

Why We Write

As part of one panel that took place during UWL's 2019 Creative Imperatives Festival, a collection of Creative Writing students were invited to share their responses to this prompt: Why I Write. Here's what they had to say:

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Because I will never get better at getting my ideas on paper if I don't start now. Writing used to be a source of anxiety for me. It was a process I dreaded. Even though I have this stress about writing, it is something I always have been doing, in a way. I spend a lot of time daydreaming and thinking up stories, to the point where I feel the urge to start writing them down for fear of forgetting. The physical writing aspect is the most terrifying part, and recently I have been able to understand more as to why. I struggled for a long time because I put my ideas up on a pedestal. We all have these ideas we think are going to be revolutionary, but it is so difficult to bring those ideas into actual concrete words. For me at least, there are two steps to the writing process. Forming the ideas happens naturally and frequently, and the act of translating is manual and requires real thought. The latter is the part I have stressed about. The reality is though that if I don't ever sit down and get those ideas onto paper, I'm not really writing. Even if I need to throw all of those thoughts into something nobody will ever see, I still need to translate my daydreams into words and actions. Through this process, writing is my escape. What I mean is that no matter what I have to worry about, writing is something I can do at any time. What I do now is use my phone's notes page in order to start spitting out ideas so I have them somewhere. It doesn't matter where it goes as long as I am turning thought into word, because if I don't practice that part, none of my ideas will be heard. This process did end up making the notes page of my phone a complete nightmare to go through, but that is fine. I cannot really get my ideas onto paper if I don't practice translating, and that practice is the most important motivation I have to keep writing.

--Trevor Andersen

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Why not? Sure, there are plenty of other things I could do. I could watch the same television show I've already seen a few times, but even though I'll probably still laugh, I know what happens.

When I write I never know what's about to happen. Most times, I can't even figure out where I'm going until I get there. Most often it's nowhere near where I thought I was going when I started, but I'm never disappointed in the result. It ends where it's supposed to, for better or worse.

I could watch a new movie, I suppose. The movie could be good. Maybe I'd really like it. Or maybe I'll be left wanting more, wishing they ended it sooner or later, or someone would tell me why the hell this character fell in love with that one.

When I write I get to answer the questions I ask. I can add more, or take out what I want. If I see something I like, I can leave it alone, like a movie that got the ending just right. But if I look at it again years later and wish the story kept going, I can do that too. And I'm still waiting for a sequel to Space Jam after 22 years.

Hell, maybe I could watch the news or read a book someone else wrote.

Then again, the news, while good to know, usually leaves me feeling worse about the world. And a good book can really take me to all sorts of great places, but usually it just makes me wish I had thought of the story first. Why not be the author instead of the reader?

I could take a nap, or I could get something to eat. But I'm sure I'll sleep and I'll eat later, because I have to. I don't need to write. *Sometimes* it feels like I have to, but I know that if I never type another letter or pick up another pen I'll keep breathing. Sometimes I don't feel like writing either, and that's ok too. It seems like a chore some days, or even pointless. But I can write, because at times I really want to. Some days, I write so someone else might read it, but mostly, just so I can read it. As long as there are ideas in my head, and I still have time to do so, why not write?

--Jacob Ausman

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I get this question a lot since I have a biology major, with a 'very odd' creative writing minor. Writing is my rope. The words that appear randomly strung together on a page help give me a sense of clarity I cannot otherwise find. I'm able to crawl out of my deep bipolar manic episodes through gritted teeth with the rope cutting into my hands. I write to survive a chemistry and math-heavy major that makes me, almost every day, want to quit. And a lot of days, I can't write. I cannot physically get myself to write on a page or type on a computer because some days, let's be honest, the weight of existence is kind of terrible. But with push from my loving fiancé and dog, I'm reminded that with work comes payout. I write because I need to, and honestly, there are worse things to be addicted to than the truth that eludes me, until it's on a page.

--Seraphim Boggs

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Because as a reader, I've always had stories rattling around in my brain, and ordinary things appear magical to me for these reasons. The other day I saw a wisp of black smoke in the sky, and it struck my fancy to take a plastic straw, point it at the tail of dark fluid, and suck it down like the bitterest chocolate milk. Ever since that thought, I've wondered how to write about it, leaning towards a poem, but tickled with the idea of starting or ending a short story that way. The realist in me looked at the smoke and traced its curves back to its source and thought pollution as my heavy eyes settle on the factory stack silhouetted against the orange-streaked sky, and I can't help thinking that leaving that thought as it was would be infinitely more boring than sucking the pollution from the sky. Many nights as I walk through the school grounds, I turn on a specific

song and imagine things floating and playing around the old lampposts in the dark, or amongst the few stars I can see. If I just leave it there, as a thought, who could understand me then? I could try to explain it with a conversation but writing gives me time to process why I think what I think and why I see the world the way I do, and it's through this self-exploration that others begin to see me and know me more intimately. So, I suppose I write because what else am I supposed to do with the little me floating around inside who is sometimes too afraid to explain herself to others? I've locked her inside for years; writing is helping me find ways to let her out.

--Jahni Brandt

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Because I'm not much of an expert at anything else, and because I'm pretty good at this writing thing since I failed at it for a long while, then failed better, then succeeded some and failed again, in better ways. Because I want to keep writing better. Because I like the beats of words, the sounds of sentences, the shapes of paragraphs. Because I like building stories, designing them, crafting them, first with chainsaws, then chisels, then with wind from angels' wings. Because I can no longer comprehend this chaotic world except through story. Because we could do with a little more beauty around here, even when that beauty makes us see, more clearly, what destructive deeds our species is capable of. Because I want to preserve the people and places and things that have disappeared and that will soon disappear—to document the lives of those I have loved and those who have loved me. Because I want to introduce myself to myself, and to the truth, and to seek forgiveness, and to discover what I cannot know until I see what I have said, then see how I need to say it more honestly. Because I want to break your heart, and make you laugh, and make you wince, and make you widen your eyes in a way that makes you more alive, more alert, more quiet, more kind. Because I want to ease you into dreams. Because I own my own words, and my words make me own my life. Because I'm not much of an expert at anything else, and because I'm pretty good at this writing thing since I failed for awhile, then succeeded some, and because I want to keep getting better at it.

--Matt Cashion

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To be clear. I type. I don't write. Funny how they mean the same thing though. I guess you could say I write.

What is a thought? Whatever it is, it's called a thought.

What is an idea? Like really? What is it? Is it neuroreceptors in our brains firing impulses that manifest themselves into the "voices inside our head"? The answer is...who the hell knows, but whatever it is, it's called an idea. We have words for these abstract concepts that there is no other explanation for except to give them a name.

Words are important, but not necessary. What's necessary is the transfer of ideas and emotions. If I was a talented musician I would use music to do this; fortunately, I'm not--that sounds stressful.

From an abstract thought, perhaps stirred by an emotion, in my head, I can use words not to only convey my story to you but evoke emotion as well. Writing, just like music, is one of the few vehicles that we can use to directly transfer emotions to one another. Perhaps an emotion in me has been created over years of pain and hardship. Perhaps the emotion in me has manifested itself throughout a lifetime of stories that I see patterns in and can finally put a name to it. There can be a lifetime of emotion and experience that, if worded properly, a person, the reader, can understand.

How crazy is that?

Is that why humans are the most evolved species on Earth?

Is it because we can transfer the thoughts and lifetime experiences of one person to another in just words? Is that how we continuously build off of each other's successes and failures?

How can a third party comprehend the pain of another person without experiencing it? How can a third party feel the joy of another without being there?

Words.

I write because of the complexity of the cause, and the simplicity of the result.

...Perhaps there is something to be said about writing as an outlet for authentic creation and that is us exercising the piece of God that lives in us, but that thought has turned into a question that will keep me writing.

Also, puns are fun.

That is why I write.

--Sam Douglass

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Because it has always been my catharsis. I've written since I was a child, so writing has always been with me. It's allowed me to express myself, clearly or not-so-clearly; it's allowed me to put my thoughts out onto paper, whether I'm pouring words onto paper as quickly as I can write, or whether I'm carefully crafting the words to depict the precise emotion I feel. For me, writing has always been about emotion. As I've continued my writing practice, I've used it to put myself into the perspective of other people, and to consider their emotions. In this way, it's helped me become more empathetic and better able to understand how I interact with people. I have kept writing for so long because it has improved my perspectives on the world, and allowed me to better understand myself and everyone around me. It also allows me to create a representative product of that understanding, something I can look back on to observe the growth I've experienced. Having that product is helpful not only in understanding myself and where I've come from, but also my writing itself. Seeing the progress in myself as a person and as a writer is incredibly validating, and I couldn't imagine my life without experiencing this type of growth. For me, it can only come out of writing. Without writing, I would not have the avenue to do this type of exploration in a way that I can follow clearly through different stages of my life. It's really interesting for me, because I can read things I wrote when I was eight, sixteen, or now as

an adult, and I can see some threads of emotional values that have been a part of my personality forever, and I can see how others were a part of me for some time and then evolved to result in my current perspective. Mostly, writing for me is a pathway to both express and better understand emotions— both my own and those of other people— and to use that emotional understanding to live a better life and become a better writer all in one practice.

--Abigail Duncan

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The first time I knew that I wanted to be a writer was my senior year of high school. I was a sketch writer for a comedy show that my high school did every year. Now this was in late 2015, right as the 2016 presidential campaign was starting to heat up. And being the liberal, Saturday Night obsessed teenager that I was, I decided that I was going to write a sketch making fun of a certain Republican presidential candidate that everyone agreed had absolutely no chance of winning. Of course, in retrospect this sketch was not particularly, edgy, or daring. But as a high schooler writing that sketch was the first time that I felt like I had any kind of power, that people would have to listen to what I had to say. I have a vivid memory of standing backstage the night my sketch was performed. My hands were sweating, and I felt like I might pass out. It was the first time that I had ever heard someone speaking the words that I wrote. I watched from the wings as the sketch started, holding my breath. An actor said the first joke, and people laughed, and not just giggles but full-blown laughs and there were a lot of them. I was jumping up and down, smiling. I felt like I was on drugs, not that I knew what being on drugs was like.

I knew then that writing, specifically playwriting was something that I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I think that writing gives you a kind of power that no other art form can afford you. I'm both an actrice and a writer, and as an actrice people are always trying to put you in a box. Based on how you look, and how you walk and speak. They try so hard to define you in the simplest way possible. But writing allows you to fight back against that. When you write your own truths, you can redefine what people think about people who don't fit neatly inside one of those boxes. You can show people that there is more to people than meets the eye.

--Corinne Kessler

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Because I have sought ways where I can share my creativity with the world. I have dabbled in the visual arts and throughout high school and well into my college career I was heavily involved in the music programs at my schools. The place where I found my home, however, was in writing. For me, writing is the place where I am finally able to express all it is that I feel. Writing is the opportunity I have to indulge my creative mind to its fullest potential and gives me a joy that all the other humanities can't even compare to.

In my writing I can create a vast new world, with a culture and people of my own design. I have complete control over what it is that I want to create that spans from the real to the surreal.

My mind is allowed to go as far as it wants with the pieces and in that creative fugue state, something is created. It's not always an amazing piece, but it's *my* piece. An original work that I can look at and say "I wrote this." And in this piece that I wrote is a part of me that I want to share with my readers.

--Matthew Fischer

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I'm not one of those writers whose peace of mind depends on writing. I don't spend hours of my own time endlessly typing because I feel like I have something to express or valuable to say. I rarely ever edit what I write, and I rarely ever return to things I have written to finish them. Most of my writing comes with the deadline. I need a grade in a writing class, so I write to get that grade. I like sharing my writing since, more often than not, people give me positive feedback which is dangerous because I never know if they're doing that for politeness' sake and fear of giving actual criticism or because what I've written is actually good and deserving of praise. I know I think in abstracts and social dynamics which is important for good writing. Good writing needs to understand the relationships it's describing. I know what I write can be funny because it elicits laughs. I know that my writing is beginning to sound more like myself because I like what I'm writing lately more than what I've written in the past.

It's fun to come off clever to yourself, even if no one else thinks you're clever. It's fun to create something new even if what you've made is something that already exists and you've either never seen it or are blind to the parallels between what you've made and something you've known since childhood.

I'm a creative writing minor because I like the part of me that likes to write, and I don't think I would go out of my way to write otherwise. A few in here are probably already on their way to finishing their first novel. Good for them, I hope they get published. I know that I'm never going to have that same drive and that's fine with me. A few here probably write in journals on a weekly basis. Good for them, I hope they find comfort in that. I just like to remember that a part of me can be creative when most of my time is spent learning how to do an academic lit review or analyzing business models of media companies. Also, I can turn in a piece of writing with curse words in it, without being marked down, which is a plus."

--Quinn Fitzsimons

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Because it is a form of therapy for me; it always has been. When I was younger, I didn't speak English very well and was ashamed to learn and practice for quite some time. Instead, I focused on my writing proficiency. Eventually I learned to speak English fluently, but I constantly wrote. I always wrote down stories my father told my sisters and me on paper, and I loved making up lies and sprucing them up on paper because I sucked at lying on the spot. I write because it calms me down and I feel like I have control. I write because once upon a time I fell in love with books

that inspired me to write. Whenever I felt so deeply I knew only a pencil, a pen, or a keyboard could do my emotions justice. I love the ability I have to change my voice when I write. I write because my father wasn't the best at filling out applications, doing his own resume, or completing writing tasks for his job, so I wrote for him. I wrote to tell my mother's story of how she's the strongest woman you'll ever meet. I wrote for my sisters so they could learn how to read and write themselves. I write to read back what I wrote and to remember.

--Marian Haile

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I write because it makes me feel free. For me, writing stories – and fiction in particular – is a vicarious experience; whatever situations my characters encounter, it's as if I'm there with them. Through them, I can be anyone, go anywhere, do anything that it occurs to me to do. It's a great outlet for exploring foreign situations and escaping from everyday living. But it's also great for escaping from my own shortcomings. Growing up, I always struggled just a little bit when it came to expressing myself to other people. But when I'm sitting down to write, it's as if all of those issues just vanish. Writing allows me to be thoughtful and deliberate with my words and to get my points across in whatever painstaking detail I want them to be seen.

All this said, writing isn't all about escapism to me. One of the most valuable aspects of the process is the insight it brings to my own life. I think the action of just sitting down at my computer and letting my thoughts flood out onto the page helps me find clarity in whatever issues I'm facing in my daily life. Sometimes I actually open up blank word documents and start typing out conversations with myself just to gain some perspective on whatever's been troubling me

So, yeah; freedom and perspective.

--Carson Kaashagen

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Because I have these stories in my head that have no reason for being there except for maybe that I was meant to write them.

And I have no patience for any other sort of job. Like I started college thinking I should do literally anything else. I didn't have any faith in English.

More accurately, I didn't have faith in myself.

So I kicked my own butt a little bit and thought, well I should just go big or go home. What's it worth to not even try?

And I'm pretty competitive, so knowing that other people could make it and I didn't even try would devastate me. Just knowing that the Twilight series exists is enough to make me want to write.

I actually really like movies so my plan one day is to either write screenplays or maybe have my books turned into movies. Movies are probably my favorite thing in the world. I don't

think I should try for anything less. What's life worth if I'm not doing what I want. I also think this is what I'm best at. If I ignore it and do something else, I'd be failing.

--Maggie Lerum

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There's a C.S. Lewis quote that I've always liked that says, "We read to know that we are not alone." I think this is why I always loved reading when I was younger, and still do. I didn't really fit in with my classmates, because I was always reading and writing and learning. Reading made me feel less alone, like there were whole worlds outside of my own with people like me. I love writing now for the same reasons. I write to know that I am not alone. I write to show that I am here.

I write to get everything going on inside of me, the things keeping me up at night, the words crashing around my brain, out of me. I need to write so I can sleep, and eat, and do homework. I need to get everything outside of my head, and onto a page.

Writing is free therapy. Let's be honest, therapy is expensive. Writing allows me to work through things, to talk about them, to explain what's going on, express myself. Writing is the therapist I don't have, one that won't judge, won't condemn, but, instead, supports and reflects.

I write because the world is a beautiful, horrible, wild, creative, confusing, dangerous place and we're trapped here. Writing is how I work through every beautiful, horrible, wild thing there is. Writing is how I process the world.

I write because I don't have a choice. My love of words is innate, and there's nothing I can do about it. Words are magical. Stories are magical. Writing is magic.

That's why I write.

--Kayleigh Marshall

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I remember when I was younger, I used to make up stories in my mind. Very vividly, with real characters, a real setting, and a real, usually horrific, plot.

I once thought it'd be funny to convince the therapist I was seeing at the age of 16 that I had schizophrenia because of the stories I was always making up. I did this out of spite of course, due to my parents forcing me to be there.

But, nonetheless, during that time I did sometimes feel as though I was losing my mind, or my grip on reality. I have always had severe anxiety that chooses to manifest itself in whatever form it has the most power over me. I didn't write when I was younger, because I didn't know that was an option. But that didn't stop my brain from concocting endless schemes and stories that solicited a sleeping problem.

As I came into more real-life problems, my anxiety chose to focus on my perception of myself and my relationships with those around me. The stories subsided but were still growing within me somewhere hidden.

I began to write as a way to deal with my anxiety once it became unavoidable. This is when that inner story teller within me jumped out, after waiting for so long. I realized I had a lot to say after all these years, and that saying it felt pretty good.

I write because of characters like Holden Caulfield, who showed me it's okay to be a little pissed off at the world. And that it's okay to not sound poetic when you say that.

I write because in this world, our words are the one thing that no one can take away from us. We learn war stories from people like Tim O'Brien, and get to feel, as if we're living in his skin and in his heart, what it's like to be at war. An experience we could never understand without his words. And if you can get through it, we learn what it's like to love someone until it makes you sick in Anna Karenina. We learn through the words on a page that come from someone else's soul. Words are the most powerful, potent, and heart stopping ammunition we could possibly possess.

I write because the words that have always been within me and unique to myself and to my soul. Sharing them is the most important thing I could ever hope to do.

--Nicole Nettell

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Because written words are powerful in ways that no other form of communication can be. Writing is relatively permanent once it is out there and done and completed. But that doesn't make it final. Writing can last through various contexts and people. There are ways that every person could relate or feel something from any given word or concept in writing. With writing, comes an outlet for emotions and ideas that may otherwise be held in and controlled. I'm not a real social person but I still enjoy the idea of connection.

I write because connecting to people feels good. It doesn't have to be some profound lost twin situation, but I feel like if I can get some person to feel some feeling, I have connected with them through my words. Direct speech is so...direct. People speak with metaphors and similes and really the same styles as writing, but with writing, genuine human connection can be made. Face to face I am a far different person to every person I have ever met, different than I really am. I don't mean that I am fake or that everyone else is fake, but I feel more like me when I write the words on the paper, than I do when I say words out loud and in person.

I write because I don't like to speak and yet I understand the importance of communication in society. We are a collective people; a collective set of individuals who all have ideas and thoughts all the time. I write what I want to say. My spoken words aren't very clear or even well thought out sometimes. They often become a muddled mess of syllables and sounds without any meaning, but when I write, I don't have to vocalize my ideas — I can type them directly from my brain to the page in front of me. That is a cool feeling. Like I've said before, writing is key to communicating. And I too, want a voice. I too, want to be part of the

collection of people that make up society, but I don't want to actually speak out loud because typing is where I find my real me.

I write because I have freedom to be an entirely different person in an entirely different place. There is something extremely liberating about creative writing. Where I can have a different voice and a different appearance; different perspectives and different experiences. It is up to me to decide what makes a character or a setting and how those two things interact. What I tend to write is not "out there" in terms of the fictionality. I keep things pretty real — based on real people, real places — but it isn't quite reality and for someone like me who isn't always a big fan of reality and themselves, creating something new that you do like is really powerful...

I write because it offers such a unique way to presenting an idea — it is almost like the psychology of a plot. In real life, we never see a person's actions (unless we are psychoanalysts which I am not) and consider fully how their (im)moral actions play into the big picture because we can't, as humans, even fathom what the big picture really is. Writing has its own big picture where every action is applied to the character and the other characters and the overarching plot and the subplot and the themes and the big picture. It makes it interesting to go on and easy to get lost in.

I write because sometimes I have good thoughts and maybe someday somebody else will enjoy those very thoughts because of the way that I wrote them on a piece of paper.

--Brevin Persike

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Writing helps me know what I think. I don't know exactly what I think or feel unless I write it out. With the right words, I can get to the heart of what I feel. I work on it until it feels like it's me talking. When I reach the point when I have it just right, my spirits lift.

Of course, when I can't express myself correctly, I am frustrated and anxious. I try to get past the frustration and into the happy land of self-expression as quickly as possible.

I think I'm especially interested in writing now because I have lived a long time and I want to figure out if my life has meaning. Maybe converting some of my experiences into fiction will show me where there is meaning and value. I've accumulated many stories in my lifetime, some told to me and some lived by me; some are hidden in my imagination.

When I worked at a newspaper, I wrote in response to specific assignments and deadlines. It was important to be concise, using no extraneous words or punctuation. As a copy editor, I found beauty in eliminating the unnecessary without altering meaning.

Each person who works at precise self-expression, in writing or other arts, contributes to their understanding of self and society and can transmit that understanding, or insight, to other people. I hope that occasionally readers will recognize a bit of themselves in the things I write."

--Janis Jolly

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First of all, frankly, I am probably the most narcissistic person I've ever met. I love myself, the narration in my head is lyric and I am never bored when left to my thoughts. I have things I need to say, things I think are more important than what other people have to say—or, at least, things other people could never say, could never think of. I hate being talked over, and writing lets me babble—without interruption. The only possible interruption could be the reader deciding to put down my writing, but until that point, I can make you read anything I want. HA!

Secondly, I write because everything else in the world bores me. What's the point? You have thoughts that you don't share with everyone else? Well, obviously, yes, no one wants to admit to the world how scared they are of the boogeyman they still believe is hiding under their bed, or how they secretly can't wait for their old relatives to die (maybe they're racist, or maybe you just want a good inheritance). But if I'm spending brain energy to think about something, I'd consider that an important thought. A thought I want to—no, *need to*—share with everyone, because what good are ideas in a vacuum?

I'm a human being, meaning I experience emotion, meaning often I am very, deeply confused and need help. Other people are kind of shit at talking me through things, though. Well, not shit exactly, more they just don't really know how I'm feeling – and I do, sometimes, but it's hard to express verbally. But give me a blank page and thirty minutes of silence and I can generally self-therapist myself out of any funk. Which is important, because I am crazy irrational and those are thoughts that shouldn't make the final draft.

Lastly, I suppose, I write because I can't really draw or sing or dance (like, not even a little) and I am madly in love with art—I think I would literally die if I couldn't participate in some way. Poetry is watercolor painting, each word dripping from my pen and finding a way to make itself beautiful. Prose is becoming the pen and learning ballet. Most songs need lyrics! To not see writing as an art form is... incorrect, wrong, simply not right. Writing is my art form, it is my therapy, it is my meaning in the bleakness of the world we have been forced to suffer and rejoice in. Writing pains me into happiness, and that is why I could not live off the page.

--Kristen Petersen

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Because I can build a world brick by brick. I write for the escape and the characters I mold and become a part of. Writing for the adventure back into a world that only exists in my head is exactly why I spend countless hours writing stories that may never get seen. I love writing because it helps me feel less anxious about the things happening around me. It helps me collect my thoughts and explore many ideas. Sometimes, I write as a way to find information. I make documents full of useless information that I find interesting to distract me. I like the feeling of just writing a jumble of words down that come together to form something extraordinary or even mundane. Writing for more than just academic papers gives me this sense of purpose like I'm better than just reading a book and reporting on a theme. I love that writing comes in many forms

and not just one thing. It is meant for creating, inspiring, thinking, being. Nothing I do seems to compare. I love painting and do it very often, but there is just something magical about sitting down, turning on my desk lamp, and sipping my coffee while I create this world full of mystical creatures who have to overcome some unseen force. I become my story; I am my main character conquering witches and slaying dragons. Writing is amazing and always surprising me. Once my fingers hit the keys, magic reels me in.

--Aspen Popoutsis

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I write to taste the world twice. Sometimes I feel like the first time I experience something or think of something it isn't enough. I want to be a part of that moment again and be able to revisit it and relive it forever. I love finding new ways to describe old things.

I write because it's what I've always done. Always. Since I can remember I've been writing something. You know that cozy feeling of curling up in your favorite unwashed blanket at the end of the day? When it smells a little gross, but you still find it soothing? That's writing for me. A little gross, a little smelly, but at the same time it's a necessity.

I write because I have to.

Writing is a sense of security. It's something I always have and something nobody can ever take away from me.

When I write I can go anywhere, be anything, and do anything. It is the ultimate form of freedom for me, and the rawest form of creation. What's more fun than unbridled imagination? Bringing to life people and places that have never existed before is an incredible feeling. I think the best part of that is the fact that it will never not exist. From the moment you create a person, or a place, they're real and they won't stop existing, even when you do.

I write because frankly I really suck at talking and being around people. The written word is the armor I need to communicate with the world. I don't feel like myself when I talk, but I feel like myself when I write. I have a hard time empathizing with others, writing is the best way I know how to connect to and understand the universe."

--Mclaine Isabella Schwertfeger

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Because my dad has been an eighth-grade language and reading teacher for over 25 years. My dad had a philosophy: teach kids the enjoyable ways of reading and writing, and hopefully that will propel kids into wanting to read and write more into the future. My dad wasn't that big on teaching the school curriculum readings (Shakespeare, Huck Finn, etc.) and instead tried to focus on more entertaining reads such as Hunger Games, the Outsiders, and Unwind. Because of this, I grew up loving books and having the time to read them. My dad had couches all around his classroom, so after school I would always head over to his classroom and read/write until he was done with his work/meetings/etc. My love for writing grew when my love for reading did, and I feel I have to especially thank my dad for that.

I write because sometimes it's easier to put a pen (or pencil) to a piece of paper than to talk. Sometimes it's easier to communicate an idea when it is written physically down, and people are able to visually look at it. For me, it's all about being able to express who I am. Through my writing I'm able to create something I can't necessarily do with my words. Because of the practice I have had with my dad, I feel I'm very good at it.

I write because sometimes it's the best way to win an argument. I'm a very organized person, and there's nothing more I love than having organization and my points all laid out in one location. With writing, I feel I'm a more persuasive person.

I write because sometimes I need to escape my own world. And if I don't like something in the real one, I can always change it through my writing."

--Austin Tackman

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Have you ever encountered a person who changed the entire trajectory of your life? Ever felt emotions in such a strong way that you were convinced of the existence of some abstract element, such as joy or hope, in the world? And then when life turns you in another direction you find yourself wondering, "How will I ever live without that person, without that situation, without that environment. And then time moves forward, and you continue to exist, you continue to be. That's why I write. So I don't forget those significant people or places. It's the only way I feel like I can give them proper credit. It's the only way that I can connect those people and places with others. To share the tears, the pain, the laughter, the sacrifice that allow all of us to grow. I write because I want to make the invisible nature of mankind visible. I long to make the connections between two realities, whether fantasy or concrete. I feel a sense of duty to bring together the lives of those I write about with the lives of my readers. Through my writing I can put together, piece by piece, the world that surrounds me. My writing takes me all over the world. It allows me to encounter people that I never would have imagined meeting. Writing allows me to fly. It allows me to experience different realities other than my own. I can do anything through my writing, all in the presence of myself, a pen and a piece of paper.

-Danielle Thornton