

Top Writing Tips

My Five: **Daren Shiau**

Fiction writer Daren Shiau shares some recipes for keeping your writing juices flowing.

- If you write long prose, and have trouble sequencing your narrative, watch a DVD of your favourite movie and make notes on how the plot develops. For each new scene in the film, note the setting, which characters appear and what happens to them. Certain plot development techniques may become apparent through such an exercise. In fact, you may come to better appreciate what about that movie 'works' for you
- Find a two to three page passage written by an author you admire. Read it a couple of times. Set the book aside and attempt to re-create the same scene in your own words. Compare what you have written to the passage. As before, such an exercise may provide insight into writing techniques which the writer you are analysing adopts, and which contribute to your enjoyment of his or her works
- To craft realistic dialogue, listen closely to speech patterns, especially syntax and cadences, of people around you. These can be your friends, acquaintances or even people within earshot of you in public places
- Create an inventory of random observations, and phrases which never make their way into a poem or story. Pen these in a notebook. Such a repository might come in useful when you next experience a bout of writer's block
- Gather a trusted circle of friends who are open to critiquing your work on a regular basis. Avoid people who would have a tendency to only praise your writing, or who are habitually destructive in their comments