

Junior Cycle English Assessment Task

Writing as a process: An interview with Eoin Butler - transcript.

My name is Eoin Butler, I'm a writer. I write mostly non-fiction, so I do long-form journalism; I will interview people and write a feature about them; am, I would write occasionally about sport, about politics, I write pretty much about whatever I'm asked to write about, that's what I do.

I also wrote a piece about a local hurler, who was a guy that I'd gone to school with who had played hurling all along up the way through the ranks and then one day after a county final that they'd won, he had an accident. He fell down a set of stairs, banged his head and was thought to be... you know...he was thought...well he wasn't expected to live basically, his brain swelled up and he came back and just through absolute dogged determination he came back. Especially when, when, because he'd had a head injury, am, the doctors didn't want him to play hurling again but just through sheer determination, he forced his way back onto the team and played again. So, yeah, I've always written about sport, it's always something that I've enjoyed writing about.

FEEDBACK AND COLLABORATION

Feedback is... you have to be open to constructive criticism. Because, it's a little bit like if you're telling someone a story... I'm sure this happens to everyone... you're telling something a long story about something that happened and you get three-quarters of the way through it and you realise you left out a really important detail at the beginning and now the end doesn't make any sense...

When you're telling a story, you don't... you're not always aware of what you're saying the best way you can or what things are clear and what things are unclear and sometimes things that are obvious to you are not so obvious to someone who doesn't know the story. So having a second person, it's just like a second set of eyes, someone that can say 'ok, all this makes sense but I don't understand this part here'. Am, and that's really good, so you should never ever be afraid of or resentful of criticism, criticism is always, is always good.

DRAFTING AND EDITING

I might even think I have too much of a tendency to do this, I would be constantly, constantly, constantly re-writing as I go. Am, you can always see after you've written something, like, what I said there in 25 words, I could easily have said in 12 words, you know, and you're constantly making it clearer, more concise, and crisp. So you can always find that there are 4 or 5 words here that are totally superfluous and you just cut them and the piece is better for having lost them.

ADVICE

Well, I don't care who you are, something interests you. You know, something engages you, it has to, something engages everyone. And then the other thing I'd say is, never... never rule out, never think 'oh, that wouldn't be for me'. I mean, you know, I remember when I did my... as I said, I grew up in the West of Ireland, I played Gaelic football, but I remember when I was doing my leaving cert, I really enjoyed a Jane Austen book. And when I finished my leaving cert I read six Jane Austen books back to back and like you know 18th Century, aristocratic people – yeah, and it was mostly like, kind of, you know like, about which woman was going to get married to the best... I would not have been the most obvious candidate to enjoy those books but I just did, I just liked them, you know they were really witty, they were really well done.

So I would say, there's... never say 'oh that thing's not for me' because just about anything could be for you and when you find something that interests you, explore it, you know, don't just, don't just, you know, don't just walk away from it, really engage with it. Because the great thing about writing is that you get to talk for a long time and everyone else is listening, I mean, isn't that the dream...you get to talk, the things that are on your mind, the ideas that have been percolating in your brain while you were, you know, doing your work or washing the dishes, you get to give voice to them, and, if you do it well, people will listen.