

Little Prince Inspiration for Writers

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Every once in a Wednesday, I like to share a writing exercise. This time, I'm including some historical information as a source of perspective and inspiration for writers. Too often, we writers think of writing for kids as being something that isn't taken so seriously. But really, when you look at how the cultures of the world treat authors, that isn't true at all. The writers of childrens books are, I believe, treasured in a way that is quite incredible.

I believe it's because the books we read as kids are the ones that really shape our adult selves.

DID YOU KNOW? Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, most known for his authorship of *The Little Prince*, was actually a French aristocrat and a pioneering aviator.

The author's full aristocratic title was Antoine Marie Jean-Baptiste Roger, comte de Saint Exupéry.

Some incredible facts you might not know about this children's book author

- The Little Prince has been translated into 250 different languages.
- Currently, there are over 30,000 different editions of the book being sold on the market. Right NOW. Over 30,000 editions.
- Saint-Exupéry also wrote a philosophical memoir in 1939, originally titled *Terre des hommes* (literal translation: Land of Men), which was retitled in the English translation to *Wind, Sand and Stars*. This book inspired other movements: an international children's charity called *Terre des hommes* and, quite significantly, was the overriding theme during the Expo 67, the 1967 International and Universal Exposition, which is recognized as having been the most successful world's fair of the 20th Century.
- In 1944, at the age of 44, Saint-Exupéry disappeared on a reconnaissance mission from an airbase in Corsica. In 2008 crash remains were verified as being that of his plane. The cause of the crash is unknown, though it would seem likely that the plane was shot down.
- Today, there are inscriptions, historical markers for places he visited, many commemorations, as well as several museums and monuments for Saint-Exupéry and his novella. They stretch around the globe. Museums: America, Argentina, Brazil, France, Japan and Quebec. Stamps: Africa, France and Israel. His portrait has also been on the 50-franc banknote.
- There is a mountain peak named after him: The Aguja Saint Exupery in Argentina.
- Two airports and several schools are named after him.
- The author has been mentioned in several books, his life has inspired music to be written about him and his life, and both his personal life as well as his novella have been adapted to film.

Author of a Novella and SO much more

To say that this man is a national hero in France is an understatement. He has impacted the world in a profound and lasting way.

He wrote a novella for kids. It wasn't a book to just get out on the market, it was a work of love. He wrote about what mattered to him. Most of Saint-Exupéry's success and recognition has come after his tragic death, but he did have success as a writer - just not to the astronomical scale that it now has reached!

Those who he left behind all know about it, his success. He was recognized as a hero of France immediately after his disappearance. He had a deep and profound impact on everyone he touched. Not just because of *The Little Prince*, but also because of the deeply personal things he wrote in his memoirs. He shared what was deep down.

Your Writing Exercise of the Day

Think of a moment when you had a startlingly clear realization about the human condition, when it hit you in a quiet moment alone and changed you. These are the types of things Saint-Exupéry wrote about and that we can all relate to. Write about it for at least 20 minutes. Just let it flow.

Take a breath and look at it again, what you just wrote. Can you use this in a children's story? Do you dare be that honest, that bared, on published paper? Ask yourself: what am I prepared to share?

These are basic questions but I think as writers and illustrators it's essential to be honest about what it is we are willing to put out there. *The Little Prince* is highly autobiographical.

Be Honest, Be Yourself

When I look at my own work, I don't think I'm nearly as open as I could be. I would never presume to reach for the kind of status that Saint-Exupéry has achieved, but I can take my cues from him as a philosophical-creator and be inspired by the incredible way he inspired others around the world.

It is no exaggeration at all to say that illustrated storybooks affect us deeply and for our whole lives. It matters. Don't let other people call you a "writer" with air quotes. You are a Writer. Caps, not quotes.

Be real, do it right, get it out there: Writer.

Keep creating, no matter what.

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