

“I CAN WRITE A BOOK IN A WEEKEND” AND FIVE OTHER ANNOYING THINGS BEGINNERS SAY

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Since every literate person can write most people think they can be writers. Interestingly enough, we all can speak quite well, but few of us would deem ourselves ‘speakers’. However, this prevalent belief encourages beginners to say the oddest things that make professional writers want to cringe (or preferably strangle them with a thin wire). If you find yourself saying the following, please stop:

1. “I can write a book in a weekend.”

I’m certain you can mutilate a couple hundred pages with words, however that doesn’t mean that anyone will want to read them. Yes, I know there are prolific writers who can write a book in two weeks (Voltaire supposedly wrote *Candide* in three days). Usually they are professionals who have mastered a style and understand the craft of writing. Have you?

2. “I can write those ‘trashy’ books and make tons of money.”

Bwahaha! I love this one.

Many new writers see a 200-page romance or mystery and scoff. These things are so easy, they tell themselves. I can write this in a day. I doubt it, but maybe you can. If you do, will anyone pay you to read it? That is the difference. Those who sell in these genres usually have a passion for the craft that translates onto the page. Hate romance? Think mysteries are ridiculous? Believe sci-fi is for loonies? Then don’t write it, editors and especially readers can tell.

3. “If this crap gets published, I bet I could get a contract in six months.”

Define crap. One man’s trash is another man’s treasure. Don’t be arrogant and think the world should concede to your every taste (that’s what critics are for). Every writer is not meant for every reader. Just because you don’t like a book doesn’t mean it’s not good. It’s just not good for you. I don’t like okra; however, that doesn’t mean I need to start an anti-okra campaign. Diversity is what makes life interesting.

Okay, okay you’re not talking about taste. You’re talking about horrible, poorly written books. Yes, I know there are some truly bad books out there. Here’s the hard truth. Some bad books (poor grammar, poor structure and poor execution of a plot simpler than a fairy tale) get published. I have plenty of dents in my wall from an effective toss. However, these books are probably ‘placement’ books to fill a hole in a publishing list. Usually, these books sink and their authors are rarely heard from again.

Unfortunately, the existence of these books convinces people that getting their book published should be a breeze. Sure, and every person with a dream to sing will become the next International Idol. Is it fair? No. Do they care? No.

4. “I can write better than that.”

If you can, shut up and write. Nobody wants to hear about it. It’s as annoying as listening to someone explain what they would do if they ruled the world—well you don’t. Next!

5. “I’d write, if I had more time.”

You’ll never get more time; steal it. That’s what the rest of us do.

6. “I have the perfect book already written in my head.”

Sure, and I have the secrets to the universe taped to the bottom of my shoe. People who say this remind me of the naked emperor walking down the street trying to convince his kingdom that he’s clothed. You’re fooling no one except yourself and you look ridiculous.

Writing is work. Writers make it look effortless because that’s our job (image the disappointment you would feel seeing a dancer straining to leap off the ground).

I encourage anyone with a desire and passion to write fiction to do so. Write with meaning; write with truth and skill. Write because you must, not as a path to riches and stardom. It may come; it may not. The real writers (beginner and pro) don’t talk about it; they do it. Be one of those.

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