

Do you feel mystified by your own creative process, and wish you could create the right conditions for inspiration and “flow” on a daily basis?

Are you sure (so sure!) you are meant to write, yet you feel frustrated when your ideas seem boring or derivative as soon as you’ve put them down on paper?

Do you want (more than anything in the world) to tell stories that your readers will remember for the rest of their lives?



I know how you feel. As a twenty-year-old aspiring novelist, I thought I was quite clever writing a story narrated by a dead girl, and I was midway through a rough draft when *The Lovely Bones* came out. If I could send an email back to myself in 2001, it would read, *Quit trying to prove how clever you are, dive into your research, and eventually you will come up with something good. Don't rush this process.* I've spent almost twenty years since then exploring universal themes like familial identity, monsterhood, and self deception through weird (and often genre-bending) premises: A scientist who clones her grandmother. Teenaged cannibals on a road trip. Two kids living in the same house a century apart who become friends by way of a hand-painted spirit board. I also write nonfiction on creativity and personal growth, specifically “ego management” and the psycho-spiritual connection I’ve discovered between diet and creativity. These are subjects that other artists seem reluctant to examine—and we all know how rich a vein is the taboo, if we are brave enough to mine it.

Readers (who tend to be aspiring writers) often ask, “How do you manage to come up with such unusual ideas?” Is idea generation—exciting, “original” idea generation—a skill that can be acquired? This course and workbook have grown out of a Medium article I published in 2019 called “How to Write a Book Worth Reading.” To produce it I've essentially reverse-engineered my creative process, not to offer a definitive how-to, but to get you thinking and exploring in such a way that you will develop a process and a sensibility of your own.

My goal is to help you generate fresh, exciting ideas, to tell a story that hasn't been told yet—or at least not the way that *you* can tell it. If you're starting this course hoping for a confidence booster as you honor the mystery that is your creative process, then you're in the right place. If you relish the idea of reconnecting with the bright and curious kindergartener you once were, dreaming new dreams and playing with possibilities without worrying about a finished product, then you are most certainly in the right place. I want you to allow yourself to have a

tremendously fun and carefree time as you move through this course.

Coming up with fresh ideas has little to do with talent, and everything to do with your level of engagement with the world around you. Curiosity can be cultivated. Fascination can be fostered, not only in extraordinary moments, but in the seemingly mundane ones too. And influence can be purposefully chosen rather than inadvertently absorbed. These modes of consciousness determine the quality of the ideas you're coming up with, and in this workbook I'll offer tools for expanding that consciousness—in other words, your capacity for wonder.

As with any workbook, you can skip the exercises that don't resonate for you, although I have found that the activities I initially dismiss as unproductive often pose the questions I most need to ask and answer in order to move forward. It's a matter of a neutral "nah" as opposed to "this is *stupid*." Challenge yourself to take a closer look at anything you feel yourself resisting. I can promise you there's a payoff underneath!

