MIRROR! MIRROR! ON THE WALL! AM I AN EFFECTIVE WRITER OR NOT?
A TEACHER’S REFLECTION.

When I was in primary one, I received a book prize for being First in Class and Third in Standard. The book? The evergreen story - Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Do you know that this is the first book which I have received? Today, it is still around and a much cherished memento.

Over the years, I continued to be awarded with book prizes, much treasured and my passion for reading continued to grow.

You see back then, the only library, the National Library, was a long arduous distance away from home and going there was always a moment of joy and delight for I did not have much opportunities to read at home. My parents were not avid readers and did not share the same passion as I do.
In any case, my love for reading and writing did not wane and I made do with whatever resources I was armed with and could get hold of.

Thus, when my writings were selected for the school's magazine, I was overjoyed and one might add filled with an enlightened sense of elation. I must say that the reading and writing habit also enabled me to be selected in debates, participation in quizzes and making speeches.

In later years, when my essay came in second in an inter-unit essay competition whilst serving National Service, the sense of fulfillment was considerably enhanced.

Recently, when my writings were published in a professional newsletter, I surmise that perhaps, I have come of age! But that would indeed be a foolhardy proposition. At most, I am just an ordinary person having the interests and perhaps the flair for writing. Coming of age? Who would have been so preposterous to think of such a notion?
Writing is a living art and has to be constantly sharpened, improved and crystallized. What is important for me is that writing gives me an avenue to express my thoughts, feelings and even my two cents worth. Is it not a marvellous thing? I mean this word spelt as WRITING!

**IS CREATIVITY AN INNATE QUALITY?**

Research has shown that creativity is not necessarily an innate quality although some people are by nature very talented and gifted in certain areas such as music and the arts.

Writers like Agatha Christie took her ideas from the criminal files whilst Catherine Lim’s inspiration for her stories comes from her ironic sense applied to her personal life experiences, particularly her childhood in Kedah. Many characters and stories are drawn from childhood memories, the people she has encountered and things she reads (Wicks P, 2002). Mr Goh Sin Tub who lived and experienced the Japanese Occupation also wrote based on his own experiences. Others rely on a figment of their imagination.

Thus, to indulge in creative writing and be the creative and effective writer that you can be, you can and should do the following:

1) **READ! READ! READ!**

There is no substitute for reading. You need to read widely and wisely for the right types of books for in this way; your horizons and perspectives into the environment and the world around you will expand. You will be able to creatively change the setting and characters to suit your story and for all you know it could be a masterpiece.

Therefore, continue to garner good ideas from the books that you have read. You can also emulate the effective styles of writing by writers; both international and local.
2) **WIDEN YOUR VOCABULARY BANK!**

There is a need to build your vocabulary for without an arsenal of effective and rich vocabulary, it is difficult to evoke interest in the readers.

3) **GET YOUR GRAMMAR AND SPELLING RIGHT**

This goes without saying. A writing blemished by poor grammar and spelling is ineffective.

4) **WRITE WITH CLARITY**

Often, students wonder why they wrote so much and did not get the marks they had expected. Have they wondered it could be a case of one writing without clarity?
5) AROUSE THE INTEREST OF THE READER

An effective piece of writing should arouse the interest of the reader and should be able to involve the reader. The reader’s emotions and feelings and visual senses should be evoked. A writing that is flat is one which runs like a monotonous commentary.

6) PLAN YOUR ESSAY

There is no one so chivalrous as to write an essay without planning and thought. You need to be clear about what you want to write and then set a road map as to how you are going to move your story from the introduction to the conclusion. How does one get to Raffles Place from Woodlands? Is there not a journey to the destination? So, how one crafts the outline of the writing is pertinent and of utmost importance.

7) GO LISTEN TO OTHER WRITERS AND READ THEIR WORKS AS WELL

Learn from others! Listen to other writers and budding writers alike. By all means, let your writings have a second opinion or be critiqued. However, I must stress that the feedback has to be given by someone who can give you positive and constructive comments.

8) HAVE THE PASSION AND MOTIVATION

You must have the motivation and passion to have the desire to write creatively and effectively. Without the interest and inspiration, it would have been a much harder task.

The abovementioned pointers are not exhaustive but a list of pointers based on my own experiences and reflections.

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2000
Reference