



# The Writing Life: Writers On How They Think And Work

By Marie Arana



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Featuring a gathering of more than fifty of contemporary literature's finest voices, this volume will enchant, move, and inspire readers with its tales of *The Writing Life*. In it, authors divulge professional secrets: how they first discovered they were writers, how they work, how they deal with the myriad frustrations and delights a writer's life affords. Culled from ten years of the distinguished *Washington Post* column of the same name, *The Writing Life* highlights an eclectic group of luminaries who have wildly varied stories to tell, but who share this singularly beguiling career. Here are their pleasures as well as their peeves; revelations of their deepest fears; dramas of triumphs and failures; insights into the demands and rewards.

Each piece is accompanied by a brief and vivid biography of the writer by *Washington Post Book World* editor Marie Arana who also provides an introduction to the collection. The result is a rare view from the inside: a close examination of writers' concerns about the creative process and the place of literature in America. For anyone interested in the making of fiction and nonfiction, here is a fascinating vantage on the writer's world--an indispensable guide to the craft.

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## **The Writing Life: Writers On How They Think And Work By Marie Arana Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #250020 in Books
- Brand: Arana, Marie (EDT)
- Published on: 2003-05-08
- Released on: 2003-05-08
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x 1.00" w x 5.25" l, 1.05 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 426 pages

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### Editorial Review

#### From Publishers Weekly

Arana instituted the "Writing Life" column at the *Washington Post Book World* in 1993 shortly after assuming the editorial reins, and she collates here articles from several top names she's enlisted as contributors over the past decade. Her lavish introductions sometimes run nearly as long as the essays; after the buildup she provides Stanley Elkin, though, his vacuous rambling is a severe disappointment. There are other notable clunkers: James Michener recalls banal advice he has given aspiring writers, while Joanna Trollope's essay, though excellently written, says little more than that creative writing courses might be able to teach writing, but they can't teach creativity. But the best contributions make slogging through the worst worthwhile. Some of the better stories are already well known: Ray Bradbury's account of how he came to write the screenplay for *Moby-Dick*, for example, or Donald E. Westlake's story of the creation of the pseudonym Richard Stark for his hard-boiled novels. But there are new treasures to discover as well. Jane Smiley discusses why she disavows her most famous novel, *A Thousand Acres*: "I am no longer attracted to the dire mechanism of tragedy," while Julian Barnes turns in a droll account of his experience as literary executor for close friend Dodie Smith. Though some of the authors do pass on practical wisdom to would-be writers, this collection is ideally suited for those who want to enjoy the "literary life" vicariously.

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#### From Booklist

From Mary Higgins Clark to David Halberstam, 55 writers talk about where they get their ideas and how they make them into books. Some of the voices are flat, betraying the authors' discomfort with speaking publicly on matters of private inspiration. With others, there's a different problem: they've done this kind of thing so often they have little new to say. But many are brilliant. Julia Alvarez tells how she found her Latino voice when she read Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (1976). Anita Desai writes movingly about being "bicultural, adrift, and wandering." Ray Bradbury is exuberant about the inspiration he finds in movies, Shakespeare, and Melville. The essays first appeared in the *Washington Post Book World* over the last 10 years, and best of all are editor Marie Arana's introductions. Sometimes better than the writers' self-conscious pieces, her lively, highly readable, fairly lengthy bios capture each subject's essence and make you want to read their books. Keep this on hand for book discussion groups. *Hazel Rochman*

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#### Review

"A sprawling, addictive addition to a seemingly bottomless category..." -- *Kirkus Reviews*, February 15, 2003

"This book is truly good...What makes the book especially interesting is Arana's two to three-page biography of each author..." -- *Houston Jewish Herald Voice*, May 2003

"[a] splendid collection of fifty-five essays...For students and beginning writers, the essays are rich in useful advice and examples." -- *ForeWord Magazine*, May/June issue

"a fascinating array of talent and revelation... the essays are both instructive and amusing...vividly enlightening and entertaining." -- *Library Journal*, April 1, 2003.

## Users Review

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#### **Henry Jensen:**

What do you with regards to book? It is not important together with you? Or just adding material when you want something to explain what your own problem? How about your extra time? Or are you busy individual? If you don't have spare time to perform others business, it is gives you the sense of being bored faster. And you have spare time? What did you do? Every individual has many questions above. The doctor has to answer that question simply because just their can do in which. It said that about publication. Book is familiar in each person. Yes, it is correct. Because start from on kindergarten until university need this specific *The Writing Life: Writers On How They Think And Work* to read.

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