

Facing the Blank Page – Han Nolan's Words of Wisdom

By Mary Wade

Han Nolan, a top USA writer, offered some incisive thoughts on the writing process at a Los Angeles conference.

When you face that blank page, say to yourself: "I'm not allowed to judge myself today." Approach your work with a beginner's mind. Have no preconceived notions - no expectations. This is a new story with new understanding. "A beginner is allowed to stink, but you never know what gems you will find in that garbage."

Once, after finding one sentence in a chapter, she threw out 200 pages and started again with that sentence.

Develop an attitude of patience. Give yourself a vacation between books. Use that time to refill and refuel. You can even clean the house!

She takes walks that help her to go inward. "I have cleared out my mind and have a place for new ideas." What you shut out is the clamour of the media and other people. What you let in is you. "Creation comes in its own time."

Han's Rules for Reviews

Han spoke candidly about dealing with bad reviews. Her first book, 'If I should Die Before I Wake', received a scathing review that left her depressed and she lost faith in the book. Then she decided, "I don't want reviewers to have that kind of power over me and my writing." With that in mind, she shared these comments.

1. I have yet to read a starred or critical review that furthered my writing.
2. Believe in the work or don't send it out.
3. If editors send reviews, you don't have to read them. If they are bad, throw them out. (Do you keep ugly photographs of yourself??)
4. Don't paste up starred reviews. This leads to how-can-I-pull-that-off-again.

Noting that John Steinbeck's novels all got criticized, she pointed out that we need to remember that once a book is sent out, it becomes public property. It is then time to move on to the next project. Move on! Move on! Move on!

Mary Wade is the former Regional Advisor for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators in Texas and a powerhouse of knowledge. Her top selling non fiction books reflect her vast range of interest and expertise: General Houston, Christopher Columbus, the Easter Fires and Tsunami (Monster waves!) See her great range of books at:

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