

3. Thy characters shall steal, kill, dishonor their parents, bear false witness, and covet their neighbor's house, wife, manservant, maidservant, ox, and ass, for reader's crave such actions and yawn when thy characters are meek, innocent, forgiving, and peaceable.
4. Thou shalt not saw the air with abstractions, for readers, like lovers, are attracted by particularity.
5. Thou shalt not mutter, whisper, blurt, bellow, or scream, for it is the words and not the characterization of the words that must carry their own decibels.
6. Thou shalt infect thy reader with anxiety, stress, and tension, for those conditions that he deplores in life he relishes in fiction.
7. Thy language shall be precise, clear, and bear the wings of angels, for anything less is the province of businessmen and academics and not of writers.
8. Thou shalt have no rest on the sabbath, for thy characters shall live in thy mind and memory now and forever.
9. Thou shalt not forget that dialogue is as a foreign tongue, a semblance of speech and not a record of it, a language in which directness diminishes and obliqueness sings.
10. Above all, thou shalt not vent thy emotions onto the reader, for thy duty is to evoke the reader's emotions, and in that most of all lies the art of the writer.

When you get the good news of a book contract, let me know and share the pleasure.

SOL STEIN

A Final Word

Whatever the effect this book might have on your writing, I trust that it will have made you into a more perceptive reader for the rest of your days.

I hope you will have occasion to benefit from the techniques that I've been passing on to writers for nearly four decades. In time, some of these techniques will improve your chances of successful publication, or if you're already publishing, will enhance your work. Hemingway said, "We are all apprentices in a craft where no one ever becomes a master." We know that's not literally true. Many of Hemingway's stories and some of his novels are masterly. He meant we can always learn more. You can return to this book like an old friend for guidance and support whenever you feel the need.

In the course of reading this book, you may have come to the correct conclusion that a writer is a manipulator for whom the end justifies the means, a teller of white lies, a deceiver, all to a good end. He is also a shaper of the destinies of the characters he brings to life, a creator of golden idols he hopes some readers will worship. Hence the form of the following advice.

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR WRITERS

1. Thou shalt not sprinkle characters into a preconceived plot lest thou produce hackwork. In the beginning was the character, then the word, and from the character's words is brought forth action.
2. Thou shalt imbue thy heroes with faults and thy villains with charm, for it is the faults of the hero that bring forth his life, just as the charm of the villain is the honey with which he lures the innocent.