

Why I Write

Anni Domingo

I have always wanted to tell stories. Long before I could read, I was captivated by books, the feel of the book in my hand, the smell, the shapes of the words on the page. I loved travelling to other places without physically going anywhere, to see other peoples, to experience wonderful adventures. I became a fanatical reader, hid in cupboards, or locked myself in bathrooms so that I could read in peace. I tucked books in pockets or waistbands of my skirts, grabbing a few minutes of reading whenever there was an opportunity. I even bribed my youngest brother with toys, food and, later, pocket money, to lead me around so that I could read without interruption. I told made up stories to my poor brothers, forcing them to listen to my interminable stories, until eventually they rebelled.

Toni Morrison said: 'If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it.' I longed to capture and hold on to the feelings that books gave me. I wanted to continue to be spellbound by African characters who were not considered strange because they liked both ballet and goombay dance. I chose to immerse myself in an imaginary world. So, I started to write the stories, poems, essays and novels, at first without thought of having anything published.

I write because storytelling has become my reason for being. I write because there are things I want to say. I write about what annoys me as well as what makes me joyful. I write because there are many pictures floating in my mind, images of people I have met and visions of characters I am yet to meet. I write to hear their voices, their thoughts, feel their loves and understand their fears, for they reflect me.

I write to let me know I am alive, that I exist, that I do matter. I write to record my dreams and pray that I can make them come true. I write to face my nightmares, to set them down and thereby banish them forever. I write to remember, and I write to forget. I write to reflect on the past and to record the present. I write to make connections between the living and the dead.

I write to make others laugh, and to make them cry. I write to experience both ecstasy and despair, and to survive both. I write to enter discussions with friends and strangers, exchanging ideas, learning to listen. I write to show the political, social and economic nature of the world I live in.

I write because I love to be alone with just words, my reassuring companions. I write because I can build a world I can control, and I have the power to change it. I write to be with the people I create, for they are my friends, even the horrible ones.

I write for a thousand reasons. I write because I need to, I write because ...

A recording of this text can be found at writersmosaic.org.uk

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