

Top Writing Tips

My Five: **Pooja Nansi**

Singaporean poet Pooja Nansi gives us a sneaking look into her writing process, as well as her writing desk...

1. Read other poets.

I always tell my students they will never be better writers if they don't want to read other poets. If you don't like reading poetry, or think you don't need to. You will never – and I mean never-be any good. People think poetry is easy, but it's an art like anything else, dancing, painting, singing. You need to understand your techniques and hone them and you need to practice. And you practice by looking at how other poets have used them. You've got over 400 years of teachers at your service! Use them!

2. Keep photos or things around that inspire you.

For me it is old pictures of my parents and grandparents because they always remind me where I come from, the stories I need to tell, the questions I have unanswered, the events that I do not know of in my history that led to my present. And these make me think about how I look at the world. It could be anything for you, a painting, a card or letter someone wrote to you, but something that makes you stop and listen to yourself in the midst of your busy day.

3. Find time everyday to do a little writing exercise.

One of my favourite poets said this. Give yourself half an hour in a place where you can write. This is important. Why? Because it's a discipline . If you really want to write,you must make a commitment to that desire. Does this mean you can't play around and enjoy writing when you feel like it? Of course you can. But if you want to know what poetry is really about,and if you want to do it well, you must commit.

4. Find your own voice but at the same time don't be afraid to experiment

with other people's use of technique and style. Read widely, imitate widely, this is the same as with any other craft, you need to know what tools are available to you, before you decide which ones you are best at using and which ones appeal naturally to you.

5. Live, laugh and be silly. Your deepest source of inspiration is yourself.

Poetry is about capturing experience, and the more intently you listen and engage in the world around yourself, the more you will have to write about.