

Surprising Voice

by Christina St Clair



Writing, when I started out years ago, seemed a way I might quench a longing I couldn't even name. I certainly didn't understand there was such a thing as voice which I now realize is an important aspect of becoming a writer.

Voice is defined as the author's style and is something many fiction-writing teachers believe emerges over time. I would add that finding one's voice is more than learning to write well: for me it's been about meaning, purpose, and personal authenticity.

When I was at my father's funeral in England, I began telling stories to my small nephews. It seemed to me perhaps I could turn this interest in story-telling into an energizing way of making my living. My job as a chemist no longer satisfied me. It never really had. It paid the bills though. How hard could it be to write for children, I thought? I became convinced my words would be worthwhile enough for people to pay me money, enabling me to live freely, roam the world, and never again have to work in a nine-to-five job. Success would surely come, but perhaps what mattered most, though I did not see it at the time, was not money but a deeper life.



Learning the "trade" is an important way to hone one's skills and understand the publishing process. I began with children's novels which I wrote feverishly, full of excitement. I studied the genre, I attended workshops, I went to writers' conferences, I joined the SCBWI, and I constantly read the best in children's literature.

Submission to publishers includes targeting your market, and writing great cover letters. I learned this the hard way, often randomly sending out manuscripts and not creating remarkable cover letters to pitch my work. I got better but in spite of years of effort, the result was hardly any affirmation, and certainly no novels accepted for publication by major publishers. Eventually, I won a monetary award for a YA historical fiction novel, which convinced me my novel would find a good publisher. It did not. Could it be that my voice hadn't emerged? Perhaps. Or maybe my goal of earning a living by writing novels was unrealistic? Probably. But that's no reason to give up. You never know where your writing life will lead you.



I have been surprised to discover my voice emerging through blogging. I love writing short quirky anecdotes about all sorts of things that interest me. And I love images to enhance the text. It is not only a good way to promote work, but also a forum for ideas and suggestions for others.

I recently started a new blog which is a lot of fun. Take a look xyzwords.com/blog

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Christina St Clair invites you to explore her latest website: www.xyzwords.com/

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