



NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR  
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## WHY WRITERS WRITE by Madeline Hunter

“Why do you write?” “What made you decide to become a writer?” “What inspires you to write?”

People often ask writers these questions. I guess there are a lot of different answers. However, no matter what their other reasons, most writers that I know would answer this question by saying, somewhere in their explanation, “I write because I can’t not write.” That is probably how they would say it too, double negative and all. It may not be a satisfactory explanation to someone who is not a writer, but every other writer would understand at once.

The urge to write is emotional, visceral, spiritual and compelling. A writer is not happy not writing. We tend to get a little surly if we are away from our writing for too long. One of the biggest causes of writer’s block, I am convinced, is the depression that comes from not writing. It becomes a vicious cycle --- not writing creates unhappiness that causes not writing to happen longer.

On the other hand, writing is a job. In some ways it is the worst kind of job. A novel is a big, long project with no intermediary deadlines and only self-imposed structure. No boss, no clock, no set schedule, no one to harp if you are running late.

Sounds great, doesn’t it? It is if you can work that way, independently, with self-discipline and without feedback. It is the greatest job in the world when the story is flowing, pouring out so fast you can’t hold it in. Eventually, however, there will be the book that is hell to write, where you slog through every scene. It may end up being the best book you ever wrote in the end, but no money in the world is enough when you have endured eight months of misery.

So we don’t write for fun. If we did, we could never finish those books from hell. Which isn’t to say writing can’t be fun. It just isn’t the reason we write. The not fun books get written, and often written very well, because we can’t not write.

I have figured out a few other reasons why I write. They are secondary to the big reason, and they may not apply to other writers.

I write for the thrill of discovery. I start with an idea, a sense of my characters, and the spine of a plot. The rest unfolds as I go. I like being surprised by my story, and following where it leads. I learn my characters as I write them. There are some writers who outline everything, do character charts, etc. That works for them, and maybe it would work for me. But I don’t want to lose the discovery, so I don’t do it.





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## WHY WRITERS WRITE (cont.) by Madeline Hunter

Then there is the ecstasy of being in “the zone.” This does not happen all the time, which is why it is exciting when it happens. The Zone is when I am so involved in the story that even though I am writing I forget I am writing. Total immersion. Timeless. Wonderful.

I write because I enjoy creating characters whom I would like to meet. I get to make them better than they might be in real life. I get to eliminate all the insignificant worries and obsessions, all the drudgery of life. My characters get to clip from one interesting event or meeting to the next without any of the boring parts of living. My heroes can be drop dead gorgeous, sexy as sin, strong, sensitive, intelligent, and NOT conceited. What are the odds of meeting a guy like that in real life?

Several years ago something happened that made me realize another reason I write. A crisis happened, one that shook my world. I found myself drawn to my computer, where a story started flowing. It seemed almost sacrilegious to be writing a romance when this deeply painful event was surrounding me. Then I realized why I was writing, and one reason why I have always written.

I can control my fictional world in ways I can never control the real world. Bad things don’t happen unless I allow them. Good people triumph in the end. Innocents never suffer. For all the surprises, nothing survives on the page unless I let it survive. One punch of the delete key and bad news is gone.

I don’t need a crisis to find solace in that control. It is, I have decided, a big appeal even during ordinary times.

Mostly, however, I write because I have always written. As soon as I learned to read I began writing stories, pecking them out on an ancient Underwood in the family basement. My feet didn’t even reach the floor when I sat on the chair. It was just there, inside me, the need to create characters and stories and put them down on paper. Then and now, I wrote because, like most writers, I can’t not write.