



Start with Your North Star **Main Takeaways**

*“I believe every work of art **needs a spine—an underlying theme, a motive for coming into existence.** It doesn’t need to be apparent to the audience. But you need it at the start of the creative process to guide you and keep you going.”*

- Twyla Tharp

Let’s start a story with your north star this week!

- A north star is what guides you home. It provides both the intention and direction for a story—but also for your overall creative practice.
- We can think of your north star in two different ways:
 - The *intention* or *theme* that can help start and guide your story
 - The reason *why* you create and return to the writing table

Try to start with an *intention* or *theme* for your story:

- As Twyla Tharp recommends, try giving your story a “spine.” Think of your motive for a particular story or project. *Why* does this story need to come alive?
 - For example, maybe you want to share stories from your childhood that contain wisdom for your grandchildren. Your motive for writing is to share your stories and wisdom with a younger generation.
- Your reason for writing a particular story is also *why* your story will matter to your reader. Your north star is what you hope your reader will take away from your story.
- It’s also okay to *not* start with a north star! Sometimes we just want to write for fun. See where your pen takes you!

- But you might find as you write that a north star emerges for your story. When editing, it is useful to decide what your intention is for a piece. What is the point of the story? What do you want readers to take away?

Here are some questions to ask to find your story’s north star or “spine”:

- “Why am I writing this story?”
- “Why will my reader care about this story?”
- “What is it I want my readers to walk away thinking about?”
- “What point does my story make?”
- “How do I want to change the way my reader sees the world?”

Remember your north star for *why* you write:

- *Why* do you want to write? It’s helpful to know the north star for your story—but it’s also useful to know *why* you write. What keeps you returning to the writing table? Knowing your why helps you come back to writing.
 - For me, I find everything in my life works better when I make time to write. I feel more joyful, more creative, and more alive. I have stories in my heart that I want to share—and it feels meaningful to get them down on paper. I’m sure it’s the same for you, too.

This week’s writing prompts:

- *From Natalie Goldberg:* “Begin with, ‘I remember...’ Write lots of small memories. If you fall into a memory, write that. Just keep going. Don’t be concerned if the memory happened five seconds ago or five years ago. Everything that isn’t this moment is a memory coming alive again as you write. If you get stuck, repeat the phrase “I remember” again and keep going.”
- What matters? Right now, *this minute*, what matters?
- Write a list of memorable events from your life. These events can be big or small, from divorces to dentist visits. Write down whatever comes to mind, and trust that if an event pops up, it’s one you want to write about. Pick one to write about. Your optional starter: “Let me tell you the story about...”