

Review

Power Write

by Scott Berry

Good writing has never been more important. Today with the Internet and text messaging we are communicating with the written word more than ever. But have you noticed how drastically the level of English has been slipping as people hurriedly write on line or tap in their text messages?

Wayne Stier's *Power Write* is out there in the front lines resisting the deterioration of the written language. "Writing is primarily a skill that anyone can learn with practice," Stier tells us at the outset.

*Power Write* is not a long or intimidating book, but there is plenty here to keep you busy. Based on his long experience as an author and writing teacher, Stier sets numerous useful exercises that, if done correctly, will be of great benefit. Right off, for example, he gives you the excellent challenge of keeping a journal of at least 500 words a day. He's not interested in what you had for breakfast: he wants you to record all those thoughts, emotions, opinions and conclusions that flit through our minds and usually escape unrecorded. Then without giving the kind of traditional grammar lessons we have all hated, he makes sure you know the difference between a sentence and a dependent clause, a run-on sentence or a sentence fragment. He makes sure you organise your paragraphs, and he gives you all sorts of useful hints for that vital first step: finding something to write about. It is all taken step by step, and anyone who wants to learn to write powerfully and effectively is bound to succeed following Stier's Power Write method

Not that it is all hard work. For anyone who has ever struggled to make the words sound right, the idea of a "laugh draft" rather than a rough draft will come as a welcome relief. And the whole book is peppered with quotes from other writers, some serious, some fun, but all useful. "Short words are best, and the old words when short are best of all," from Winston Churchill, for those of us who think we have to overwhelm with our vocabularies. Then there is this gem from Voltaire: "The easiest way

to bore is to tell everything.”

Particularly useful near the end of the book is the section on weak and risky techniques, with a “botched checklist” just to make sure you haven’t missed the point.

The first sentence of *Power Write* declares that “Writing is a pleasure.” As you work your way through the book, it is a pleasure you will discover for yourself.

Scott Berry’s books include, *A Stranger in Tibet, Japanese Agent in Tibet* (with Hisao Kimura), *The Rising Sun in the Land of the Snows* and *From Goddess to Mortal* (with Rashmila Shakya).