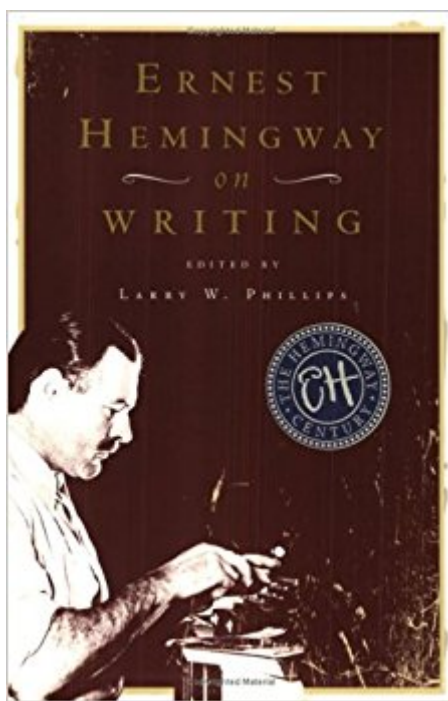


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Ernest Hemingway On Writing



Synopsis

An assemblage of reflections on the nature of writing and the writer from one the greatest American writers of the twentieth century. Throughout Hemingway's career as a writer, he maintained that it was bad luck to talk about writing "that it takes off whatever butterflies have on their wings and the arrangement of hawk's feathers if you show it or talk about it." • Despite this belief, by the end of his life he had done just what he intended not to do. In his novels and stories, in letters to editors, friends, fellow artists, and critics, in interviews and in commissioned articles on the subject, Hemingway wrote often about writing. And he wrote as well and as incisively about the subject as any writer who ever lived. | This book contains Hemingway's reflections on the nature of the writer and on elements of the writer's life, including specific and helpful advice to writers on the craft of writing, work habits, and discipline. The Hemingway personality comes through in general wisdom, wit, humor, and insight, and in his insistence on the integrity of the writer and of the profession itself. "From the Preface by Larry W. Phillips

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Customer Reviews

Of course, I've read everything he wrote, but I wasn't prepared to get the key information on writing enclosed in this little book. Most people think Hemingway was a rough and tumble guy who wrote in his spare time when he had the urge. Most other times, the legend goes, he was too busy drinking, fishing, or womanizing. This book clearly shows that ain't so. He spent most of his time, the way real writers do: Writing and thinking about writing. Often he would check into a hotel, let everyone know

he was there, and then stay somewhere else so as not to be disturbed from his main mission. The gems of informations depicted here come in the form of advice to the Mice (H's term for young student writers) from Y.C. (your correspondent). Did you know, for instance, "Most live writers do not exist. Their fame is created by critics who always need a genius of the season, someone they understand completely and feel safe in praising, but when these fabricated geniuses are dead they will not exist." Or how about this gem: "If an sonofbitch could write he wouldn't have to teach in college." Particulary interesting is Papa's advice to writers about reading. He was of the opinion that most writers write too much and don't read enough. His advice is to master Tolstoi, Flaubert, Mann, Joyce, Fielding, Mark Twain, Stendhal, Dostoevskis, Crane, Kipling, Turgenev, Hudson, James, (on and on so fast you can't write them down, three times that many) before you start writing. Very good advice, I would say. His point being you must first read the literature before you can write literature. This book does omit one piece of advice that H never gave but which he practiced by example. He memorized the King James Bible (cf Moveable Feast) and could recite it by heart.

Hemingway was reticent about his craft; he feared that talking about it would destroy it, or even worse, be a substitute for it. Yet, woven throughout his novels and other writings are numerous observations about writers and the art of writing. In "Ernest Hemingway On Writing", Larry Phillips has culled several hundred excerpts from Hemingway's books, interviews, and personal correspondences that touch upon some aspect of writing. They range in length from a mere sentence fragment to several paragraphs. As Phillips explains in the introduction, "This book contains Hemingway's reflections on the nature of the writer and on the elements of the writer's life, including specific helpful advice to writers on the craft of writing, work habits, and discipline. The Hemmingway personality comes through in general wisdom, wit, humor, and insight..."Some of these reflections are insightful, some are humorous, and some show us Hemingway at his best. But this is not to say that the collection works as a whole. While I like the idea behind book, and feel it has definite value, there are a good number of excerpts that do not seem to have any of the above qualities, so I question why they were included. They seem like filler. Nonetheless, I'll list a few of the reflections that I liked, as they show something of Hemingway's many moods and styles. In a letter to Charles Scribner, Hemingway reveals a tortured ambivalence about writing: "Charlie there is no future in anything. I hope you agree. That is why I like it at a war. Every day and every night there is a strong possibility that you will get killed and not have to write. I have to write to be happy... But it is a hell of a disease to be born with. I like to do it. Which is even worse.

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