



The Creative Writer's Survival Guide: Advice from an Unrepentant Novelist

John McNally

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Beginning with “The Writer’s Wonderland—Or: A Warning” and ending with “You’ve Published a Book—Now What?” *The Creative Writer’s Survival Guide* is a must-read for creative-writing students and teachers, conference participants, and aspiring writers of every stamp. Directed primarily at fiction writers but suitable for writers of all genres, John McNally’s guide is a comprehensive, take-no-prisoners blunt, highly idiosyncratic, and delightfully subjective take on the writing life.

McNally has earned the right to dispense advice on this subject. He has published three novels, two collections of short fiction, and hundreds of individual stories and essays. He has edited six anthologies and worked with editors at university presses, commercial houses, and small presses. He has earned three degrees, including an MFA from the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, and taught writing to thousands of students at nine different universities. But he has received far more rejections than acceptances, has endured years of underpaid adjunct work, and is presently hard at work on a novel for which he has no guarantee of publication. In other words, he’s been at the writing game long enough to rack up plenty of the highs and lows that translate into an invaluable guide for anyone who wants to become a writer or anyone who is already a writer but doesn’t know how to take the next step toward the writing life.

In the sections The Decision to Become a Writer, Education and the Writer, Getting Published, Publicity, Employment for Writers, and The Writer’s Life, McNally wrestles with writing degrees and graduate programs, the nuts and bolts of agents and query letters and critics, book signings and other ways to promote your book, alcohol and other home remedies, and jobs for writers from adjunct to tenure-track. Chapters such as “What Have You Ever Done That’s Worth Writing About?” “Can Writing Be Taught?” “Rejection: Putting It in Perspective,” “Writing as a Competitive Sport,” “Seven Types of MLA Interview Committees,” “Money and the Writer,” and the all-important “Talking about Writing vs. Writing” cover a vast range of writerly topics from learning your craft to making a living at it. McNally acts as the writer’s friendly drill sergeant, relentlessly honest but bracingly cheerful as he issues his curmudgeonly marching orders. Alternately cranky and philosophical, full of to-the-point anecdotes and honest advice instead of wonkish facts and figures, *The Creative Writer’s Survival Guide* is a snarky, truthful, and immensely helpful map to being a writer in today’s complex world.

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