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Because everybody
needs an editor . . .

and a newsletter



Just what the doctor ordered

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The Central Library at the University of California San Diego became the Geisel Library in 1995 in recognition of the substantial gifts to UCSD from Audrey Geisel after the death of her husband, Ted. His private papers are housed at the library, and a bronze version of Dr. Seuss and pal overlooks the library entrance.

How many times have you read an interview with an author whose talent you admire, the kind of author you would like to be, and been disappointed?

Not by the author but by the interview.

The piece starts amiably enough: Strong lede, an establishing quote, maybe a breezy description of how the author is dressed and what he or she orders for lunch (the best profile interviews take place over lunch because if the author gets a splat of vinaigrette on his or her shirt, it can be presented as a hint of the author's humanity or an indication of the interviewer's quick grasp of embarrassing detail).

But since you often read these interviews to learn more about an intriguing author and how to conduct yourself when it's your turn in the national spotlight, you know what's coming. The same tired question. Somehow, successful authors seem to get asked for tips on how to become a good writer, as if the author's quick advice could unlock the mystery for all of us, thus prompting a surge of good writing and the collapse of the worldwide book market due to

oversupply. The question might be indirect, or it might be obvious. It might be cloaked in polysyllabic flourishes (*Vanity Fair*) or gushing with adulation (*Parade*), but it's there. How does someone become a good writer? How? How? How? The answer is always the same. Anyone alive during or after the 1940s knows it.

**The more that you read,
the more things you will know.**

**The more that you learn,
the more places you'll go.**

Dr. Seuss. The answer is so simple you can see it with your eyes shut. Get books from a shelf or maybe a store, then read all the nouns, the verbs, and far more.

Many people have forgotten what they learned long ago from the Cat in the Hat, Horton, or Things One and Two. They also may have missed other advice that even Dr. Seuss did not realize he had encoded into his oeuvre. I can help with that. Here is the annotated remainder of *I Can Read With My Eyes Shut!*

**You might learn a way
to earn a few dollars.
Or how to make doughnuts...
or kangaroo collars.**

Even though Dr. Seuss (you may know him as Ted Geisel) owned a sprawling home in La Jolla overlooking the Pacific Ocean, and that property means he earned more than a few dollars, the above guidance should be taken literally. As a writer you will earn only a few dollars. Keep that job at the kangaroo collar factory, especially if it has health insurance.

**You can learn to read music
and play a Hut-Zut
if you keep your eyes open.
But not with them shut.**

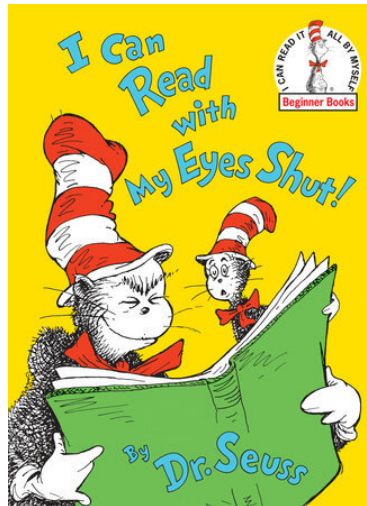
Don't limit yourself to language. Allow music's rhythm to influence you (speaking of which, Dr. Seuss often wrote in anapestic tetrameter, but you knew that). I foolishly didn't learn to read music until I was in my late twenties. While that eventually allowed me to play an instrument, I never mastered the Hut-Zut, one of the enduring regrets of my life.

If you read with your eyes shut

**you're likely to find
that the place where you're going
is far, far behind**

A passage that is one of the more literary (a code word for confusing) in the Seussian library. It might mean pay attention or you'll miss something, it might be praise for memory and how books read long ago can energize future writing, it might be a contradictory bit of rhyme that no editor thought to challenge. Or it could be about rear-view mirrors.

**SO...
that's why I tell you
to keep your eyes wide.
Keep them wide open...
at least on one side.**



As far as I know, only two rare instances in life permit the use of a cliché: when you are trying to locate a particular man named Nicholas in the Midwest and you realize the guy you want is the Nick who lives in a tiny Illinois town named Time; or if a vicious cat up and claws the tongue clean out of your mouth. I also realize that any urge to use a pun is inexcusable. Nonetheless: This Dr. Seuss book is an open and shut case.

The more you read . . . the more places you'll go. And be careful with the vinaigrette.

Glad I read that

Two from **Patrick Radden Keefe's** *Empire of Pain: The Secret History of the Sackler Dynasty*:

Marissa did not like the term “philanthropist,” she told the magazine *W*. She preferred to think of herself as a “social entrepreneur.” She made “social investments” and delivered keynote speeches and spoke in an impenetrable patois of corporate buzzwords.

*

Here was Joss’s predicament: if you imagine the members of the Sackler clan arrayed across concentric circles of culpability, she lived uncomfortably close to the bulls-eye.

**Kind regards,
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