



One Year to a Writing Life: Twelve Lessons to Deepen Every Writer's Art and Craft

Susan M. Tiberghien

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Whether you are a writer of fiction or essays, or want to explore poetry or memoir, Tiberghien's twelve fundamental lessons will help you discover and develop your own distinct voice. Tiberghien's inventive exercises focus on the processes unique to each genre, while also offering skills applicable to any kind of writing, from authentic dialogue to masterful short-shorts. With vivid examples from literary masters such as Rainer Maria Rilke, Eduardo Galeano, May Sarton, Terry Tempest Williams, and Orhan Pamuk, *One Year to a Writing Life* is an essential guidebook of exercises, practical advice, and wisdom for anyone looking to embrace, explore, and implement creativity in everyday life.

One Year to a Writing Life: Twelve Lessons to Deepen Every Writer's Art and Craft Details

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From Reader Review One Year to a Writing Life: Twelve Lessons to Deepen Every Writer's Art and Craft for online ebook

Linda says

Tiberghien's suggestions are deceptively simple and direct, and aim at helping the writer develop an intuitive approach to discovering material and developing it. The format seems perfect for novice writers but holds much for experienced writers as well. An essential resource.

Joy Manne says

"A writer writes." "A writing life is a creative life." (Susan Tiberghien)

One Year to a Writing Life opens the door to the treasure chest of a writing life whether you are a beginning writer, or an experienced writer in search of inspiration. I am a glutton for books about writing. This is among the five best I've ever read. It's one of the rare ones I use. I do the exercises to widen my skills, and when I need structure and inspiration. I come back to the exercises when I am stuck.

One Year to a Writing Life has many excellences.

It leads us gently and firmly by the hand down a wide and well-lit corridor of options, each of which is clearly explained through tips and experienced through structured exercises. I had thought of myself as an accomplished personal development writer and an aspiring children's writer before I read this book. Now I have a menu of options I'd never imagined: journal writing; personal essays; opinion and travel essays; short stories, the short short; folk and fairy tales; poetic prose and the prose poem.

The lessons have a logical and harmonious structure. They start with the promise of what we will learn. The topic is then explained and illustrated with one or more examples by outstanding writers. Their texts are then analysed for us to show us what they achieved. No groping in the dark. No guessing what the writer achieved. We are taught with friendliness and joyful, non-pedantic clarity. We are given timed exercises. The contract with the reader is honoured in every chapter.

And this is the most amazing excellence. Most writing books are about how their author writes. Susan Tiberghien includes some of her own writing - how else can the reader trust her? But One Year to a Writing Life is an invitation into the company of writers. Its generous recognition of excellence in other writers puts us among that illustrious group. We participate in a society of authors and feel their presences as we read.

They talk to us, teach us and encourage us and we know where to find them again. Every lesson has a bibliography (pp 229-238) and there's a bibliography of Authors, a list of credits and an Index.

A good writer finds the treasure deep within, births it and places it in the light: illuminates it in such a way that brings insight, inspiration and information to readers. We are taught how to use our dreams and imagination as resources. Our corridor leads us into the magic rooms where the alchemy of writing is practised. Without access to these rooms, writing is only words.

The language of One Year to a Writing Life is exemplary in its simplicity and straightforwardness. The book communicates friendliness, good sense and encouragement. It inspires me to writing again and again. Thank you, Susan Tiberghien for this excellent book.

R.M. Byrd says

This is a great book, one I go to time after time, especially when I'm stuck. It has just the right touch of instruction and encouragement, with practical lessons to get the pump going. A very special book.

Eve says

"Exercise: Write a second journal entry, reaching toward the depths within. Ten minutes. Look for a new title to help ground your second entry" (p. 14).

This illustrates perfectly why I was, for the most part, disappointed with this book. Ten minutes for "reaching toward the depths within"? Come, now. Having been in Jungian analysis for at least a year, I'm sure Tiberghien knows it's going to take more than 10 minutes to take such a plunge. Most writers haven't even finished their pencil-sharpening rituals in that amount of time.

This is a good book for the writer who is a novice, for the person considering becoming a writer, and for those uninitiated into depth psychology and all things Jungian. I do not recommend it as a primer for either writing or analytical psychology, but as a brief overview of either, or as an appetizer in preparing for the main course, it's fine.

I found the "lessons" (chapters) on essays, short stories and short-shorts, memoir, and rewriting the most valuable. I admit that I learned a few things. I liked, too, how Tiberghien showed the relations between fiction and the non-fiction essay or memoir. Both were nicely done.

This is the sort of book a person might check out at the library and borrow a few times for its occasional pithy quotes or its outlines. Though I'll keep it, I doubt it's a writing book I'd turn to again and again, as I have Brenda Ueland's "If You Want to Write," Or Stephen King's "On Writing" (a blend of essay and writing advice), or Annie Dillard's "The Writing Life."

I did love Tiberghien's memoir about her year in Jungian analysis, though. It was that book that led me to this one.

Jaimee Walls says

One of the best books on writing I have ever read!

Meredith says

I'm removing this book from "currently reading," the category it's been in for a very long time. I've had to admit I may never finish reading it. My approach has been to read a chapter carefully when I'm about to write something in a format, such as personal essay, short story, and so on, covered by that chapter. The book is helpful as another way of thinking about the given format. It would be best suited to a one-year focus, as its title suggests, but I'm too sporadic in approach to use it correctly.

Carlie Van Amerongen says

I think this book should be in every writer's resource library. The writing exercises in each of twelve lessons are simple and comprehensive, and never a waste of time. Tiberghien advocates using visual representations of ideas as well as written ones, which is an interesting approach I hadn't heard of before. I loved doodling my mandalas as part of these lessons.

Sarah says

Brief essays on a variety of writing styles along with a diverse array of exercises makes this book an easy one to pick up at random, when you're in the mood to write, but not in the thick of a project.

David Kent says

A great book to encourage writers to write. Each chapter covers a different type of writing and provides both guidance and exercises to follow. To get the full value of the book you need to do the exercises.

Carolyn says

Our writers' group used this book and found it very helpful. I personally found many parts very useful in defining different types of writing, offering exercises, suggestions, etc. My only misgiving about the book is it got kind of weird on me sometimes. I don't know how better to explain it other than to say perhaps it was a bit new-Agey or other-worldy in parts. I haven't read any similar texts, so I can't really compare it to anything else.

Hannah Jane says

The checklist for rewriting is very helpful and can be used for critiquing not only your writings, but the writings of others as well. I also appreciated the four steps to writing an essay and the structure of the short story bit. My favorite part of the book is a quote by Eunice Scarfe: "The seed of story is found in every genre, told or written, imagined or remembered. If we have lived, we each have a story; if we can tell it, we can write it. Story has the power to redeem, restore and renew - and bind us together."

Savannah Porter says

This writing book was very organized and it had a lot of good exercises pertaining to writing. However, the content was definitely different, albeit strange at some parts. I was surprised at the emphasis on meditation

and "letting your spirit and mind guide you" when writing (my quote, not Tiberghien's). It was a new view I have never seen before. This book is useful for writers who want to learn about discovering new ideas by reaching inside their soul. Like I said, this was not what I thought it was, but still refreshingly original.

Mary says

This book is organized into twelve sections, with each section covering an aspect or type of writing. The author is obviously well-read and she includes a number of good passages from other authors to support or help illustrate certain points, so overall it was a pleasant read, but I think it lacked detail enough to support the claim of the title. The exercises were fairly simple (e.g., Start to write a short-short. Fifteen minutes.), and there weren't enough of them to justify spending a month on each section. Still though, this would be a very gentle introduction to writing for someone who isn't exactly sure where to start, and the author provides a very detailed bibliography for further information/inspiration.

Jan Kellis says

I know, I know, I already have a writing life! I write every day. I have 7 published books. BUT, I still love reading about the craft of writing and picking up a tip or two from other authors. I have an entire shelf (well, half a bookcase) dedicated to books about writing. Reading about writing is one of my favorite things.

This book is split up into twelve different types of writing, and each chapter contains several exercises within that type. For instance, there's journal writing, essay writing, travel essay writing, folk lore and fables, short stories, etc. There's something here for every type of writer, would-be writer, or someone just looking for a little literary inspiration.

Jude says

This, for me, is such a difficult book to write about objectively simply because there were so many things I looooooathed about it. Firstly, the title. Now call me pedantic but it implies that in one year this book will significantly enhance any writer's professional credentials, an implication which is simply not backed up by the simplistic nature of the book itself. This book caters for beginners (reiterated by the annoyingly simple and MAGNIFICENTLY boring exercises) and, while there's nothing wrong with that, don't imply you are making Norman Mailers of us all just yet. Secondly, Tiberghien includes such hippie tosh as drawing mandalas in one's personal journal, the purpose of which is to 'enter this center [where] you are at one with the universe.'

I am not even going to dignify that sentence with an answer....

Thirdly, this book was infuriatingly patronising even to beginners. 'The essay has a personal voice and is written in the first person...' Wowza, someone get Captain Obvious a medal! And this is a book aimed at intelligent and creative adults?? Finally, and perhaps most unforgivable of all, the best writing in the whole book happens to be work borrowed from other writers along with some magnificent quotes. Still, to end on a positive note, we can applaud Tiberghien on her anthology-making skills at the very least.

