



## The Perfect Place to Write

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Andrea Bennett

**I**S THERE SUCH A THING as the perfect place to write? Have you found it yet? Could you get in to it, or was it already full of other writers, mugs of tea at furious elbow, heaving and murmuring like a wordy, plot-peppered sea?

Is ambience all? Must you have an antique mahogany desk, a view of the mist-shrouded fells, a 40-watt bulb under a gypsy scarf and the aroma of fresh coffee? Or maybe if you're a crime writer, you need strip lights and eau-de-morgue; wattle, daub and pus if your bent is more historical? Would you get more and better writing done, if you had all this?

My view is that the perfect place to write is wherever you make it; just do it, as they say. The actual nuts-and-bolts-writing-chunks-of-words work probably needs to be completed indoors, on a laptop or at a desk, ideally in quiet conditions, with electricity. I have a desk. It's in the bedroom bay-window and looks out over a suburban street. I've written one novel and learned a lot about my neighbours since it was installed three years ago. The walrus-like taxi driver in the house opposite brings out his rubbish at the same time every day in a rumpled shopping bag, religiously sorting the recycling and the other. He never speaks to the weaselly scaffolder, resident in the same shared house, who stands on the doorstep at least six times a day to smoke and observe his souped-up, mostly broken-down mini. New neighbours are moving in to the downstairs flat, staggering up and down the area steps; they never stay more than six months. I wonder why? It's the detail and the possibilities that fascinate me and which go in



to my writing. If I wrote fantasy, however, I'd be world building, and this writing place might be really rubbish.

Inspiration and good writing don't just come from sitting at a desk, no matter how good the view. For me, ideas come in flashes when I'm in a hurry, out-of-place and usually out-and-about. Twists and truths present themselves when I'm driving a long journey or walking the dog. For ideas, then, maybe everywhere *apart* from the desk is the perfect place. As writers, we need to be prepared; recording our thoughts on our phones or jotting them in a notebook; taking photographs and recording sounds; doing these things while we're in the moment, because the feelings and words sometimes don't come back if we wait for when we get home to be at our desks, as writers.

If I'm feeling flat at the nuts-and-bolts-writing-chunks-of-text stage, I get out of the house to write notes elsewhere. The public library is a good place to go, or a park bench, a train, a coffee shop or a pub. External influences of any kind can stir up the flat and make the words jump about. I'm wrote these thoughts during Lockdown three, so all these venues are currently mouth-wateringly unobtainable. If we're still in some sort of lockdown when you hear this, well...we still have our one-hour outdoor exercise, don't we?

Like many aspects of life – think fitness, cooking, travel – we're sold gadgets, special clothes, lessons, retreats, sign-ups, trackers, apps and more to convince us we can't do the thing if we don't have the trappings. But I'd say that to write, we just need time, determination and a way of recording our words. And maybe a good vantage point for spying on our neighbours.