

## **It's Not About You**

Many writers say, with great pride, that they “write for themselves,” as if this means they are a real” writer, in touch with their Muse.

Oh yeah? I think this is only true if you are writing a journal. But if you are writing to share your thoughts and feelings, then you are not writing just for you. Writing is a means of communication. All effective communication is two-way. When you write for your readers first, you must know what they care about, or what their passions are, or their fears and hopes, or their knowledge levels, and so on.

You need to find out these things because you want to elicit emotional responses in your readers. This is what will get them to listen to what you have to say. If you just slam your opinions and emotions onto a piece of paper, without knowing or paying attention to what your reader cares about, guess what? There will be no readers!

You might be tempted to think that your particular topic is something that everyone needs to know about. Maybe so, but no matter what you think, not everyone is going to be interested in what you have to say. So the first step in writing for your readers is to define who they are.

Okay, okay -- it is true that with written work, you cannot know for sure who will be reading what you write. But you can know who is most likely to read it. And you can also know who you want to read it. Is the topic of your writing going to appeal to men more than women, or vice versa? Will it appeal to people in their thirties and forties, or seniors over 65, or teenagers? Are you writing for experts in your field, or laymen? Do you want to “win over” the liberals -- or the conservatives? Are the people who will want to read your thoughts going to be intellectuals or jocks, engineers or artists, or of a particular ethnicity? Get as detailed as you want -- for instance, are your hoped-for readers middle class moms, or environmental activists, or people challenged by cancer?

Why is this important? Because you are going to tailor your writing to whoever your audience is. Different people respond to different kinds of words, different slang, different metaphors, different jargon. This does not mean you are pandering or betraying your own muse. All it means is that you are treating your readers with respect, and paying attention to who they are.

The reason you write is so someone else will read it. Always remember: it's not about you.