

Simplified Speech #025 – Writing

Episode description

Writing is one of the most important forms of communication! In this Simplified Speech episode, Andrew and Morag have a slow but natural conversation all about writing.

Fun fact

John Steinbeck, an American author, reportedly used 300 pencils while writing *East of Eden*, a famous novel published in 1952. Apparently, he was known to sometimes use up to 60 pencils per day!

Expressions included in the learning materials

- Anguish
- To stress [someone] out
- To be in the zone
- Creative writing
- To come to terms with [something]



Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

Andrew: Hey everyone. My name is Andrew.

Morag: And my name is Morag.

Andrew: And we're back with another Culips episode.

Morag: Hey Andrew.

Andrew: Hey Morag.

Morag: How's it going?

Andrew: I'm doing pretty well, thank you. And you? How are you?

Morag: Yeah, I'm all right.

Andrew: Hey, Morag, I've got a question for you.

Morag: Shoot.

Andrew: What comes to mind when you think of the word writing?

Morag: Mental **anguish**?

Andrew: Mental **anguish**.

Morag: That was a bit of a joke. I did a lot of writing in my academic career, and that was always very stressful and very difficult for me.

Andrew: Yeah, academic writing can be very difficult and very stressful. I know about that as well. But I hope I don't **stress you out** too much with this episode topic because, today, we are going to do a simplified speech episode about writing.

Morag: Oh no, don't worry. I'll be OK.

Andrew: Of course, a Simplified Speech episode is where we have a natural conversation, but we speak slower than we do in our everyday lives. So I'm glad to hear that you'll be OK with this topic, Morag.

Morag: I've **come to terms with it**. Well, I also write for a living mostly now, so ...

- Andrew: Yeah, you're a legit writer.
- Morag: Yeah. Although I'm a bit of a mercenary writer.
- Andrew: A mercenary writer?
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: What do you mean?
- Morag: I write what people ask me to.
- Andrew: OK, you're a writer for hire?
- Morag: Exactly. Someone needs words to be put together, they need a particular sort or piece of writing, and then I will write that. Many other people who refer to themselves as writers are creative writers, so people who have something inside themselves that they need to get out—stories, poems, things like that. For me, I just ... Well, I'm a craftsperson
- Andrew: It's interesting that you brought up **creative writing**, Morag.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: And of course, **creative writing** is writing novels or poems, or maybe even blogs. And have you ever tried to do this style of writing? I feel like since you're a literature person—you know, you're interested in reading and books—that you must have tried at least at some point.
- Morag: Absolutely. I wrote a lot of short stories and poems when I was a kid and a teenager. I think I wrote my first short story when I was—I don't know—6? I would dictate them to my mother.
- Andrew: You would dictate them to your mother, and she would write them for you?
- Morag: Yes, I was very insistent that she would write them down. And now, I still do some sort of **creative writing**, but it's for myself, not for the world.
- Andrew: Mmhmm, OK. It is Harry Potter fantasy?
- Morag: Hey ... No.
- Andrew: Busted.
- Morag: No more. When I was 14, oh yeah.
- Andrew: Really?

-
- Morag: Yeah.
- Andrew: That's a popular style of writing these days actually, on the internet, fan fiction.
- Morag: You can find fan fiction for anything.
- Andrew: For anything. And what is fan fiction? Maybe you could explain it for our listeners that don't know.
- Morag: Sure. A piece of fan fiction is a story that someone other than the original author writes about a popular world or universe. So something like a story about Harry Potter and his friends that's written by, oh, say me, when I was 14. That's fan fiction.
- Andrew: Right, you're continuing the story of characters that have already been established by a different writer or a different franchise.
- Morag: Mmhmm. There's, for example, a lot of Buffy fan fiction, if anybody watched that.
- Andrew: Oh yeah.
- Morag: Yeah.
- Andrew: Buffy, Star Wars ...
- Morag: Star Trek.
- Andrew: Star Trek.
- Morag: Yeah.
- Andrew: Harry Potter. The list goes on and on.
- Morag: Any sort of fantasy or science fiction, particularly that has a big fan base, is very popular. There will be fan fiction written online. So Andrew ...
- Andrew: Yes?
- Morag: I know that you have done a good amount of academic writing and that you also used to do some writing for Culips, and that you write things like learning plans?
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Morag: So would you consider yourself a writer?
-

- Andrew: No, not at all.
- Morag: Hmm.
- Andrew: I have done a lot of writing in the past, and occasionally, I even enjoy it.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: But I wouldn't consider myself to be a writer. I think ... It's something I've considered as a career, kind of like what you're doing as a kind of writer for hire.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: I think when I'm really **in the zone**, I can even sometimes be a good writer, not always. But if I really concentrate and I go back and revise my work after, I think that sometimes I can write really well. But yeah, it's never been a passion of mine, so it's only been a passing thought to consider writing as a career.
- Morag: Hmm, I just always think it's interesting that so many people write. Emails—just things in your daily life—it's so much writing, and yet so few people consider themselves or are considered a writer. It's weird.
- Andrew: Actually, recently, I had the idea of writing a kind of comic book for English-language learners because, in Korea, where I'm living now, online comic books, which are called webtoons, are super, super popular. All of my students love reading webtoons, and so I've been using webtoons to study Korean. And I thought, "Wow, this is so cool. These are a great study resource. I wonder if there are things like this in English too."
- And there are, and of course, there are some fantastic graphic novels in English as well.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: But I couldn't find anything quite as good as the Korean webtoons that I've been reading on the internet. So you can go to the English-language bookstore and plop down 30-plus dollars and buy a really great graphic novel, but it's more difficult to find that high-quality content online for free.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: So this is where I had the thought of, "Ah, I should make something that could be really great for people learning English to study with. But then I

realized I'm a really, really crappy artist, so my dreams were dashed rather quickly.

Morag: Oh, you just need to partner up with someone.

Andrew: Hmm, nah, there's no time for all the things I wanna do. Maybe one day.

Morag: I think you should try doing it by yourself and get better. Do one a day and have it be *Misadventures of Andrew in Korea*.

Andrew: Hey, it could be cool. I mean ...

Morag: You'd get better really fast.

Andrew: I would. This would actually be a really nice demonstration of learning a new skill because—the learning curve when you're learning something new—you can make a lot of progress quickly and then ...

Morag: Slow down a little.

Andrew: Slow down. But initially, it would probably be really something interesting to observe.

Morag: Mmhmm, it definitely would. And it's very much the case with different types of writing, even though you're not used to writing that particular style. Both your drawing skills and maybe your comedy skills, your in English webcomic writing skills, those would go up quickly.

Andrew: Yeah, and for a second there, I thought you were hinting that my sense of humour was not quite polite, and I was almost offended, but you saved yourself.

Morag: Oh no. Oh no, it really is quite hard writing to make people laugh.

Andrew: Hey, Morag, I think we should wrap it up here before we stray too far off topic. But it was actually really interesting to talk to you today about writing.

Morag: I enjoyed myself as well, and I hope everybody learned a little something.

Andrew: Of course, we have a website. It is Culips.com, and I encourage all of you to check out the website for two reasons. The first reason is that it's the place where you can find all of our previous episodes. And we have over 400 episodes, so there is an amazing bank of episodes for you on our website.

And Culips.com is also the place where you can sign up to become a Culips member. This is reason number two why you should visit the site. Culips

members have access to our learning materials, which are prepared by Morag, specifically for you, to help take your English studies to the next level. For each and every episode, you'll get a transcript, detailed explanations of the interesting or difficult vocabulary and slang that you hear us use, and you will also get a quiz.

That it is for us today. We'll catch ya next time. Bye everyone.

Morag: Goodbye.

Announcer: The best way to study with Culips is by becoming a Culips member. When you become a Culips member, you will get full transcripts, detailed vocabulary explanations, and quizzes for each episode. Visit Culips.com—that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com—to sign up and become a member.

Detailed Explanations

Anguish

Anguish is a noun that means extreme distress caused by physical or emotional pain. You can use **anguish** as a synonym for severe pain, whether the pain is in the body or in the mind. Like with the word pain, when you want to say that someone feels **anguish**, you can say, "They are in **anguish**."

For example, if someone breaks their leg, they are probably in **anguish**. Similarly, if someone loses a loved one, they are probably in **anguish**.

In this episode, Morag jokes around by exaggerating and saying that the first thing that comes to her mind when she thinks about writing is mental **anguish**. Because writing can be difficult and mentally tiring, she says that she thinks about being in extreme distress. While writing isn't easy, it doesn't normally cause people to feel **anguish**.

Here are a couple more examples with **anguish**:

Bob:	Did you hear what happened to Randy?
Joan:	Is he OK?
Bob:	I think he's going to be OK, but he's not doing very well at the moment.
Joan:	What happened?
Bob:	He got hit by a car! He has two broken ribs and a concussion.
Joan:	Poor guy, he must be in anguish . Broken ribs are extremely painful.

Jack:	Why didn't you call me back last night? Is everything all right?
Vicky:	My cat died last night.
Jack:	I'm so sorry to hear that. Losing a pet is really hard.
Vicky:	It is. I honestly meant to call you back, but in my anguish , I completely forgot.
Jack:	Don't worry about it. It sounds like you had enough to deal with.

To stress [someone] out

To stress out is an informal phrase that means to feel very anxious, nervous, or worried, often to the point where you can't relax or focus. When you **stress [someone] out**, you do something that causes them to feel this way.

In casual conversation, telling someone, "Don't **stress out**" is the same as saying, "Don't worry" or "It's not a big deal," whereas "Don't **stress me out**" is the same as saying, "Don't make me feel anxious or nervous."

In this episode, Andrew says that he hopes that he doesn't **stress Morag out** too much with this episode's topic. In other words, he hopes that the topic doesn't cause her to feel anxious or uncomfortable.

So when someone is anxious and unable to relax, you can say that they are **stressing out**. Similarly, if someone causes you to feel anxious or nervous, you can say that they are **stressing you out**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to stress [someone] out**:

Sarah:	Have you seen John lately? I'm a little worried about him.
Adam:	I ran into him the other day. He seemed really stressed out !
Sarah:	I got the same impression. I wonder what's causing him to be so anxious and nervous.

Katie:	How long do we have before the train gets here?
Pat:	Um, about 15 minutes.
Katie:	Are you sure? You don't sound certain, and I'm dying of thirst, but I don't want to leave this spot if the train is coming in 5 minutes.
Pat:	It's not coming in 5 minutes.
Katie:	Are you certain? Why don't you check the tickets again? I just can't be responsible for us missing this train!
Pat:	Whoa, calm down. You're all stressed out and it's stressing me out too. It's going to be fine. We won't miss the train.
Katie:	OK, sorry. Travelling just makes me really nervous.

To be in the zone

Can you remember a situation where you felt happy and confident performing an activity because you knew that you were doing it well? Maybe you had a good day at work and completed all your tasks perfectly and easily. Maybe you were engaged in a creative activity, like playing music or painting, and you created a masterpiece. If this has happened to you, then you have probably **been in the zone**!

When you become absorbed in an activity or when you perform above the norm, this is called **being in the zone**.

Being in the zone can be used to describe a range of activities, such as yoga, knitting, writing, hockey, and work. For instance, if you write a test, and you are in a state of focused attention and the answers just come easily to you, then you can say, "I was **in the zone** while writing the test." So **to be in the zone** can be used to describe any situation where you are doing well, focused, and enjoying yourself!

Here are a couple more examples with **to be in the zone**:

Graeme:	Hey Dana. What are you up to?
Dana:	Not now.
Graeme:	What do you mean?
Dana:	Don't bother me right now. I'm working, and I just got in the zone .
Graeme:	Oh, sorry! I'll come back later.

Alex:	Good morning, Erica! How are you?
Erica:	I'm great, thanks! I was extremely productive last night. I'm feeling pretty happy about it too.
Alex:	What did you get done?
Erica:	I spent a couple hours working on a painting that I was having trouble finishing. Last night, however, I finished it without any problems!
Alex:	It sounds like you were in the zone .
Erica:	I sure was! It felt like the painting almost finished itself!

Creative writing

Creative writing is a noun that can refer to two things: artistic writing or the act of producing artistic writing.

First, **creative writing** can mean writing that is artistic and results from the imagination, such as short stories, poetry, and novels. Although **creative writing** is often associated with fictional works, some memoirs and essays can be considered works of **creative writing**.

What's important to remember is that **creative writing** is usually a way for a writer to express themselves, to convey thoughts and emotions, stories, and insights, as opposed to just information. Manuals, textbooks, and pamphlets are not examples of creative writing.

Second, **creative writing** is the act of producing artistic writing. For example, if someone says they do **creative writing**, they mean that they write fiction or other imaginative pieces.

Here are a couple more examples with **creative writing**:

Becky:	Do you like reading?
Kenneth:	I love reading! In fact, I studied literature at university.
Becky:	Me too! That's so cool. So do you do any creative writing ?
Kenneth:	I used to write short stories when I was younger, but I don't anymore. How about you? Do you do creative writing ?
Becky:	I do! I love to write poetry. I actually just published a book of poems!
Kenneth:	Wow, that's really impressive!

Mina:	Did you read the news today? Everything is so depressing.
Fred:	No, I don't like reading the news.
Mina:	What do you read?
Fred:	I like creative writing . I usually read a novel a week!

To come to terms with [something]

To come to terms with [something] means to gradually accept something, often something negative. When you adjust to the reality of a bad situation after a period of time, you have **come to terms with it**.

To come to terms with [something] is most commonly used to describe getting over the death of a loved one. People who have suffered the loss of a loved one take time to accept the situation and move on. When they have gotten over their loss, they have **come to terms with it**.

In this episode, Morag says that she didn't always like writing, but she's **come to terms with it** now. In other words, over time, she's learned to deal with the process of writing and now is OK with it.

Can you think of a sad situation or a difficult activity that you have learned to accept over time? If so, you can say that you've **come to terms with it**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to come to terms with [something]**:

Luke:	How are you doing?
Shannon:	I'm OK, thanks.
Luke:	Are you sure you don't need to talk?
Shannon:	Talk about what?
Luke:	I heard you went through a breakup a little while ago.
Shannon:	Oh, I'm fine. I've already come to terms with it .
Luke:	Good to hear!

Mark:	I just got fired!
Karen:	That's awful!
Mark:	I'm so frustrated and sad right now!
Karen:	It might take a while to come to terms with losing your job , but what you're feeling right now is normal and will pass.

Mark: You're right. I just need some time to calm down.

Quiz

- 1. Which of the following is a synonym for anguish?**
 - a) sorry
 - b) zone
 - c) physical
 - d) distress

- 2. If you learn to accept a bad situation, you've come to _____ with it.**
 - a) terms
 - b) stress
 - c) express
 - d) suffer

- 3. Which of the following is the best example of being in the zone?**
 - a) Karen is an artist, and she's working on a painting.
 - b) Karen likes to read, and she just finished reading a really good book.
 - c) Karen plays hockey, and she had a game.
 - d) Karen is having a really good day, and got a high score on her math test.

- 4. True or false: To stress someone out means to cause them to feel anxious and nervous.**
 - a) true
 - b) false

- 5. Which of the following is the best example of creative writing?**
 - a) a manual
 - b) a short story
 - c) a book report
 - d) all of the above

Quiz Answers

1.d 2.a 3.d 4.a 5.b

Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Morag St. Clair

Music: *Something Elated* by Broke For Free

Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates

Audio editor: Andrew Bates

Transcription: Transcript Heroes Transcription Services

Learning materials writer: Morag St. Clair

English editor: Stephanie Minelga

Business manager: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima

Project manager: Jessica Cox

Sponsor: [Spoken](#)