

Jessica's Writerly Items Ahoy!

Some of my favourite books about writing, and related to writing and creating:

- *What It Is* by Lynda Barry
- *Craft In the Real World* by Matthew Salesses
- *From Where You Dream* by Robert Olen Butler
- *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles* by Steven Pressfield
- *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft* by Janet Burroway
- *52 Weeks to a Sweeter Life* by Farzana Doctor
- *What Comes from Spirit* (Selected) by Richard Wagamese
- *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* by Audre Lorde

+ **Two of my favourite online resources about the writing life:** Writer Therapy by Sonal Champsee: <https://sonalchampsee.substack.com/>
Open Book Ontario: <https://open-book.ca/>

Some of my favourite short story collections; titles before maple leaf are Canadian: *Perfect Little Angels* by Vincent Anioke, *Mad Hope* by Heather Birrell, *The Other Side of Youth* by Kelli Deeth, *Glass Beads* by Dawn Dumont, *Kuessipan* by Naomi Fontaine (translated by David Homel), *Lands and Forests* by Andrew Forbes, *All the Anxious Girls on Earth* by Zsuzsi Gartner, *Pretty* by Greg Kearney, *How Does a Single Blade of Grass Thank the Sun?* by Doretta Lau, *Shut Up You're Pretty* by Tea Mutonji, *A Safe Girl to Love* and *A Dream of a Woman* by Casey Plett, *This Cake Is for the Party* by Sarah Selecky, *Islands of Decolonial Love* by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *Bang Crunch* by Neil Smith, *Ferry Back the Gifts* by Kate Story, *Her First Palestinian* by Saeed Teebi, *How to Pronounce Knife* by Souvankham Thammavongsa, *The Best Place on Earth* by Ayelet Tsabari, *Chrysalis* by Anuja Varghese, *Bats or Swallows* by Teri Vlassopoulos 🍁 *Where I'm Calling From: New & Selected Stories* by Raymond Carver, *Whatever Happened to Interracial Love?* by Kathleen Collins, *Break Any Woman Down* by Dana Johnson, *Birds of America* and *Like Life* by Lorrie Moore, *CivilWarLand in Bad Decline* and *Pastoralia* by George Saunders, *Honored Guest* by Joy Williams

Consider Doing these Things:

- Try writing early ideas in a notebook. Practise being on devices less, and being open to the world more.
- Get your own website (keep it simple if you're not design-inclined). Spend less time on social media.
- Attend other writers' readings at local reading series. If there's an open mic, bring something to read, but make sure to keep it brief (2-3 minutes max, or well within the limit given by the host), or the audience will probably become grumpy towards you. Attend local literary festivals too! And other authors' book launches! And if you enjoyed something an author read, let them know (either in person after the event, or reach out to them online). That will quite likely make them very happy.
- Attend small-press, comic & zine fairs (better yet—make a zine and bring it to exchange, or book a table to sell and exchange it); attend writing workshops and talks; and start your own writers' group.
Here is a link to a list of Canadian Small Press Fairs: <http://smallpressbookfair.blogspot.com/>
- Before submitting to literary magazines or journals, buy some different publications (or read online...but buy if you can because they need our support) and read fiction they've published to get a sense of what they're looking for, so you can send your stories to the places most likely to publish them.
Bonus Tip: Check lists of previous publications in short story collections you admire for ideas on where to submit! **Another Bonus Tip:** Submit your work to the litmags that published your favourite stories included in the Journey Prize series: <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/series/CHB/journey-prize>
- If the submission process allows, include a brief cover letter with story title & word count (+ brief bio), addressed to the correct (& correctly spelled) editor. Number your story pages. Include your name & contact info on every page (except with contests & grant applications in which work is judged anonymously). Double-space & use 1-inch margins with an easy-to-read, 12-point font. Spell & grammar-check your story, and/or ask a trusted reader to check it over. Keep track of your submissions, e.g. in a Word or Excel table (when & where sent + response). **List of Canadian litmags compiled by the National Magazine Awards:** <https://magazine-awards.com/en/a-guide-to-canadian-literary-mags/>
- Remember: personalized rejection notes from litmag editors are like gold! It's important to follow up and submit more work to those publications that want to see more of your writing. Include a brief thank you to the editor who wrote the note, and mention the title of the story you submitted previously.
- Support your local independent bookstores! They give so much love to their communities and local authors. Of course, local libraries are wonderful too.