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# Is Writing a Memoir Worth Your Time in 2013?

By Denis Ledoux

USA 5 January 2013. "Worth the time to write?" I repeated--raising my voice into a question--when a man said to me recently that most people didn't have a memoir that was worth their time to write.



"Not only is every life worth writing about," I countered, "but the writing of memoir is a healing and developmental process for the writer. There is something precious in the telling of every tale. And, I've never met anyone who wasn't happy to have a memoir of a father or mother."

Let me say first of all, that it is appropriate to consign some stories solely

to family readership. There is nothing "wrong" with a small audience. The value of any piece of writing is not measured by how many people—total numbers—have read it. This emphasis on size is a spin off of the commercialization of worth. It is a result of the creation and promotion of the "superstar" in our culture. Using this criterion, the bestseller lists should be chock full of classics in the making!

The worth of a memoir is better measured by the inherent value to the writer and to its selected audience. The act of writing will change you and your relationship to your life. Writing is significant for itself.

That said, I think that it is also possible to reach a larger audience. Below I will offer four suggestions to make your story appeal to a larger public.

Meanwhile, keep writing your memoir. The effort is worth it no matter who the audience is. Here are four suggestions to make your story appeal to a larger public.

1) Write a story that is truly well written and whose reading—the prose itself—will bring joy to your reader. To do this, you will need to make effective use of a number of fiction writing techniques including images, metaphors, similes, suspense, foreshadowing, and dialog. You can succeed at creating a well-written memoir that will bring pleasure to its readers.

2) Find what is truly unique about your story and explore that thread. Perhaps you were a prisoner of war or you have given birth to triplets.

People love to read about a personal experience that is different and unique. And it is highly probable that you have done something in your life that is unique—even if it is only during a small portion of your life. Perhaps there was a time when you tried to reconcile a liberal political view with a conservative religious group or perhaps you were afflicted with a malady that vanished when you took a special cure. Linger with your story a while and your uniqueness may come to you. Remember that the uniqueness does not have to appeal to the masses.

3) Set your story in a historical context. Perhaps you were the first person to do something in your group or community—the first man to graduate from a hitherto all-woman's college. Perhaps you were in the Vietnam War and you wish to write a memoir from the point of view of an ordinary soldier or perhaps you were a pacifist who opposed the war. Perhaps you were housemaid to the Kennedys and have stories to tell about national figures that frequented the house where you worked. To succeed at setting your story in a larger historical context, you will obviously have to learn about the historical context and be able to write about it with ease. Begin by reading about the historical context and from that may come your story.

4) Find the psychological/spiritual/cultural drama in your story. It often happens that writers can write about the psychological or spiritual unfolding of their personality and in doing so write about the "universal," the typical unfolding and development of a personality or of the soul. This treatment of your memoir sets your life experience as a possible model. An example would be how you became an artist or how you have had an experience of enlightenment or how you rose from rags to riches.

The value of a memoir is measured by the inherent value to the writer and to its selected audience pursuing the same sort of life. If you want to reach a larger audience, it is important to position your story.

These four possibilities demonstrate how to go about making an otherwise ordinary life into a story that can appeal to a larger audience. It is in the rewriting stage, as you struggle with the story that is trying both to remain hidden and to come out, that you will most likely achieve the insights that will appeal to a broader readership. So keep writing. It is possible for you to produce a story that is not only worth your time to write but worth someone else's time to read.

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From the memoir writing handbook, *Turning Memories Into Memoirs* by Denis Ledoux, to writing groups to editing, coaching and book production, Soleil Lifestory Network offers all the products and services needed to create a memoir to be proud of.

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