

## **Top Writing Tips**

### **My Five: Ng Yi-Sheng**

Poet, playwright and jack-of-all-genres Ng Yi-Sheng shares five tips for the writing life.

#### **1. Believe in something.**

This will lend power to your writing. It doesn't have to be a political cause: you can be driven by a belief in the power of love, or the importance of art, or the simple truth that we have to make the most of our lives.

#### **2. Steal stories.**

Can't think of a plot by yourself? Recycle someone else's tale. Adapt a story from a pre-existing myth, Biblical story, Ming Dynasty novel, Arabian Nights fairy tale, historical incident or family history. But give the original authors due credit; cite them in your dedication: say the following is inspired by the work of Mr/Ms Et Cetera. You have licence to be a thief, but not an asshole.

#### **3. Speak odd English.**

Of course you should be aware of the official rules of grammar, but also know that the language people use on the streets is richer, more bizarre and more exciting than the speech of official English grammar; also know that you have the poetic licence to invent words and abuse the lexicon as so many other writers have before you. We all have the right to write oddly. Exercise that right.

#### **4. Say yes to alternatives.**

Let's say a friend asks you to write a screenplay, but you've never written a screenplay before. Let's say someone invites you to collaborate on a musical, a comic book, an experimental dance performance, a text art installation or a translation project. You may be hideously underqualified, but when in doubt, say yes. Go ahead and explore new areas of writing. It's the best way to learn what you're capable of.

#### **5. Write under the influence.**

Try writing when drunk. Try writing when high. Try writing when sick. Try writing when heartbroken. Try writing when hormonal. Try writing when dangerously fatigued. Try writing when irrationally afraid of the world. There is more than one voice inside you. One or more of them probably has amazing things to say.