

A Writer's Life

“It’s impossible to become a writer if you don’t read. On the other hand, reading itself isn’t going to lead you to writing—only to imitation. The thing that makes a person become a writer, I believe, is an empty space. Something that needs to be filled. If a person were a normal, healthy, functional, well-adjusted individual, they would have no need to become a writer. If you’re slightly dysfunctional, have sweaty palms, and wake up in the middle of the night and worry—which may describe all of you in this room—you will have a very good chance [of becoming a writer].”

Paul Theroux

*William A. Starr Freshman Course
Writer-in-Residence, September 1996,
in a lecture entitled, “A Writer’s Life”*