

# *So What?* is pivotal to any writing

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- When we begin to choose memories and events from our life to write poems or memoirs on, a question we have asked ourselves is ***So What?***: “This happened to me. So what? What changed after this? What did I learn because of this?”
- In this lesson, I want to let you know that a *So What?* is not always immediately available.
  - Sometimes, the writer knows the *So What?* even before they begin their first draft.
  - Sometimes, they don't.

- Whether they know the *So What?* before they begin writing depends on whether or not they have processed the experience emotionally.
- Processing an experience = making meaning of the experience; knowing what they learnt because of it; knowing how it changed them.
- We don't always get immediate opportunities to process significant experiences in our lives.
  - Sometimes, the time to process may not have come yet.
  - We may need to go through life some more or require guidance in order to be ready to process certain experiences.
  - We may sometimes believe we have processed something only to realize later that we haven't.

Processing an experience is essential to writing about it.

The meaning you make while processing = *So What?*

But, it's not mandatory to process an experience **BEFORE** you begin to write about.

You can process **WHILE** writing, **THROUGH** writing.

# Knowing *So What?* vs. Discovering *So What?*

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Sometimes, I know the *So What?* of the poem/memoir I am writing in advance. This is because I have processed the experience even before I put pen to paper.

**Experience → Processing → Writing**

Sometimes, I process the experience through the writing. I discover the theme as I go along.

**Experience → Simultaneous (Writing + Processing)**

When Nidhi began to write about the first reading homework she got our school, she already knew what that day, that homework, and the book she chose meant for her. She already knew that she wants to write about it because *reading* had opened a door in her life through which she could escape her unsupportive family, her reality.

But when Anisha began to write about something she had struggled with - the fact that all her friends were teasing her for having a crush on a teacher - she didn't know the *So What?* to begin with. She only knew that this topic was calling out her name, and that she wanted to desperately write about it. She made meaning *while* writing, *through* the process of writing.

Aishwarya M.,

<https://www.teachingtenets.com/>

# Where do you stand with your topic?

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- Do you already know the *So What?*
- Have you begun to think about it as you're drafting? Do you believe you have begun to process it?
- Do you feel that this topic is hard to process at the moment (for any reason)? Would you like to shelve this topic for later?

## NOTE!

If you're processing *while* writing, please expect it to take slightly longer than it would if you already know the *So What?* before beginning.

Make plans in your calendar accordingly, and expect some level of frustration along the way. It is normal and expected and absolutely okay.