

Discursive Composition - 'Writer's Dilemma'

1. Staring at the Blank Page

In the vast landscape of creativity, where ideas blossom like wildflowers, and words flow like rapid streams, there exists a peculiar desert. A barren expanse, as white and as intimidating as a blizzard-stricken mountain, yet as empty as the vacuum of space. This is the Sahara of the Scribe, the Arctic of the Author, where sentences go to die and verbs vanish into thin air. Its Name? The Blank Page. Its victim? Yours truly, a once prolific penman, now ensnared by the mysterious, yet universally dreaded affliction known as writer's block.

This block, this treacherous trap, has a certain shape, a form, a presence. It resembles, I often think, a maze - a convoluted structure of hesitancy and uncertainty, filled with dead ends of unfinished thoughts and corridors of unexpressed emotions. Each turn promises an escape, a sudden bout of creativity that'll set you free, but it only leads you deeper into its enigmatic jaws.

The writer, with a heart full of stories but a page of empty words, stands at the precipice of this maze. They are Icarus, on the brink of a glorious flight, and yet, their knees give out, stricken by the fear of flying too close to the sun.

I offer you two paths:

2. The path of Perfectionism

Perfection is a double-edged sword. On one hand it guides writers towards the essence of their craft, the picture perfect emblem of the philosopher's stone. A piece that's not just well written, but perfectly so. Every word chosen with care, every sentence constructed with precision. But on the other hand, it's a fantasy, an unattainable illusion that seems so tantalisingly close, and yet, is lightyears away. The constant pursuit of perfection can lead to paralysis, a hesitancy to write down anything less than flawless.

Perfectionism is somewhat of an obsession, one that imprisons the writer, it is a resolute demand. It comes in the form of an unforgiving critic seated on the writer's shoulder, scrutinising every word, every punctuation, every rhythm. It places the writer on a pedestal of their own making, one that they fear to fall from. It's the fear of misplacement, awkward phrasing, a weak

metaphor that blocks the writer's path; the fear transforms the blank page into an intimidating maze.

But still, some writers swear by perfection, they recognise that their work is a craft to be honed. This perspective appreciates the beauty of a well crafted sentence, the rhythm of eloquent prose, and the artistry that can elevate a piece from good to great. The aim, then, is to create a piece that resonates, that evokes emotion, that leaves a lasting mark on the reader.

This path is one of discipline; Its stringent requirements force the writer to produce their best work. It's a dance with the devil that can lead to extraordinary heights or steep falls. It's a dance that, though exhausting, is ultimately fulfilling.

Yet, while the pursuit of perfection may lead to paralysis, there's an alternative approach that offers a reprieve: freestyle writing.

3. The path of Freestyle

Writers have forgotten what it means to, well, *write*. To put it simply: racing a pen across a page, avidly clicking keyboard keys. This perspective urges authors to embrace the very essence of writing - the spontaneous eruption of thoughts, the unrestrained flow of ideas, and the unplanned twists and turns that a story can take.

Embracing freestyle is like diving headfirst into a roaring river of creativity and being swept by the currents of inspiration. It's to recognise that a story, like life, has its own unique rhythm, an organic pace that does not follow the methodical ticking of a clock. To write in this way imitates the beauty and imperfections of human speech, comforting the reader with a more natural and innate tone. It's to permit the ink to flow freely, to morph and take shape, to grow and evolve, without the constraints of a predetermined plot or the harsh critique of the inner self.

Freestyle doesn't mean to disregard all the rules, instead, it means to not be limited by them. The lines can be raw, the syntax irregular, the metaphors vivid, but in essence, it's authentic, unfiltered, and alive. It's to sculpt a narrative, and to do so instinctively, without overthinking.

Of course, this path has its own set of challenges; The author has to risk the potential of getting lost in their thoughts and it demands trust in their instincts and voice. Straying from

perfectionism in this way is not the absence of effort, but rather, a different kind of effort - one that leans into the unexpected, the spontaneous, the chaotic - promising an exciting and unexpected outcome.

Freestyle writing, in its liberated form, can serve as a lifeline to a writer trapped in the maze of perfectionism.

4. In the End, the Page Fills.

As writers, we traverse between the mazes of perfectionism and the liberating currents of freestyle, each path offering its own challenges and rewards. In the end, it's not about choosing one over the other, but about understanding when to let perfection guide us and when to let the pen run wild. Only then can we truly conquer the intimidating blank page.

Word Count: 868

Reflection

In my discursive piece, 'Writer's Dilemma', I utilised creative language to elevate the discursive form, thus enhancing the communication of my insights on two distinct writing modes, perfectionism and freestyle, as solutions to writer's block. I took inspiration from Zadie Smith's 'That Crafty Feeling', particularly her use of dichotomy, authorial narration, and metaphorical narration. These stylistic elements supported my ideas, allowing for an unbiased view of both writing modes.

The depiction of the 'path of perfectionism' and the 'path of freestyle' helped me articulate different methods to overcome the 'intimidating blank page'. To inform the audience about these writing approaches, I presented these paths as a dichotomy, similar to Zadie Smith's comparison of the 'macro manager' and 'micro planner'. Furthermore, by adopting Smith's listicle structure, I was able to distinguish between the author's personal voice and the proposed 'paths' by making the voice more prominent in the first and last sections, rendering the author impartial, creating a more informative tone to the piece.

I implemented a blend of vivid metaphors and symbolic language to illustrate the challenges and rewards of each writing mode and to introduce the audience to the challenging predicament of writer's block. Smith utilises some metaphorical concepts and intertextuality in order to convey points; in my response I have taken this to the extreme by explaining most concepts in metaphorical ways to further evoke emotion in the reader. This can be seen particularly in the first section whereby writer's block is introduced as a "peculiar desert", "a barren expanse" in juxtaposition to "the vast landscape of creativity", metaphor and imagery further convey to the reader the seemingly insurmountable obstacle of writer's block. Furthermore, I used the narrative of Icarus as a metaphorical overlay to express the writer's struggle and vulnerability to writer's block thus connecting the reader at an emotional level; This, in tandem with the intertextuality of classical literature, provided an engaging and thought provoking definition of writer's block.

Zadie Smith's use of authorial narration presents itself as an inspiration in my work through the use of authorial intrusion. The introduction of the author as a "once prolific penman" defined the narrator; The subsequent intrusion of "I offer you two paths:", allowed me to address the reader directly, breaking the narrative flow and allowing for the explicit offering of two distinct perspectives ultimately clarifying the structure of the discursive piece.

Hence, through engaging with experimentation of Zadie Smith's use of dichotomy, authorial narration, metaphorical narration and intertextuality, I was able to effectively communicate ideas about the writing process.

Word Count: 422