

Dear (name removed for privacy),

I was a big fan of my creative writing class in college too. So much a fan I ended up minoring in it. I would have gotten a degree in it if possible, but the college I attended, Southeastern Louisiana University, didn't offer one at that time. Just my luck, they offered it after I graduated.

I like writing short stories and poetry. I'm even considering writing a novel based off one of my short stories called "Wal-Mart Made Me Do It." A few people have shown interest in the life of Matthew Corsair, the main character in that story.

But creative writing classes are always great to me. As you said, you get to know everyone better. What people choose to write speaks a lot about them. A writer has a voice much like a singer that is easy to recognize. The tools they use, such as dialect, point-of-view, setting, etc. all tell a little about the author. It's hard to write about what you don't know and make it good.

Thanks for the letter, and I'm looking forward to working with you this year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Michael White', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr. Michael White a.k.a. Saphrym

Dear (name removed for privacy),

I think I'll enjoy the class. Creative writing is one of my favorite subjects. I'm not a 12th grader, but I can learn from Ms. McAbee and from you students.

Poems are one of my favorites too. I love reading novels, but when it comes to writing, I just think a poet is able to express in words what an artist does in a painting. They are small but filled with tons of insight and emotion. Simple images and metaphor are very powerful when used properly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. White', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr. Michael White a.k.a. Saphrym

Dear (name removed for privacy),

I used to be extremely quiet. Then I was put at a cash register at the local grocery store and I either had to open up or be very bored throughout the day. My only means of entertainment was speaking to my customers and that's hard to do without actually talking.

Creative writing is another great outlet for things trapped in your brain. Conversation with people is one thing. Conversation with paper and/or a computer is another thing. Writing is a more permanent form of communication which, to me, makes it more powerful.

And I'll tell you this, although I probably shouldn't, but time is not always the best tool for a writer. I planned some stories for my creative writing classes that didn't go over too well. So I tried just having an idea and writing about it and it still didn't go so well. The story that worked the best in my class took me about an hour to write and all I did was start with the first sentence and then just took off. The ideas flowed as I wrote and the piece stuck together better. Everyone has their own ways of writing and that one seems to work best for me. Albeit, I did have to edit it some to make it even better, but as the best writers will tell you, a story is NEVER finished.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Michael White', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr. Michael White a.k.a. Saphrym

Dear (name removed for privacy),

What's wrong with Maysville? I just got here and love it. I know. I know. It's a small "boring" town. But it just happens to be a great small town to raise my six-year-old daughter in. She'll probably want to leave when she grows up also, but I'm alright with that.

I can understand revision being a tough thing in writing. I've stared at some of my stories for hours thinking, "This isn't going anywhere. Argh!" And many stories have died to such travesties. What I found that works for me is "freewriting." I don't know if you know the term yet, but it's just sitting there with a blank piece of paper (or blank screen) and starting to write. Don't worry how it sounds or the grammar or anything else. Just write. Keep writing. You can even write "I can't think of anything to write" twenty times if you want. But as you write, ideas start to flow. And they are ideas you just don't want to put down. Boring stuff may arise, but then there's those moments when you think, "Hey. This is good. Even I want to know where this is heading." Because if you care about the piece so much that you want to know what's going to happen next, then your readers will do the same.

Newspapers, magazines, books, etc. are all great. I've written for the college newspaper at Southeastern Louisiana University, and it was fun. I hope that works out for you because it is a great way to make a living if you enjoy it. But it's like being a teacher: Don't expect to make lots of money. You have to go into it because you love it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Michael White', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr. Michael White a.k.a. Saphrym

Dear (name removed for privacy),

I'll definitely enjoy learning from your class and Ms. McAbee. She seems to be a great teacher and I feel there is a lot I can learn from her.

As for what I like to write, I like it all. I've never written drama, but I'd give it a chance if I learned how. That's one area that wasn't covered in my creative writing minor at Southeastern Louisiana University. I've had a few literature classes where the class had to act out parts from *Canterbury Tales* or Shakespeare plays. Those were fun actually.

I really hope you get a lot out of this class. I love seeing a high school offer this class.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Michael White', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr. Michael White a.k.a. Saphrym

Dear (name removed for privacy),

Horror? Fantasy? Now you're speaking my language. Give me Stephen King, Clive Barker, Terry Goodkind, Douglas Adams (alright, so he's more science fiction), or Piers Anthony any day. Those are the guys I aspire to be able to emulate in the writing world. Not for their fame or fortune, because that is never a given, but for their pure talent and love of the written word.

Music is good. All creative people love music. It's a fact of life. I've never listened to Japanese music. I have an eclectic taste as I love all kinds of music. So I'd probably like it too. I listen to everything from Bach and Beethoven to Pearl Jam and Evanescence.

Poetry is a beautiful form of expression. Emotions are easily conveyed in the form and condensed in such a way that the reader has the opportunity to take from it what they need to take from it. Yeah, I said "need." Anytime you read something with imagery and metaphor (which of course poetry is filled with) there's this little bit of need in the back of your mind that tells you what you should think the writing means. It's what it means for you. I've read many a poem, and depending on my mood I've always gotten something different from them each time I read them.

I also love to write. As for your shyness of showing your work, you'll never be shy again after you watch a friend read a poem or short story you've written and you see them smile, laugh, or cry at just the right moments. There's just an overwhelming sense of accomplishment when you do that and you want to feel it over and over.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Michael White', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr. Michael White a.k.a. Saphrym

Dear (name removed for privacy),

I'm not cross-eyed. So you shouldn't be concerned.

Yeah. I understand the awkwardness. I'm feeling a little awkward myself as I am not writing just one person I don't know, but many. But we have something in common: I like to write and sing also. The drawing I used to be good at, but the skill left and took its bags with it. Acting is fun, but not a love for me.

I was 14 when my church had only seven people attending it. They asked if anyone could sing, I raised my hand, and badda-boom-badda-bing, I became the music director at the church. At 14. I quit when I was 21, but that's a whole'n'other story. I write better than I speak, but as I plan on being a teacher, that is probably going to have to change. I'm just trying to decide if I should get better at speaking or worse at writing (thick sarcasm).

I have the issue with my head thinking faster than I write. Even as I write this letter, I have to go back and fill in the words I skipped while I was typing. Or fix the dyslexic typing because I constantly type things like "ym" instead of "my." However, I'm not seeking treatment. I'm attempting to have the word "ym" inducted into the dictionary so I don't have to worry about it anymore.

I also type everything I write. Your handwriting is art compared to mine. Wait until you see my signature.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Michael White', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr. Michael White a.k.a. Saphrym

Dear (name removed for privacy),

Fashion magazine editor? That's rather specific. I'm 32 and didn't know what I wanted to be when I grew up until 2 years ago. I compliment you on your ability to decide on what you want so early in life. It lets me know that you will probably accomplish your goal. When a person decides on specific goals, they tend to work harder to achieve them because the hard work is actually done (i.e. making a choice).

Now, you've put me in a spot. You've just told me exactly what you want to do with your life and you're asking me what I want to do with mine. I told you, it took until 2 years ago to actually decide on such a thing, but I'll give it a try.

First, I want to get married and have a wonderful relationship with a wonderful woman. Wait. I've done that already. Alright, second, I want to have a child I can love and who loves me and becomes my world. Ooops. I've done that too. That's right. I actually accomplished my main goals already. Where do I go from here?

I want to teach. I want to impart my knowledge and the ability to gain knowledge to other people. I want to write. I want to let the words flow freely from my fingertips as I tap on the keys and listen carefully to the voice in my mind. I want to see Paris. I want to drive to Canada. I want to play the piano. I want to speak 52 different languages. I want to sail across the ocean. I want to fly to the top of the Empire State Building and hang from the tip like King Kong. I want to live.

Will I accomplish all of those goals? No. But I will love my family, I will teach, I will write, I will live, and I will be waiting to pick up an issue of some famous fashion magazine and find "Holly" signed to the bottom of the editorial on page 6.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Michael White', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr. Michael White a.k.a. Saphrym

Dear (name removed for privacy),

3 dogs that could talk? Sounds interesting and I'd love to read it. I love challenges also. One of my most recent challenges was to become a teacher. I'm working on it.

As for making your stories come to life, I can understand. It's wonderful to watch the faces of your readers and see when they "get it" at all the right moments. You can just imagine the blue cotton candy sky, the pink flowers with the green felt dots in the center as they're laid out on the dress of your main character, and the red leather shoes of the man standing next to her who's striking a match and lighting a sickly sweet cigar. And you can imagine that your reader is imagining the same thing. And life feels good.

Confidence is a good thing. Keep it. I didn't get mine until after I turned, well, let's just say a little late in my life. It's served me well since then, but when it wasn't around, life was not so fun. So keep it and protect it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Michael White', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr. Michael White a.k.a. Saphrym

Dear (name removed for privacy),

It's nice to know that you know what you want to do in life. Acting is a great choice. Comedy writing is good too. I'm actually quite impressed with the number of students in your class who already know what they want to do with their lives. They have found that one thing they love.

I love my family. But I also love to write. You can probably tell because my letter to you is getting longer and longer. Tonight, I have written every one of your classmates who wrote me, and I've enjoyed every minute of it.

I hope you accomplish everything you want in life and I look forward to working with you this year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Michael White', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr. Michael White a.k.a. Saphrym

Dear (name removed for privacy),

“People are stupid. They believe what they want to believe or what they fear is true.” That’s an awesome rule. Wizard’s first. Yeah. I’m a Terry Goodkind fan. I’m looking forward to reading *Phantom* but just haven’t found the time yet.

I get what you mean about your poetry being separate from your short stories. Poetry is definitely more from the heart at most times. The blood, sweat, and tears that are poured into so few words can be quite powerful. And it’s tough to do on cue. Been there. It’s not a pretty sight when I hit a mental roadblock because someone told me to do something. Normally the piece just doesn’t have the heart in it that it should. I’ve surprised myself though and wrote some really good stuff on deadlines. One of the best short stories I wrote took me an hour. I started with one sentence and flew with it. Ideas flowed. It was great. Hasn’t happened since, but I’m willing to wait for the next time.

As for publishing your works, look into the *Writer’s Market* books. They give tons of information on how to get your work published and they list venues (magazines, book publishing companies, and even greeting card companies) that are looking for writing. They also tell you normally what those companies are looking for specifically. It helps you to find just the right place for your work. They have a general version called *Writer’s Market*, and then they also have versions for novelists, short story writers, and even poets. They put new ones out each year to keep them up to date. You can do a search on Amazon for “Writer’s Market” and you’ll find them there.

As for the comment about publishing 3 books as good as Terry Goodkind’s, you and me both sister. That’d be a dream fulfilled.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Michael White', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr. Michael White a.k.a. Saphrym

Dear (name removed for privacy),

Thanks for your letter. Spelling and writing are very important skills. I admire that you know exactly what you want to learn from the class and I hope you learn everything you want to learn from the class.

Creative writing is one of my favorite subjects and I know that you will be able to learn the things you want to learn in this class. However, you will also want to take your other English classes very seriously as they will also teach you what you want to learn.

Thanks again for your letter, and I wish you all the best throughout the school year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. White', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr. Michael White a.k.a. Saphrym

Dear (name removed for privacy),

Being an unorganized writer is not necessarily a bad thing. I have enjoyed your writing in class. And actually, I've read Stephen King's *On Writing* book, and he normally doesn't have a plan either. He just asks "what if" questions like "What if a car came to life?" or "What if a girl with telekinesis got angry at the prom?" After he asks himself those questions, he just starts writing to answer the question. I've used that method a few times, and it works well. It's not organized, but it works.

Poems don't have to rhyme. That's the beauty of poetry. It's not really about rhythm and rhyme, although that's a necessity with songs, it's about putting as much information into the smallest amount of words as possible. That's one thing poetry is about. It can also be about being silly or simple. But I've been able to take a poem and turn it into a short story and vice versa. One of my best poems, to me, is "The Prick", and it also doesn't rhyme. But it has plenty of poetic devices such as imagery and double meaning.

Thanks for the letter and I hope you accomplish your goals this year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Michael White', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr. Michael White a.k.a. Saphrym

Dear (name removed for privacy),

You may read anything you want of mine. If you have access to the Internet, just go to saphrym.com. My writing portfolio is posted there. I'd love to hear what you think.

Many people don't believe they write well. Writing is a learned art though. Yes, some people have a natural ability for it, but others can learn to write well, and that's what creative writing classes are for. I think you'll learn a lot this year with Ms. McAbee. She's a great teacher and she'll lead you down the right path towards writing as well as you would like to.

Using writing to express your emotions is actually what most writers do. They show their beliefs, feelings, politics, etc. to the world through their writing. There's always a part of the author in their writing. There has to be. There's an old quote that goes something like "Write what you know." It's impossible to be a good writer and not put some of yourself in your writing. So writing about your emotions is a good start to becoming a good writer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Michael White', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr. Michael White a.k.a. Saphrym