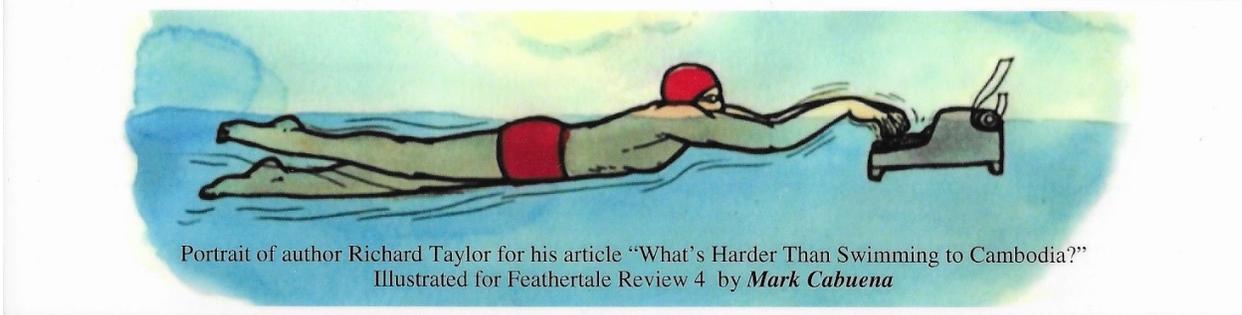


HOW TO BECOME A WRITER

By Richard Taylor

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READ WRITE PUSH



Discover and inhale your own eclectic tribe of spirit mentors, for example: Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Virginia Woolf, The Beatles, Stones, The Who, Gauguin, Ondaatje and company. Once you become a passionate reader, a listener, a taster and thinker, writing may become a natural outlet. Write as a means to travel beyond your own life. Capture moments of despair, joy, intensity, rapture, irony, pity (and most everything else), so that hopefully some of this may be understood by others. Because it seems, most writers share Jean Cocteau's famous quandary, "This sickness to express oneself, what is it?"

SILLY REASONS TO BECOME A WRITER:

Sex. Money. Fame. Power. Immortality.

DEMENTED STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH WRITERS BLOCK:

A lot of writers drink. They distil everything through their heads, hearts, and guts and foolishly attempt to turn it into words. Sometimes I'll do almost anything rather than sit my ass down to write. Sometimes I eat, do odd jobs around the house, study myself in the mirror, pace the rooms or stare out the window. Even when the juice is flowing and I can't wait to get back to my desk, the neurotic anticipation that I might be writing either great literature or dog shit leaves me so agitated I need release. Luckily I have my wife Dale, my daughters, housework and swimming.

HOW TO GET PUBLISHED:

Read. Get something, anything down on paper. Push yourself to your limit, then push harder. Expose your manuscript. Make getting published a life and death quest.

GENERAL ADVICE ON HOW TO AVOID SHARK ATTACK:

You can't.

Even metaphorically speaking, sharks happen.

No one is exempt. That's why striving for an authentic life is so important. By authentic, I don't mean proper, conventional, or politically correct. I mean you should seek out and embrace the poetry in everyday life, because you never know what's around the next corner.

Give little things the grandeur they deserve. Live it up while you've got the chance.

Richard Taylor, who teaches writing at Carleton University, has just published a travel memoir, HOUSE INSIDE THE WAVES: Domesticity, Art and the Surfing Life.