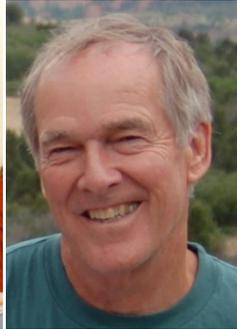
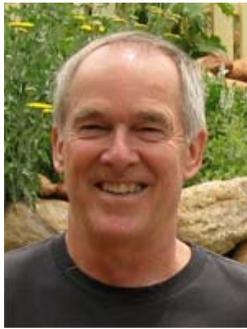




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## Feedback on Interview with John Trimble, PhD Friday, October 19, 2012



John and Jan Trimble

## Feedback on John's Interview

He was truly great with loads of content. He comes across as a masterful expert who also happens to be unpretentious, relaxed, likably self-deprecating, funny and genuine. This is a keeper.

...incredibly inspiring, great tips... I pulled out my partial manuscript and worked on it the same day!

Thank you - more of this type of stuff please! :-)

Outstanding ideas and presentation....so needed by us all....helping to put things in perspective and offering concrete tools re use of self. Very encouraging....

John's talk was amazingly inspiring! I have been tossing around the idea of writing a book, and this call sparked my interest. I walked away with ways to brainstorm if I get writer's block. I also learned how to make my book compelling by being concise, clear and creative. I feel inspired to move forward with my

idea. Thank you so much!

I thought it was great! Here's a man at the top of his "game" who's still actively contributing at 72 and who sounded very modest. It was a very inspiring experience especially the work ethic it took to write the first book and to get to this level.

I really liked it when he was describing how to make writing more "flavorful" (my word.) He's a wonderful teacher. I think he enjoyed the interview as much as we did!

For me, two things were particularly valuable:

1. Good editors re-edit many times (I am near completion of a non-fiction book and felt that something was wrong with me because I need to re-edit numerous times to accomplish something satisfactory to me.)
2. Tighten, sharpen and brighten (I was automatically doing those things, but the clarification and consciousness now makes me more confident and focused with my editing. It also will save me time, so I am not just rewriting without definite improvements.) Gratefully,

This interview was a tremendous gift, full of hints and principles for polishing writing. I want to get the recording and go over it again and again.

I have an M.A. in English with an emphasis in teaching Composition. John's presentation brought back some wonderful memories and long-lost ideas and inspired me to get back to writing. It's been way too long.

I have been struggling to get my book off the ground and flying for years. John's sheer enjoyment of writing and his specific suggestions – like get to the point quickly and tighten, sharpen, and brighten all you offer – blasted my project down the runway and into the sky, where I'm happily looping and soaring. Thank you!

(If you're wondering whether we'd like him back, I'd give a huge Yes! How tantalizing to think that there are 20 more questions with which to mine the precious riches of this generous, exceptionally helpful man.)

Loved John's interview. What immediately stuck like a barnacle was his use of Gore Vidal's remark as writing advice. Vidal said, "I have nothing to say, but a great deal to add."\* Trimble translated that into the advice of getting in writing a quick, sketchy, skimpy first draft, then associating to it....Also - tighten, sharpen, brighten.

Your interview was a wonderful showcase for John's wisdom and warmth. As he reminded all of us, there is no great writing, only great rewriting. I especially appreciated his practical suggestions for getting started and for overcoming writer's block.

*This was by far, my FAVORITE interview of all that you have done. I found myself so envious of you and others who were lucky enough to have had him as a teacher.*

*Not only does he have a passion and breadth of knowledge about writing but he is one of the most balanced, humble human beings I've "experienced" in a long time. I immediately ordered his book and would love to hear him speak again!*

*Rarely do I take notes during one of your interviews but I couldn't write fast enough...I didn't want to miss any of his wisdom and also really appreciated the "practical ideas" he shared about the the craft of writing.*

*John's humanity, humor and warmth flow from within....you can actually "feel" his LOVE of writing as he speaks.*

*One last thing that struck me was his sincere effort to "listen and then respond" to each question, personally. What a rare gift these days...someone who listens and not just talks at you! He reminded me of the importance of respecting your audience....of not wasting others time. Interestingly, he seems very aware of the preciousness of the time.*

*Thanks again, Ben!!! What a treat! I am always inspired by people who show up in their life....focused, attentive, observant and mindfully engaged. It helps me to recalibrate and become more present to myself and others.*

**Fascinating and useful! (I have 5 pp of notes to save in a writing file).**

**Particularly helpful: the "Zero Draft" strategy.**

**Fun to hear: (and, a great balance to the lecture/info component) great anecdotes, Nora Ephron, especially.**

**Something to think about: While I stayed the entire time, we might have just learned why most teleseminars are just an hour. The guest began to flag – it was asking too much, perhaps, and the questions seemed less urgent and interesting as we exceeded the allotted time.**

**Thank you for making this possible!**

**John's total commitment to responding in full to each questioner *personally*.**

**The normalization of stuckness in the writing process.**

1. Writing with the reader in mind - they are not mind readers
2. Write as if I'm writing to an 'actual' good friend who will accept me and enjoy my style
3. The reader should read once to understand. The second read should be to appreciate it.
4. Particularization and specificity - adding useful information to the basic

**Just want to add - I've been sitting with all the data to my research paper wondering how to kick start. After the interview, I'm up and running!**

**As a 21 year old, recent college graduate, the whole interview was very inspiring and reminded me that my struggle with writing is not just my own. (a fact that I many times forget).**

**The quotes that he mentioned about how there is no good writing, only good re-writing really stuck with me.**

**He gave some really great practical pointers about writing-specifically not leaving the reader itchy for more information. Like you, I liked the ways to get started with writing when you are completely stuck, especially the zero drafts idea that begins with "well it seems to me that..."**

**I am still exploring and figuring out what I want to do as a career, but after hearing his words I can see myself becoming an editor. I also write down sentences or words that captivate me and hope to go back to them in my future writing, or possibly editing. His humbleness, and his statement that he is of only modest intelligence shows just how wise he really is. Great job!**

**Thanks for organising the wonderful interview with John. I thoroughly enjoyed it and will take away the 3 universal errors he identified + the 3 ways of addressing them. Very helpful. I just need to practice them now! I will forward the interview to my son who is a journalist & I know he will find it engaging & inspiring. I found John's unpretentious, non materialistic approach refreshing. I also found it encouraging that at 72 he can attract a large audience and keep them in rapt attention. Many thanks again for a wonderful treat!**

**Outstanding is right! I love all of your interviews, but this one was especially practical. To communicate the benefits of coaching and positive psychology I need to be clear and concise.**

The highlights for me were:

- the value of keeping language simple and the writing style direct
- ways to handle getting creatively unstuck
- the importance of clear thinking, having something to say, and getting to the point
- don't make the reader work too hard!
- the opening needs to draw the reader in

Thanks for lining this up! I look forward to re-listening when I get the recording. I bought the book too.

Hello – I was able to hear the first hour of this call – wonderful, thank you – and I was wondering if there will be a recording available so I can catch the rest of it. Thanks so much for making this available!

I found it to be informative. I had never heard some of his ideas before so that was helpful. I stayed till the last question.

...what a helpful interview! i registered but unfortunately got cut off halfway through do to work demands. is there a way to hear the rest of the interview? thank you so much!

*Indeed, John was outstanding and inspiring. His advice hit the target. Also, in my case, it was confirming of what I have been doing for years. I have kept notebooks of ideas, arguments and good writing examples found in other people's writing: Metaphors, idioms, synonyms and felicitous phrases in order to keep learning how to write better. I am not a native speaker of English, so writing well demands even greater dedication and tons of revising and editing.*

*Now I am inspired to finally write my own book, a swan song so to speak, in my field of academic expertise as I am retired. Others have been waiting for it.*

*In addition to his advice, John made a kind and integrated-mature impression.*

Call was excellent. I wish I'd learned it years ago. He really hit to the core in short time. I'm telling my friends about him. Thanks so much for your quality calls!!!

John's interview was truly outstanding. He was thoughtful, generous of mind and heart, and a thoroughly knowledgeable and decent man.

I thought the interview a seamless amalgam of the inspirational and the perspirational- inspirational in his ability to motivate us to write and contribute- and perspirational in making it clear that writing well requires a focused effort to tighten, sharpen, and brighten. No shortcuts. Do the perspiration and hope for the inspiration to emerge.

I was also pleased that he seems to live where he wants and in the way he wants. It's a good model. We should all aspire to do and be as John does and is.

One more thought about the idea of being blocked or stuck- John, among his recommendations, said to write as if you were writing to a good friend, one who is encouraging and who wants to hear what you have to say.

I developed a similar idea but it was in relation to dealing with "stage fright", not writers block. I called my idea a "melt moment". It's a simple strategy. The idea is to conjure up, for 60 seconds, someone or something that makes you melt inside. It might be a spouse, child, friend, place, or pet.

Allow yourself to feel the warmth and melting/thawing inside. Then, when you have the image locked in, conjure up that person and speak to them-make them your "audience", not to the critical audience that gets you spooked.

My sense was that stage fright is caused by emotionally playing to a critical/judgmental audience. If you can replace

that critical audience with someone that elicits a "melt moment", the stress of performing will likely be diminished. I think that a melt moment and a state of agita/anxiety are not compatible- they can't occupy the same emotional space. The melt moment lowers respiration, pulse, and blood pressure.

I also appreciated the effort that he (and you) put into the interview. I could feel him thinking and struggling to craft thoughtful and targeted responses to the questions. He took the questions and the questioners to heart. I could feel his hard drive spinning as his drive head was gathering bits of ideas from all over his vast experience. He answered each question candidly and fully. He is a great teacher- but he would be a lousy politician!

Thanks again Ben. All of us on the calls are grateful to you.

Some key points I found helpful:

1. tightening, sharpening, and brightening helped me visualize how I'd evaluate a piece.(missed the beginning, eager to hear recording)
2. his thoughts on freshening dull ideas, adding interest to the layout, that predictability is dull, that using quotes, dialogue..are like a magnet on a page, also similes, metaphors,and snappy verbs. He mentioned something that's a big brightener, I missed it and will look for it in the recording. He talked of fresh compound adjectives, and capitalizing a common noun. ('Girl')
3. He tries to imitate,... has an eye for stealing good stuff, like words he puts into a word bank. I ran right down to my basement to get a notebook to start my 'writers notebook'. But the big thing for me, was that I had this idea myself, but thought- 'I'm overly invested'...as I kept track of what fascinated me. Hearing he does it made me feel totally validated!  
(All right, ..I shouldn't have been so insecure!)..just giving you my thinking as I'm not sure what you're looking for.
4. I always want to hear how someone got started,.... did they know they'd be able to do this? (I thought he touched on that but can't find it in my notes). I once asked author Paul Auster if before he wrote, he knew he could. His response: "no". What gave him the confidence to keep going, I wondered.
5. "All pleasure consists of variety", he says, and needs 'fresh, and unexpected'. I never would have thought of varying chapter length!
6. I knew about Hemingway and his brevity of words, I'm even more eager now to read him.
7. 'The main point needs to be up front to hold the reader's attention!' I will think about that more as I create beginnings.
8. 'Edit your own prose' is something I'd like very much to be able to do. Did he say that's a book he's writing?
9. That he constantly upgrades his work...  
Thank you for all the wonderful classes you bring me!

I had the opportunity to listen to the entire interview this evening. An unbelievable experience, it is amazing to me that expertise of John's caliber is available FREE on the internet!!! What a wonderful world of opportunity that we live in! I can't add much more to what was already said through the feedback commentaries. But i will say that I loved the comment on universal problems of most drafts..."they are wordy, fuzzy, and dull." Hahaha...for some reason the truth of that statement was a real hoot for me, maybe it was because all three described my writing. lol.

You were totally correct, Ben. I really liked the Trimble recording. I was very taken by your excitement about his work and your academic experience with him. And what a wise and authentic man.

I \*loved\* his comment about being an editor not a writer. I actually uttered those exact words to a close friend, someone I met in secondary school, who told me what a good writer I am. My response, "I am not a writer, I am an editor." Indeed, I was editor-in-chief of the literary magazine in h.s., but she insisted that I am a writer, as others have. So glad you encouraged me to listen to the interview.

And what also made an impression on me was Trimble's flowing comment about uniformity leading to predictability leading to monotony and then boredom. Very, very powerful for me as a general issue to ponder given that I have a real antipathy towards anything boring. That comment hit a core issue for me and was very enlightening. Also loved the honesty about writing a book out of passion and not profit. So true, so wise. A lot of people don't get that.

Well, great energy on that call, Ben. And I enjoyed hearing Mary Judd....made the interview feel very cozy, like being in someone's livingroom.

*I liked every bit of it...quite useful...thanks Ben*

Phew! What an extraordinary human being. I learned so much - including about this book he wrote so long ago! As someone who has written for a living for thirty years, it's really saying something that I learned... And was reminded, too. Also, I love the idea of combining positive psych with other professions and practices beyond coaching (or things that will add to our practice). Keep up the great work, Ben and team. And thanks, too for the moment of silence. What a loss...

It was excellent and inspirational about writing and editing. Thanks, Ben.

Excellent clear line

Knowledgeable presenter who was so generous with his information and advice. Great questions. Very encouraging for one who often fears that I have nothing to write, that is worth reading. Could easily have listened for a further hour!

I was skeptical regarding the Q&A format, but it turned out great – I learned a lot and have burned in my skills inventory – “tighten, sharpen, brighten” Thanks for bringing on Mr. Trimble

*Despite having to tune in a little late due to class conflict, I could not believe the amount of useful advice that I was picking up from the questions and answers. Dr. Trimble*

*was remarkable and I loved the way he encouraged relaxation and the enjoyment of writing.*

*Wonderful guest.*

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You were totally correct, Ben. I really liked the Trimble recording. I was very taken by your excitement about his work and your academic experience with him. Awesome, BTW, that he's in CO. And what a wise and authentic man. I \*loved\* his comment about being an editor not a writer. I actually uttered those exact words to a close friend, someone I met in secondary school, who told me what a good writer I am. My response, "I am not a writer, I am an editor." Indeed, I was editor-in-chief of the literary magazine in high school, but she insisted that I am a writer, as others have. What also made an impression on me was Trimble's flowing comment about uniformity leading to predictability leading to monotony and then boredom. Very, very powerful for me as a general issue to ponder given that I have a real antipathy towards anything boring. That comment hit a core issue for me and was very enlightening. Also loved the honesty about writing a book out of passion and not profit. So true, so wise. A lot of people don't get that.

Well, great energy on that call, Ben. And I enjoyed hearing Mary Judd....made the interview feel very cozy, like being in someone's living room.

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**Note from Ben:** Here's the full Gore Vidal quote:

*"I am an obsessive rewriter, doing one draft and then another and another, usually five. In a way, I have nothing to say, but a great deal to add."* --Gore Vidal