



MFA in a Box: A Why to Write Book

By John Rember

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Eric Hoffer Book Award Grand Prize Short List, and 1st Runner Up - Reference Category (2011)

Midwest Book Awards, Finalist - Reference Category (2011)

Nautilus Book Awards, Silver Winner - Writing/Creative Process Category (2011)

Part craft talk, part philosophical tome, part memoir, *MFA in a Box* is not so much a book about *how* to write as it is about *why* to write. In chapters that explore the relationships between the writer and love, grief, place, family, race, violence, and other topics, Rember helps writers dive deep into their own writing. He tells them how they can breathe down there and how they can get back.

"A big part of writing involves grappling with the terrors and discouragements that come when you have writing skills but can't project yourself or your work into the future," says Rember. "My hope is that *MFA in a Box* will help writers balance the despair of writing with the joy of writing. It's a book designed to help you to find the courage to put truth into words and to understand that writing is a life-and-death endeavor--but that nothing about a life-and-death endeavor keeps it from being laugh-out-loud funny."

"More than an advice book with a catchy title...Rember engages his readers in some of the issues every writer faces...not as problems to be overcome but as issues to be understood. - The (Portland) Oregonian

"Witty, audacious, and wise." Robin Metz, author of *Unbidden Angel*, and winner of the Rainer Maria Rilke International Poetry Award

"The essential truths about excellent writing." -The Judges of the Hoffer Awards

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Drawing on Gilgamesh, the Book of Job, the myth of Orpheus, his own life, and the lives of Ezra Pound and Jack Henry Abbott, with a little James Hillman thrown in, Rember (*Traplines*) argues that the only reason to write is to tell the truth about the soul-less, life-denying, nature-destroying culture we inhabit. This news simultaneously taps into a writer's deepest fantasy-I'm the one, the truth teller-and nightmare-writing really does require a descent into hell, and makes the writer superhuman, able to bear truths the rest of society can't. There must be a lot of kryptonite about, then, because Rember's effort often reads like a cross between self-help manual (face the darkness!) and a teacher's cri de coeur (go deeper; don't make me read another puerile story!). It's hard to argue with some of his points-yes, language lies, especially when writers mistake prettifying for deepening. But when the insights have to be plucked from a mash-up of overstatements, self-indulgent personal narratives, and gnomic and risible rules like "Dream as a God, write as a mortal," most writers and would-be-writers will opt to find another box.

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Review

"Rember's *MFA in a Box: A Why to Write Book* is more than an advice book with a catchy title. What makes it different than the many, many books about writing on the market today is the way Rember engages his readers in some of the issues every writer faces--writing about place, about family, about grief--not as problems to be overcome but as issues to be understood." --Jeff Baker, Book Editor, *The (Portland) Oregonian*, January 3, 2011

"Witty, audacious, and wise, John Rember's *MFA in a Box* is a unique and valuable book that addresses the subject--and the life experience--of Creative Writing from both a practical perspective and in a manner so highly personable you'll read it like a memoir--and want to meet the author. Rember has the storyteller's magic. You'll be enthralled. And walk away a more astute and vibrant writer." --Robin Metz, author of *Unbidden Angel*, winner of the Rainer Maria Rilke International Poetry Award, and Director of the Program in Creative Writing at Knox College, January 1, 2011

"John Rember's *MFA in a Box* should be on every writer's bookshelf, right next to *On Writing* by Stephen King and other great books on the art and craft of creative writing." -- Randy Richardson, President, Chicago Writers Association -- (chicagowrites.org), January 2011

Nautilus Book Awards, Silver Winner - Writing/Creative Process Category --Nautilus Book Awards, May 14, 2011

Eric Hoffer Book Award Grand Prize Short List, and 1st Runner Up - Reference Category --Eric Hoffer Award, May 12, 2011

Midwest Book Awards, Finalist - Reference Category --Midwest Independent Publishers Association, May 12, 2011

About the Author

John Rember is a fourth-generation Idahoan. Recurring themes in his writing include the meaning of place, the impact of tourism on the West, and the weirdness of everyday life.

His books include the memoir *Traplines: Coming Home to Sawtooth Valley* (Vintage: 2004), and two collections of short stories, *Cheerleaders from Gomorrah: Tales from the Lycra Archipelago* (Confluence: 1994) and *Coyote in the Mountains* (Limberlost: 1989). His most recent book is *MFA in a Box: A Why To Write Book* (Dream of Things: 2011). He has also published numerous articles and columns in magazines and newspapers, including *Travel & Leisure*, *Wildlife Conservation*, and *The Huffington Post*. He has been a professor of writing for many years, most recently as a core faculty member of the Pacific University MFA program (Forest Grove, Oregon). He is Writer at Large at The College of Idaho.

John lives in the Sawtooth Valley of central Idaho.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Eugene Obrien:

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Antonio Nelson:

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