer of 2008, you discussed writers willing to go outside their comfort zone to get the raw truth on the page so that they could experience ". . . the healing benefit of writing their truth." You've also mentioned how you began workshops with the statement: "We are alchemists. We can turn garbage into gold. We can take what happened to us, the trauma, the hurts, the tiny murders and we can transform them into something beautiful. But the most important thing we have to do first is, we have to feel them. You can't skip the pain part." How difficult is it for writers in the Chilmark Workshop to get to that step where the layers/censors are removed and they are tapping directly into that well of innermost emotion?

Obviously it's different for everyone but what happens in the circle is there is always someone who breaks the sorrow ice and weeps openly while reading. And they all always say the same thing: "I wasn't that sad when I wrote it."

The first person who cries is an invitation and permission for everyone else.

2) You emphasized 'safety' as one of the most important aspects of the workshop, to foster an atmosphere of encouragement that would help writers 'take a risk' and 'go deep'.

Have you ever had writers that found it difficult to express certain issues where you needed to help coax out their stories?

I really don't coax anyone. It's the exercises that are so provocative that you can't not go there.

On getting writers to open up on the page:

"The first assignment is so provocative, they step up to the challenge. The only hard part is for them to truly believe that the piece they wrote is great. It takes them a long time to acknowledge that they have a gift. They leave the workshop feeling charged and inspired. It's a positive environment, it isn't phony, and when your writing is raw and real, it's good."

"They find their own way through the feedback of other participants. They think to themselves, 'Wow. I wrote a great f#\$%ing line!' They look over their work and learn to be kind editors to themselves. It's important to be nice to yourself about your writing. A lot of people are battered in school and they've simply learned to be too tough on themselves."

On the most important aspect of the workshop atmosphere:

"Safety. When people are safe, they can go anywhere. If you have a ski instructor who encourages you, you take a risk. If a painting teacher is telling you that you're using the wrong brush, are you going to feel flowy and free? There is no wrong in creative art. Any negative remark is going to stop you. Model a human being who suffers and laughs in the same paragraph. Go deep. Think, 'This is what terrifies me. This is what I love.'"

How do you give yourself the same gift of 'safety' writing alone?

As for me, boundaries and being private are not among my "issues"; I've got my own but not being open and honest about personal things is not one of them.

3) Following an essay we'd done for *The Review Review* entitled "How Can Poetry Heal Us?", we asked the poetry winner, Chanel Brenner, of our First Annual Poetry, Fiction and Non-fiction Contest whether she "...found poetry to be a personally cathartic medium of expression" as her poem depicted the loss of her son. She responded that 'reading and writing poetry' about the passing of her son saved her life and that it was something to share about him that would honor him and go on. What was your process when acknowledging the grief on paper that came of the passing of your son, Dan, who sounded like a light to the world? How did the words evolve as you tackled the difficulty of expressing your range of emotion?

You know Dan was sick from the time he was 9 months old and I always wrote about my broken heart when it came to him. So it was already a habit of processing the whole journey; the good the bad and the really ugly. Because of writing I was able to see so much of the beauty of what we were going through. I could be in the story and I could be writing the story.

4) Do you find that it's even more inherent/necessary for writers to need to heal through writing than the average person (though the medium can be helpful for anyone)?

I think everyone has wounds and thus, writing is cathartic for everyone.

On whether openness in writing spreads into participants' lives as emotional healing and whether words can affect and shape our lives in a spiritual sense:

"Absolutely. Whole lives change. Married people go home to their spouses able to truly talk to them. Behavior changes because there are no more angles. Major life transformations are able to take place. There is complete clarity . . . people say that they powerfully acknowledge their humanity through writing. Sometimes they return numerous times to the comfortable atmosphere of the workshop after having been out in the difficult world for awhile."

On writing through it:

"Leave the censor part of yourself at the door. As for the baggage, take it and put it on the page. Let it go. Put [it] on the paper . . ."

Craft Box Guest Contributor Bio- Gwendolen Gross holds an MFA in fiction and poetry from Sarah Lawrence College. Her novels have received critical acclaim, with her being dubbed "the reigning queen of women's adventure fiction" by *Book Magazine*. Her poetry was selected for the Adrienne Lee Award. Gross was chosen early in her career for the PEN West Emerging Writers Program. The author shares her experience in the field as an award-winning writing instructor, having led workshops at Sarah Lawrence College and the UCLA Extension online. Her novels

include *A Field Guide*, *Getting Out*, *The Other Mother*, *The Orphan Sister* and *When She Was Gone*.

<http://www.gwendolengross.com/>

Write It Out

by Gwendolen Gross

I recently started up a new session of a workshop I've been teaching at a local community school for fifteen years. It floors me that I've lived in one town (one house!) for that long now; that I've offered this class to the community, the winnowing of same and different students as I'd long hoped, the years of the same trees making and casting aside greened and reddened leaves, and each time, I teach it differently. That's my goal anyway. Tell the truth but tell it slant, the different degree. I opened with talking about writing practice—the core of the workshop—about how we are both trying to make something when we write, but also to bring ourselves closer to what is already by describing it with the combination of words only we can choose, that we are taking the physical and codifying it when it is something that can't last. Which leads to what I set out to write about here: the outdoor world codified on the page. Likened to the sentiment in the last lines of my favorite Shakespeare sonnet 65, nature evolves, seasons change but giving these settings life in writing, as if they too are characters, forever preserves them:

*... where, alack,
Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?
O, none, unless this miracle have might,
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.*

Home Safe Home vs. The Unknown Outdoors

The house is, for the most part, assumed to be a safe place. There are associations of shelter and familiarity. We live inside with the predictability of electric lights and plumbing, with animals we allow inside and food we gather. Outside is also predictable in a way: the light of midafternoon will slant; the morning will wake more slowly come November. But ask any

reader: you believe your character is open to more possibilities, dangers and romances, adventures and experiments and discoveries outside than in. Sure, there are laboratories, but there are caves in the outside world, there's under the leaves, there's what's buried in the backyard. Inside cannot challenge all the senses the way outside might. Sure, you're worried about a character lost in the *Yellow Wallpaper*, but otherwise, inside is mostly where your characters are safe, and outside is where you worry, where you literally open the door to new experiences.

In real life, for me, as a writer and as a person, outside is respite. I need it to write, partly because it refreshes all the senses. Inside all necessities call to me, all responsibilities, but I can't be responsible for all the trees; I can't keep all the wild turkeys fed. In the past few years, I have made a lucky choice—I have started riding a horse about four times a week, which means early hours sometimes, and thinking deer are jerks for darting across the ring, but it also means noticing the texture of the wind, the way the sharp bite of the cold might seem predatory instead of simply a need for one more layer of fleece. I think, at our core, we are able to think all these ways: safe and unsafe, predator and prey, intellectual and simply instinctual. All I know is sometimes I just need to be out in the world, collecting the things I need to codify, the things I need to share with you.

From the Editor- Passage quoted from the spring 2012 interview with author Gwendolen Gross:

"I have always thought of outside as its own character in books—whether the Australian rainforest or tamed lawns in my own books, or other books, Cape Cod in Elizabeth McCracken's In The Giant's House, the invented worlds of Tolkien . . . [A] big chunk of the joy of a book is that it is in a specific place, influenced by weather and buildings and the sensory world. In real life I need outside, it gives me perspective on what silly little rabbits we really are, and it also makes me marvel at how we survive."

'Try This' Exercise: A Walk in the Park

Plan to visit a nearby park and spend at least fifteen minutes. Take a notebook and jot down three things that happened to you that wouldn't have otherwise if you hadn't left the house (ex. talking to a stranger, seeing

geese splashing in the water, finding a new walking path...), three things that you observe happen to others (ex. a conversation that takes place between two female friends, a father teaching his little girl to ride a bike, an owner getting pulled too fast by their dog) and three things happening in the natural surroundings (ex. leaves turning, wind, sunset). Combine all of them into a 500 word fiction short and remember to use sensory details such as touch, smell, sound, etc... to bring the natural world alive.

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