MENTOR SPOTLIGHT

Your Journey Your Words

With Zachary Reichel

Turning travel memories into stories worth sharing

November's guest writing and mentor



When Marika shared her South Korea photographs with us, I wanted to know what she remembered about the moments around them. There's often a story in the things we tell a friend afterwards, like a small kindness, a wrong turn, or a meal we still talk about.

That's why I invited ***Zachary Reichel,*** the writer behind ***The Reichel Letters and creator of the 7 Essays in 14 Days workbook***, to join us as November's guest writing and ***Dreamcatcher Network Mentor***. His workbook caught my attention because it gives people a way to start writing. I asked ***Zach*** to help our readers turn a travel memory into a short story they'd enjoy sharing.

CHOOSING A MEMORY:



Which memory would you start with? Imagine you've come home with a phone full of photos and a notebook full of places. How do you choose the moment worth writing about?

The moment worth writing about is the moment only you could have lived on that trip. Plenty of people visit scenic vistas and take snapshots of those sights, but what about the photos you take of the random finds you discover walking from place to place? People like travel stories not because of the locations themselves, but because of the tales of joy and happenstance they can imagine discovering on their own travels. Share those kinds of tales with others.

Bringing the memory to life

What are three small things a first-time writer can do to make a travel memory come alive on the page? If an example comes to mind, we'd love to include it.



Capture the scene, explain the emotions, and describe the details.

For instance, my last vacation was a year ago, a trip with friends and loved ones to the mountains of Tennessee for my sister's wedding party. I snapped some photos of the place we stayed: a cozy cabin in the mountains, only accessible by a narrow, winding road through the grassy slopes.

To share the stories of that space, I'd write to you about the crisp, chill air that came in low gusts through the small cracks in the wooden walls, or the warmth of the moonshine in everyone's bellies and the fireplace crackling in the shared living room. I'd talk about how I repaired a leaky washing machine when a friend needed to clean a stain from a shirt, only for their desire for cleanliness to nearly flood the basement, earning me my "handyman" reputation for the trip!

In that passage, I capture the scene of the place we rented, the emotions of being around friends and family during a time of celebration, and even some personal moments you never expect to happen on a trip but inevitably find.

Ten minutes with a favorite photo



Could you give our readers one short writing prompt? Something they can try in ten minutes with a favorite travel photo would be lovely.

In ten minutes, I think anybody can write a short paragraph about a photo they snapped while traveling. Take a few minutes to look at the picture and recall how the photo, and the place where you took it, made you feel. Recall all the signals your senses picked up in that moment.

Then write a few sentences about those sensations. What did the sand between your toes feel like? What did the drink you were holding in that picture taste like with each sip? Answer those questions in sentences that explain it to the reader in whatever language you can muster.

"Close the paragraph with a line that tells us how all those sensations made you feel. Make those emotions clear and stand by them." — Zachary Reichel

Share your own Hidden Gem



Marika and Mikaela's South Korea adventure began with memories they wanted to share. Your own photographs may hold the beginning of another story. Try ***Zach's*** exercise with one favorite image, then tell us about the place or moment that stayed with you.

Share your story with Claudia

Your "Memories in the Making"

Why writing matters to Zach

What drew you to helping people write, and what do you hope they'll take away from your newsletter or workbook?

Writing got me out of many dark places growing up. I never fit in with many of my peers, and I faced a lot of ostracizations from family because I wanted to write rather than pursue "better" paths. Funnily enough, writing saw me through the various paths I tried to follow to make others happy, because it helped me organize my thoughts and exercise my creative muscles.

That's why I believe everyone should know how to write, at least a little, because it's the best way we have as humans to organize our minds and share those thoughts with others, no matter the time or distance between us. I cover the best ways I've found to do that in my weekly newsletter, The Reichel Letters (zacharyreichel.com), where every Wednesday I share about 3,000 words of frameworks, processes, and how-to's that anyone can use to start writing more.

Meet Zachary Reichel



Zachary Reichel is a ***writer with seven years of freelance experience across content writing, book editing, game narrative construction, and content operations. Today, he writes his newsletter, The Reichel Letters (zacharyreichel.com), and his fiction (coming next year!), hoping to reinvigorate a passion for writing in himself, and therefore in others. He lives in Indiana with his wife, Caitlin, and their cat, Ramuh.***

Keep writing with Zach

Explore The Reichel Letters and sign up for Zach's free 7 Essays in 14 Days workbook through his website.

zacharyreichel.com