

A Writer's Most Important Tool

As a writer, has any one of these things ever happened to you? You overhear a gloriously clever bit of dialogue coming from a conversation of strangers around a table in a restaurant, one that would fit perfectly into your next story but, not having written it down ASAP, you forgot it forever; You had an amazingly detailed and exciting dream, one that would make a great story, but you never got around to writing it down, losing it forever; You saw a three-car accident on the interstate that involved a van full of dogs, a car full of cats and a fully stocked Weiner Mobile but because you didn't take the time to document what you saw, the details of the hilarious adventure that ensued will never be enshrined on the page.

Yeah, me too.

But like most intelligent, cognizant people with firing brain synapses, I learned my lesson and finally bought a Journal!

Yes, the Journal...A writer's most important tool (after learning to observe). I can't tell you how many times my journal has saved my rumpass from the limitations of a bad memory and turned a decent story into a fantastic story. Mine is a thick, black-covered volume with this on written on the front with yellow paint marker – "*GC Rosenquist's Journal.*" Inside, the pages have no lines because I tend to draw pictures of things that I deem picture-worthy (but don't fret, you can get journals with lines).

I broke my Journal up into sections and labeled the sections conspicuously so I can find my particular subject of interest easily. The sections are broken up into the following titles (not in this particular order)...*Author Quotes, Writing Philosophy, Things I Like, Things I hate, Interesting Dialogue, Details of Certain Things, Odors, Tastes, Sounds, As or Like Similes, Dreams, Story Titles, Great People Names, Lines of Poetry, Story Ideas, etc.* But you can arrange your own Journal the way you want in the way that's easiest for you.

I try to keep my Journal with me as often as I can but sometimes it's not possible so I keep a tiny pad of paper in my pocket and transfer whatever I write in the pad into my Journal as soon as I'm within reach of it. As a writer, you have to be disciplined enough to get this important information into your Journal while it's fresh because a memory is a frustratingly uncertain thing, even for those with good memories.

I've never had writer's block and the main reason is that I keep a well-stocked and detailed Journal. I suspect writer's that complain of writer's block don't keep a Journal and if they do, it's not correctly tended to. Any time I need a story idea I open my journal and there they are, ready to be picked like grapes off a vine. Some ideas date back to when I was in high school, some were added to the Journal yesterday – the point is that they will always be there for you when you need them if you're disciplined enough to document them.

Trust me, keeping a Journal will make you a better writer and it will make writing a hell of a lot easier.

Thanks for your time,
GC Rosenquist