

*Thinking is Writing in Your Head,
And Writing is Thinking on Paper*

James T. Charnock



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by James T. Charnock

This title was inspired by a statement in *Teacher Man* by teacher Frank McCourt: "Doggedness is not as glamorous as ambition or talent or intellect or charm, but still [it's] the one thing that got me through [30 years of teaching]." This is somewhat applicable to writing. (This inspirational quote does not represent an endorsement of McCourt's book.) My objective: To cut your students' learning curve.

Complaint by students

"I don't like writing. I can't write. I won't write!" (Yes, they say those things.)

Response by teacher

"Can you think? What do you think about? And what feelings go along with those thoughts: happy, angry, loving, silly, sad, confused, confident, questioning, jealousy?"

Conclusions

1. Here's how I know you can write/compose: You can think, and thinking is writing in your head; while writing...is thinking on paper.
2. If you don't like your writing, then we need to organize your way of thinking. Thinking can be disorganized in your head because you can't fill in all the missing parts. If you're confused about just what it is you feel or think, then you'll want to keep thinking—you should continue to do this in your head, then definitely put it on paper; when on paper, read your thoughts back to yourself or someone you trust. And go through this process again, if necessary.

Sometimes you don't even think; you just feel and don't bother to put it into thoughts. Like when you're hungry—no thinking needed; you understand it. But if you want someone else to know, you have to change that feeling to thought, then into spoken language (or written language).
3. "The terrible thing about writing is also the great thing about it: You can keep changing it."—Roy Blount, Jr. (author of *Alphabet Juice*, 2008)
4. "Writing is the essence of you (or your thoughts) spilled onto paper. And "spilled" is the operative word because words don't always look nice at first; you have to arrange them." – source unknown.
5. So, let's organize our thinking so that writing is easier and more fun.