

Swallowed by a Whale: How to Survive the Writing Life

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Established writers and beginners will find practical advice for their crafts and careers in *Swallowed by a Whale*.

Half of this fresh, exciting book consists of essays, poems, and illustrations, between which are compilations of professional writers' tips on being productive, getting past internal or external roadblocks, and getting published. Its diverse roster of contributors includes novelists and journalists whose tongue-in-cheek tips, like "never open with weather," combine with tough love excuse eliminations: "plumbers don't get plumber's block." The differences between their outlooks are as fascinating as their commonalities: one essay invokes Dorothy Parker ("Writing is the art of applying the ass to the seat"); another rejects the same dictum. The book's earnest expressions of commiseration and hope will bolster writers' confidence. Anecdotes and humor enliven the proceedings, as when Herman Melville is shown considering titling his masterwork *Ahab and Moby's Excellent Adventure*, or when characters in a quest novel predict their future based on a standard story structure.

A buffet of craft knowledge, *Swallowed by a Whale* forwards relatable, world-tested inspiration for writers of all ilks.

PETER DABBENE (September / October 2021)

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