



10 Rules for Novelists

a timed exercise by Chris Kingham

To paraphrase Rumsfeld, by way of Luft and Ingham, this list largely deals with the unknown unknowns. I am not an experienced writer (yet), and certainly not a published one (yet). I do not have routines or set practices in place (yet). However there are things which I think would improve my writing and/or my approach to the same - and therefore I suspect they would be good for other writers too. Although undoubtedly not all. Cigarettes and alcohol are undisputedly 'bad' for you. Tell that to Lorna Gobey.

1. Write every day. Like anything else surely practice makes perfect. There is presumably no substitute for innate ability. But the writer who works at his craft surely trumps the writer who merely had potential.
2. Write about what you know. If you don't know about it then either learn or write about something else. Otherwise you are limited with the depth you can take your story.
3. Write when you're distracted. It can be useful to REALLY have to focus on what you are doing. Car accidents happen when you are close to home and within your comfort zone. Having your guard up and your attention challenged isn't always a bad thing.

4. Also write when you will not be interrupted. It cannot be a bad thing to find yourself head to head alone with your story.
5. Read your work aloud ('nod' to Mr Phillips).
6. Don't be afraid to want success. It does not mean you are selling out or anything silly like that. Wanting to make writing your living is nothing to be ashamed of.
7. Don't be afraid to be criticised. Terrible writers get published. Wonderful writers do not. And of course vice versa. Literature is art - whilst it can be rigorously assessed and analysed objectively, the writer with the idea which transports the reader is always preferable to the writer who can always nail their syntax or grammar.
8. The second you finish a story, start the next. Do not be too precious. Do not hold on to the work. Controversial perhaps, but my view is that the writer is bigger than their writing. Had Rowling have not written Potter then she no doubt still had it in her to write something equally capable of game-changing the genre of children's fiction.
9. Read. Alot. Everything.
10. Wear Sunscreen ('nod' to Mr Luhrmann).