



Why I Write

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TODAY IS THE 24TH of March 2020. The day it all changed.

After a creeping sense of unease and growing panic the government has finally locked down the United Kingdom. We are in the grips of a global pandemic caused by the Covid-19 virus and all citizens must stay at home in a communal attempt to 'flatten the curve' of infection.

Everything has shifted, including this piece of writing.

When I started thinking about *Why I Write* my brain turned over the usual motivations cited by authors in interviews. The urge to write, a compulsion if you like, which many share, made itself known to me at primary school. I enjoyed creative writing and poetry and was published in my local paper at the age of eight — a terrible ode to a squashed orange. Of course, at the time I was immensely proud to have it read out in assembly and pinned on the noticeboard. This first taste of success spurred me on to pen and perform a play to fellow Brownies. Despite shocking a number of the audience *The Last Days of Anne Boleyn*, which included a seminal beheading scene, secured me the much-coveted Theatre Badge and my addiction to writing firmly took hold.

In my twenties I found an outlet in performance poetry and, with a troupe of fellow misfits, toured student unions, pubs and working men's clubs (with...mixed receptions). In my next decade I worked in publishing houses where I wrote press releases and marketing materials, and then



television where I reviewed and interviewed. It wasn't until my forties, when I learnt about the witch trials that had taken place in my home county of Essex, that fiction finally called to me. My research uncovered a catalogue of horrors, born out of 'othering' and intolerance, and sparked a desire to unearth these forgotten histories and bring them into the light. You may have noted my natural predilection for suspense and drama, hence it did not take long for the idea of a ghost story to present itself. A natural vehicle with which to explore the past from a contemporary point of view, I am now seven books in. I regularly speak about these injustices with Kirsty Brimelow QC, a Human Rights Lawyer, contextualising witch hunts of the present with those of the past.

That said, it's no longer hyperbole to suggest that life, as I knew it, has screeched to a halt. In this new environment, writing has taken on more importance than ever. I am now grateful for my compulsion, the routine and income it has generated, and the ability to produce work from home. But it is the escape of these four walls that I am most thankful for. My fictional world, centred round the Essex Witch Museum in the fictional village of Adder's Fork, is idyllic. Lucky really, as I'll be spending the next three months there. Peopled by spectres, witches, and the Fae it is far less peculiar than the real world right now.