

# ON WRITING

Most of that year I spent either in bed or housebound. I read my way through approximately six tons of comic books, progressed to Tom Swift and Dave Dawson (a heroic World War II pilot whose various planes were always “prop-clawing for altitude”), then moved on to Jack London’s bloodcurdling animal tales. At some point I began to write my own stories. Imitation preceded creation; I would copy *Combat Casey* comics word for word in my Blue Horse tablet, sometimes adding my own descriptions where they seemed appropriate. “They were camped in a big dratty farmhouse room,” I might write; it was another year or two before I discovered that *drat* and *draft* were different words. During that same period I remember believing that *details* were *dentals* and that a bitch was an extremely tall woman. A son of a bitch was apt to be a basketball player. When you’re six, most of your Bingo balls are still floating around in the draw-tank.

Eventually I showed one of these copycat hybrids to my mother, and she was charmed— I remember her slightly amazed smile, as if she was unable to believe a kid of hers could be so smart— practically a damned prodigy, for God’s sake. I had never seen that look on her face before— not on my account, anyway— and I absolutely loved it.

She asked me if I had made the story up myself, and I was forced to admit that I had copied most of it out of a funnybook. She seemed disappointed, and that drained away much of my pleasure. At last she handed back my tablet. “Write one of your own, Stevie,” she said. “Those *Combat Casey* funny-books are just junk— he’s always knocking someone’s teeth out. I bet you could do better. Write one of your own.”

I remember an immense feeling of *possibility* at the idea, as if I had been ushered into a vast building filled with closed doors and had been given leave to



open any I liked. There were more doors than one person could ever open in a lifetime, I thought (and still think).

I eventually wrote a story about four magic animals who rode around in an old car, helping out little kids. Their leader was a large white bunny named Mr. Rabbit Trick. He got to drive the car. The story was four pages long, laboriously printed in pencil. No one in it, so far as I can remember, jumped from the roof of the Graymore Hotel. When I finished, I gave it to my mother, who sat down in the living room, put her pocketbook on the floor beside her, and read it all at once. I could tell she liked it— she laughed in all the right places— but I couldn't tell if that was because she liked me and wanted me to feel good or because it really *was* good.

“You didn't copy this one?” she asked when she had finished. I said no, I hadn't. She said it was good enough to be in a book. Nothing anyone has said to me since has made me feel any happier. I wrote four more stories about Mr. Rabbit Trick and his friends. She gave me a quarter apiece for them and sent them around to her four sisters, who pitied her a little, I think. *They* were all still married, after all; their men had stuck. It was true that Uncle Fred didn't have much sense of humor and was stubborn about keeping the top of his convertible up, it was also true that Uncle Oren drank quite a bit and had dark theories about how the Jews were running the world, but they were *there*. Ruth, on the other hand, had been left holding the baby when Don ran out. She wanted them to see that he was a talented baby, at least.

Four stories. A quarter apiece. That was the first buck I made in this business.

Stephen King. [\*On Writing: A Memoir Of The Craft\*](#).  
Scribner. Kindle Edition. (*Word count: 668 words*)

King, Stephen. *On Writing: A Memoir Of The Craft*. 10th Anniversary ed.  
New York City, New York: Scribner, 2000.



# QUOTES - WEEK ONE

1. Today every invention is received with a cry of triumph which soon turns into a cry of fear. - Bertolt Brecht
2. What is unbecoming is unsafe. - Publius Cornelius Tacitus
3. I spent my life folded between the pages of books. In the absence of human relationships I formed bonds with paper characters. I lived love and loss through stories threaded in history; I experienced adolescence by association. My world is one interwoven web of words, stringing limb to limb, bone to sinew, thoughts and images all together. I am a being comprised of letters, a character created by sentences, a figment of imagination formed through fiction. — Tahereh Mafi
4. The wise man does at once what the fool does finally. - Niccolo Machiavelli
5. Strong minds discuss ideas, average minds discuss events, weak minds discuss people. - Socrates
6. Simplicity is the extreme degree of sophistication. - Leonardo da Vinci
7. Ideas must work through the brains and arms of men, or they are no better than dreams. - Ralph Waldo Emerson
8. Curiosity is one of the most permanent and certain characteristics of a vigorous intellect. - Samuel Johnson
9. A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies, said Jojen. The man who never reads lives only one. — George R.R. Martin
10. What one man can invent, another can discover. - Arthur Conan Doyle

