



The Modern Library Writer's Workshop: A Guide to the Craft of Fiction (Modern Library Paperbacks)

By Stephen Koch

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“Make [your] characters want something right away—even if it’s only a glass of water. Characters paralyzed by the meaninglessness of modern life still have to drink water from time to time.” —**Kurt Vonnegut**

“‘The cat sat on the mat’ is not the beginning of a story, but ‘the cat sat on the dog’s mat’ is.” —**John Le Carré**

Nothing is more inspiring for a beginning writer than listening to masters of the craft talk about the writing life. But if you can’t get Vladimir Nabokov, Virginia Woolf, and Gabriel García Márquez together at the Algonquin, *The Modern Library Writer’s Workshop* gives you the next best thing. Stephen Koch, former chair of Columbia University’s graduate creative writing program, presents a unique guide to the craft of fiction. Along with his own lucid observations and commonsense techniques, he weaves together wisdom, advice, and inspiring commentary from some of our greatest writers. Taking you from the moment of inspiration (keep a notebook with you at all times), to writing a first draft (do it quickly! you can always revise later), to figuring out a plot (plot always serves the story, not vice versa), Koch is a benevolent mentor, glad to dispense sound advice when you need it most. *The Modern Library Writer’s Workshop* belongs on every writer’s shelf, to be picked up and pored over for those moments when the muse needs a little help finding her way.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

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Editorial Review

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There's no shortage of writing guides available, but Koch's is especially valuable as it collects the comments and thoughts of such writers as Anthony Trollope, Gabriel García Marquez, and Stephen King, in addition to his own sage advice. Koch, who taught at Columbia University's writing program, divides his book into the stages of the writing process. "Begin right now," he urges his readers. He goes over the basics, such as the importance of reading, the difficulty of finding time to write, and the importance of plot, with the added bonus of backing quotes from writers who have been around the block and found success. Learning that Toni Morrison, too, had to balance work and writing, or that Ray Bradbury writes six or seven drafts of each of his stories, is bound to buoy struggling writers. One thing he avoids is talking about the difficulties of a writer's life--a student sagely advised him to leave that to everyone else. Koch's tone is both encouraging and forthright, and his accessible, friendly guide will be essential for aspiring writers. *Kristine Huntley*

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Review

"An extraordinarily comprehensive and practical work by a master craftsman and a master analyst of the craft." —**Madison Smartt Bell**, author of *All Souls' Rising* and *Anything Goes*

"Stephen Koch was my teacher long ago. Now he is everyone's teacher, indelibly. This is a book not just for the beginning writer but for every writer." —**Martha McPhee**, author of the National Book Award nominee *Gorgeous Lies*

"*The Modern Library Writer's Workshop* is a treasure trove of wisdom, both immensely practical and philosophical, entertaining and thought-provoking. Koch takes us inside the writing process, and it is impossible not to emerge transformed." —**Joanna Hershon**, author of *Swimming*

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From the Inside Flap

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Robert King:

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