



From Where You Dream

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Robert Olen Butler, with the assistance of editor Janet Burroway, captures his process of creating literary fiction in book form. The winner of the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction maintains that writers must think like artists. He emphasizes sense memories, much like Konstantin Stanislavsky's Method acting that transformed theater. Butler believes in writing daily, but for different reasons than others who recite this writing mantra. He also offers a fresh perspective on journaling, film technique, rewriting, use of sensory detail, and brainstorming, which he renamed dreamstorming. His unique approach to the use of index cards could revolutionize plotting.

A key part of his premises is that the intellectual side of writing does not create art. Writers who think tend toward abstraction, generalization, summary, analysis, and interpretation. He advocates writing from where the artist dreams, rooting fiction in sensual experience with the character's yearning as the thrust of the story.

Butler's concepts are presented through three sections in *From Where You Dream: The Process of Writing Fiction*: the lectures, the workshops, and analysis of the stories from his teaching at Florida State University. The lectures abound with compelling examples which clearly illustrate his points. The genuine enlightenment is revealed within the workshop section where readers feel transported to his classroom watching him dialogue with students as they apply his principles to their writing.

Mastery of Butler's concepts will not be easily achieved. While he urges a complete shift to his methods, most will find a need to strive for balance in adding his information to their previous knowledge of writing. The reader will have to ferret out his main tenets and apply them. However, the artistic power of his points makes this book worthy of repeat readings for writers who want to transform their words on paper.

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