

Book Review

Writing to Change the World.

Mary Pipher; New York: Riverhead Books/Penguin, 2006.

Socially conscious writers want authenticity and transparency to saturate every page of their work. They strive to teach readers how to think, not what to think. They connect readers to ideas and experiences that readers would not have on their own. Always, this kind of writing coaxes readers to expand their frames of reference, or, as the Buddhists say, to put things in bigger containers. (p. 23)

Mary Pipher guides the potential writer to identify what she or he alone can say. Our writing will only inspire action if it comes from our authentic self, our unique voice to be “discovered through personal journaling, regular writing, and other forms of inner work.”

Pipher discusses a list of rules for change agents to engage readers. These include respect; calm, reasoned, accepting tone; finding common ground; emphasizing hope; and timing – developing informed intuition on when to write.

She builds on her background as a psychotherapist:

Therapy and writing have a great deal in common. Both are highly disciplined endeavors, involving long hours in small rooms. Both require asking intelligent questions, excavating for emotional truths, and solving complex problems. Often, the work is ambiguous and success elusive. Wise therapists help clients to think more clearly, feel more deeply, and behave more responsibly. Wise writers often want to do these same things. (p. 85)

She not only provides useful guidance on technical and audience-oriented aspects of writing, but also offers many examples of Calls to Action. The most impressive of these is her essay **Mr. USA**, where she comments on the sad state of the world with metaphoric language and incisive humour.