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FIRST THINGS FIRST: WRITING STRATEGIES

Passion is the Key

Marilyn L. Grady

One of the longest and most tiring writing tasks is writing someone else's passion. This is the situation when you accept a writing assignment on a topic that is removed from your core interests and experiences. This is much like being given a writing assignment on a topic you know little about and care even less about—the result of such a writing activity is often dismal. The experience is dreadful for the writer and tedious for the reader. Save us from this misery!

If you track the writings of prolific authors, you can identify their passions. Whether non-fiction or fiction, the “person-in-the-prose” may be visible. In the books written by Bob Greene, the “person” is present. *Be True To Your School: A Diary of 1964* is a book developed from the author's journal. *And You Know You Should Be Glad* is a continuation of the story of the author's life experiences. These books reflect lived-experiences.

Examine your life for the indicators of your passions. The Delphic Oracle instructs: Know Thyself. This admonition applies in choosing writing topics. Recall the issues in your work and life that have consumed your attention and efforts. Write about these. It is easier to maintain momentum on writing projects when you are fully invested in the subject. The themes of your writing should reflect the themes of your life and career.

In research institutions, faculty are advised to have research specializations. Another term for this would be research passions. These are the research areas that should interest you for a career of writing.

Write about what you believe in, what you stand for, what you want to be remembered for. If you need to, stop and reflect on your life experiences and your commitments. As you trace the activities and initiatives you have been involved in, you will be reminded what your passions are. Another way to consider your commitments is to consider how you spend your time, another good measure of what you value.

And when in doubt, read another good book! Try Gerard's *Creative Nonfiction: Researching and Crafting Stories of Real Life!*

References

- Gerard, P. (1996). *Creative nonfiction: Researching and crafting stories of real life*. Cincinnati, OH: Story Press.