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INTRODUCTION

This book is intended to introduce the beginner to the basic skills involved in setting out on the road to success as a creative writer. Creative writing is a term that can mean different things to different people, but I use it here to refer to the writing of fictional or factual works in a variety of forms. If you want to know not only how to write stories or articles but also how to adopt professional practice as a writer, then this book is for you.

I am aware that some readers will be writing already, perhaps even taking a course at a local college or adult education center. This guide may be used to complement such courses; and even if you are the 'kitchen table writer' trying to write with peace and continuity after a day's work, then this will offer you staged workshops involving examples of writing in a range of formats and genres as well as suggestions for further preparatory work.

The openings for prose and poetry have perhaps never been as wide and diverse as they are today. Unfortunately, writing is also attracting more people as a hobby and a potential way of earning money. It is an easy matter to attend short courses and talk about writing, watch television documentaries about writers, read interviews and so on, but this attractive, sometimes glamorous world which the media creates is largely an illusion. The fact is that real writers spend a great deal of time writing - not being media people.

It may take you several years to find out exactly what kind of writer you are, and whether you are able to sustain interest, be able to re-write and so on. The topics covered here will show you exactly what demands are asked of you if you really want to make it as a writer. The word writer does not necessarily mean novelist. By writer I mean someone who can produce publishable quality writing in any given genre or format for a specified readership.

Whatever your own aspirations are, though, this guide will offer the basic skills, techniques and knowledge that are essential to success. It is particularly important that you take time over the questionnaire that

follows, however, because the more time you spend considering what you want to write and what you are able to write, the less time will be wasted producing the wrong texts for the wrong reasons.

The point to stress here is that imaginative writing depends, in the last resort, on a personal access to your inner resources, and these are a complex mixture of life experience, personal viewpoints and inexplicable visions of life as it could or may be. All this is rooted in the strength of sharing your efforts to understand the multi-layered perplexing creature, Homo sapiens. My personal belief, after several years of planning and teaching courses in creative writing, is that people will succeed if the talent is there, and the talent can only have a chance of being there if encouraged and nurtured. There may be innate qualities of course, as exemplified in Mozart's astonishing creativity at the age of seven. But for most of us, the effort and motivation make our best potential chances of success, and that success has to be defined in your own terms. It may be that you want to write only for your personal satisfaction, and that your work being read by others is not a primary concern.