

Ten Minutes A Day; A Writer I'll Stay

Billy Bean

[@BillyBeanWrites](#)

Background:

I am a father to three young children aged 3, 7 and 8. My research interests focus on what can be done outside of the school setting to develop children as writers. I am also an Upper KS2 teacher with 6 years' experience in teaching.

Principle(s) in focus:

- [Be a writer-teacher](#)

Aims:

The aim was very simple. What happens if I write every day? I wanted to see if setting myself up with a daily writing routine outside of school would help me learn more about writing (Young & Ferguson 2020). If I am to be a writer-teacher, then I need to know - what is it, exactly, that I do? By writing each day I can begin to explore what being a writer is and build up my subject knowledge. I can then use this subject knowledge as a pedagogical tool and share what I've learnt with my pupils.

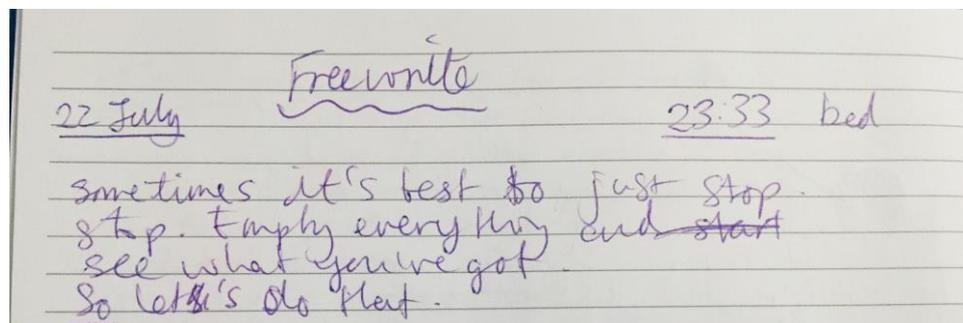


Description:

[Peter Elbow](#) advocates for writing a lot, and for writing every day. I decided then that I would try out writing every day for 10 minutes. I was sceptical at first but Elbow is quite convincing! He says that having a wealth of writing teaches you that you don't have to be so precious about it.

Every day, I set out a page in my notebook with the date, time and a note of where I am writing. It's fun to recall all the different places I write - so many! In the kitchen, on the beach, in bed, parked in the car. The time is interesting too.

It's so different to write at midnight than first thing in the morning!

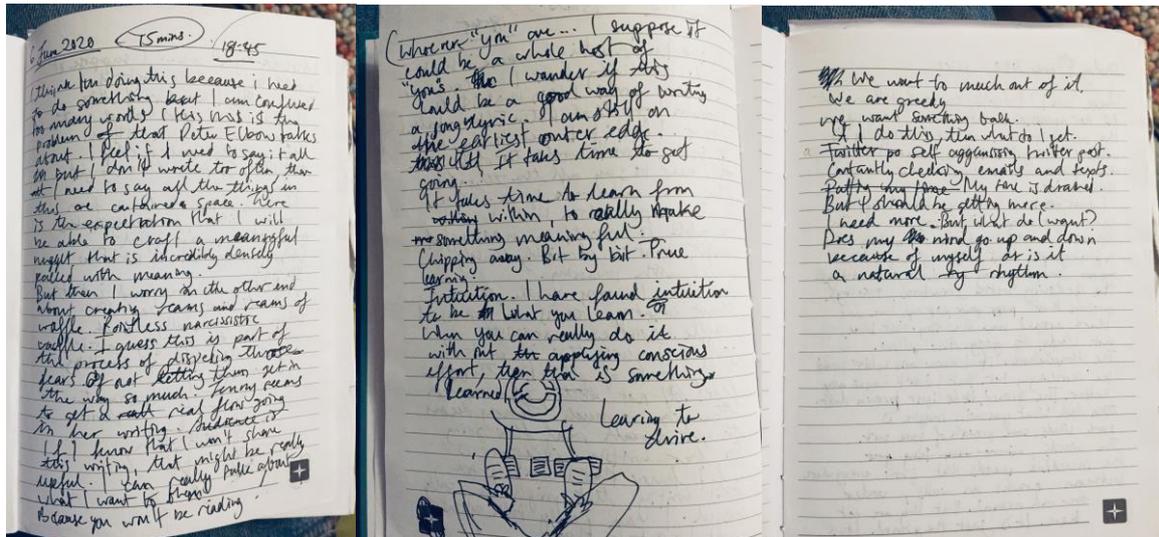


I spend 10 minutes putting down on the paper everything and anything that comes into my mind. It has been about a month now since I started, and recently I looked back at my first entry. I was surprised by what I read. Nowadays, writing for my 10 minutes is not exactly easy, but I am used to it. The first entry however felt really tense. I was really worried; full of questions about whether it was worth it and what it would achieve. Perhaps this is how my children feel when they stare at the blank page too?

Full transcript:

"I think I'm doing this because I need to do something but I am confused... too many words.. this... this is the problem that Peter Elbow talks about.... I feel, if I need to say it all but I don't write too often, then I need to say all the things in this one contained space... there is the expectation that I will be able to craft a meaningful nugget that is incredibly, densely packed with meaning. but then I worry on the other hand about creating reams and reams of waffle. pointless narcissistic waffle. I guess this is part of

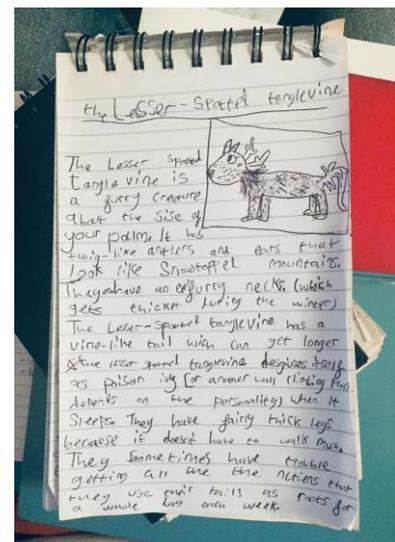
the process of dispelling those fears... of not letting them get in the way so much...if I know that I won't share this writing, that might be really useful. I can really talk about what I want to then, because you won't be reading. (whoever 'you' are... I suppose it could be a whole lot of 'yous') I wonder if this could be a good way of writing a song lyric...I am still on the earliest outer edge... it takes time to get going.. it takes time to learn from within, to really make something meaningful. chipping away. bit-by-bit. true learning. intuition. I think intuition is what you learn. when you can really do it without applying conscious effort, then that is something learnt. learning to drive. (here there is a little drawing of my feet on some car pedals) We want too much out of it. we are greedy. we want something back. if I do this then what do I get. self-aggrandizing Twitter. constantly checking emails and text. my time is drained. but I should be getting more. I need more. but what do I want? does my mind go up and down because of myself or is it a natural rhythm?"



It's interesting that I needed to not have an audience, that somehow the pressure of it being read by someone else is part of a block. Now I don't mind it being read. It's writing that's about being self-conscious, about what others will think.

Impact:

I am now in a full writer mode. I feel like a writer in the sense that I am constantly engaged with writing, and this engagement is a full spectrum. Possibilities for my writing become wider as I continue to write. By writing so often, I have experimented with all sorts of writing - poetry, memoir, explanations, letters, and a many fusions of these. As a writer-parent, this has had a direct impact. I think it is no coincidence that my daughter has her own much used writing notebook on the go too. We are both constantly on the lookout for writing!



Reflection:

I'm interested in continuing with the 10 minute low stakes daily practice. You can't decide when to have writing ideas but by writing every day, you have the best chance of catching them when they do come.

Here is something that I wrote recently during one my 10 minutes:

When you don't write daily, catching things to write about is overwhelming. You keep on thinking that you need to catch everything, but as you don't actually catch anything (because you are not writing) you get confused, you imagine that it would be possible to catch so many thing, you stop knowing what kinds of things you are actually interested in and would result in good writing, and you become inefficient and greedy. Inefficient because you don't actually catch anything. Greedy because you want catch it all. For a moment, then, you give up. You can't catch it all. You can't catch anything. You give up.

References:

- Elbow, P. (1998) *Writing Without Teachers* Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Young, R., & Ferguson, F. (2020) *Real-World Writers* London: Routledge