SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT WRITING

Thomas Sowell

> *Some young would-be writers may lament their misfortune in living out in the boondocks, instead of being at the heart of the publishing industry in New York. When I first started writing, in my teens, I lived in New York City and worked in downtown Manhattan. That is how I got my rejection slips back so fast. If I had lived out in Podunk, I could have dreamed on, in a fool's Paradise, from Monday morning until Thursday or Friday evening, before the brutal truth caught up with me.*

From time to time, I get a letter from some aspiring young writer, asking about how to write or how to get published. My usual response is that the only way I know to become a good writer is to be a bad writer and keep on improving. However, even after you reach the point where you are writing well—and that can take many years—the battle is not over. There are still publishers to contend with. Then there are editors and, worst of all, copy-editors.

Finally, the last hurdle are the book reviewers, only some of whom actually review the book. These people are all part of the gauntlet that the writer has to run, in order to reach the person for whom his writing was intended from the outset—the reader. All too often, you never know if your book has reached the reader in any sense other than the fact that it was bought. It could be gathering dust on a table or a shelf. In some cases, however, heartfelt letters come in, telling you that your book has reached readers in the sense in which you wanted it to reach them. That makes all the struggle seem worthwhile.

Read more by Thomas Sowell.