

## **Finding ideas**

Salena Godden

When you find a new idea, you must fold it up and hide it in a pocket in your head. Never tell anyone you have found an idea because their face might ruin it. It could be an odd smile or a jealous glint in the eye. It could be an indifferent glance, a stifled cough or a fake and forced smile, but never tell anyone your new idea, because people cannot filter their faces in real life, that flicker of doubt in the eyes betrays and gives them away.

Never take a new idea for granted, and don't share it and dilute it. At least not right away; let it marinate, swirl it around, let it age and let the aroma and anticipation and heat rise. Another person will hardly ever love your new idea as much as you do. If it is a very good new idea, they might hurt it, monopolise it, criticise it, shrink it or squash it. The way they react or don't react might remove some of the sparkle and magic. For example, they'll remind you of boring and mundane and practical things, like money and budget and time and rejections and admin and application forms and failure and the hard work involved. They might remind you how hard it is to finish things. Starting things is easy – anyone can start a thing – but it is the endurance to reach completion, and doing the best you can, in spite of human error, challenges and setbacks, that is the real test.

Ooh, they say, that will be tricky to market and sell. Ooh, they might say, that will be hard work to get right. And then you are no longer in the heavenly light of the idea you have found, but rummaging around in the dark and lost in the anxiety of an idea being made real.

People are people and they just cannot help themselves. You tell someone a new idea and they might list other people or things that are similar to

your idea, so you don't feel special or get too big headed. I have written a love sonnet. Shakespeare did that. I have painted a picture of a swirly sky. Van Gogh did that. I have imagined that my ideas are valid. Have you got a budget in place for that? How will you make it pay? Who will you get to back it? How will you find time to do it? New ideas and visions and dreams are so valuable. Everything good and real and true had to be a dream or a feeling scribbled down incoherently first. Everything is impossible until you have done it. And anything worth doing takes all of your passion, hard work and temerity.

Imagine your brand-new idea is red – the colour red in your head. If you share your idea, sometimes annoying people distract with a list of how they see it or how they would do it; they say, scarlet, rose, vermillion, ruby and cherry, and when they put all those other tones and possibilities forward, it might obscure your first vision of your original idea. Only you know which red you feel and mean – it is your red, not theirs – and only you can communicate that, only you can tell your story your way. You see red your way, your colour red is all yours and nobody else's. So take your time when you find a new idea, hold it close to your bloody red heart, hear it beat and breathe life into it.

### **Salena Godden**

Born in the UK, Salena Godden is of Jamaican-Irish heritage and based in London. The poet, author, activist, broadcaster, memoirist and essayist has published several books, written for BBC TV and radio and has released four studio albums.

Published books include poetry volumes *Under The Pier* (Nasty Little Press); *Fishing in the Aftermath: Poems 1994-2014* (Burning Eye); and literary memoir *Springfield Road* (Unbound).

*Pessimism Is For Lightweights – 13 pieces of Courage and Resistance*, was published by Rough Trade Books in July 2018. The poem 'Pessimism is for Lightweights' was a public poetry art piece on display outside the Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol for over eighteen months. The poem has been donated to People's History Museum in Manchester, where it is now on permanent display.

Now in her fourth decade producing work, Salena Godden is a poet whose riotous poems tend to precede her, including the comic and political poetry anthems: 'My Tits Are More Feminist Than your Tits', 'Imagine If You Had To Lick It' and 'Can't Be Bovered'. *LIVEwire*, released by indie spoken word label Nymphs and Thugs, was shortlisted for the Ted Hughes Award.

Essays include 'Shade', published in the award-winning anthology edited by Nimesh Shukla, *The Good Immigrant* (Unbound); 'Skin' broadcast on *The Essay*, BBC Radio 3; 'We are The Champions' published in *Others* (Unbound); and 'Broken Biscuits' in *Smashing it! Working class artists on life, art and making it happen* (edited by Sabrina Mahfouz, Saqi, 2009).

Her debut novel, *Mrs Death Misses Death*, is published by Canongate.

A recording of this talk can be found on [writersmosaic.org.uk](http://writersmosaic.org.uk)

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