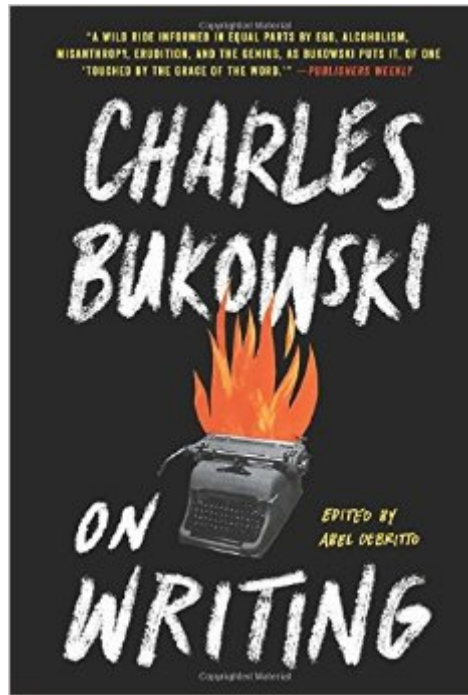


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# On Writing



## Synopsis

Sharp and moving reflections and ruminations on the artistry and craft of writing from one of our most iconoclastic, riveting, and celebrated masters. Charles Bukowski's stories, poems, and novels have left an enduring mark on our culture. In this collection of correspondence—the letters to publishers, editors, friends, and fellow writers—the writer shares his insights on the art of creation. *On Writing* reveals an artist brutally frank about the drudgery of work and canny and uncompromising about the absurdities of life—and of art. It illuminates the hard-edged, complex humanity of a true American legend and counterculture icon—the *poet laureate of American lowlife*—(Time)—who stoically recorded society's downtrodden and depraved. It exposes an artist grounded in the visceral, whose work reverberates with his central ideal: *Don't try*. Piercing, poignant, and often hilarious, *On Writing* is filled not only with memorable lines but also with Bukowski's trademark toughness, leavened with moments of grace, pathos, and intimacy.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As a hard core Bukowski fan and writer, I was looking forward to this new book. As soon as I opened it, I was disappointed because it mostly contains letters he wrote to others from 1959 to 1993 along with a few reproduced illustrations and posed photos of an older Bukowski. I've read most of Bukowski's sizable collection of letters, published in three earlier books. It was a sometimes interesting but otherwise tedious exercise. His letter writing, while admittedly under the influence, is

nowhere near as clear and sharp reading as his poems and short stories. According to Abel Debritto, CBOW's editor and also a Bukowski biographer, these letters are unpublished until now. It seems to me the person to whom the letters were addressed (Henry Miller, Fante, Ferlinghetti and others literary notables important to Bukowski's career) are more important here. There's very little about writing in most of the letters. The most germane letter to the book's title doesn't appear until 1983, and the good news is there are more direct references to writing in the years' more concise letters that follow. Bukowski often sounded off in interviews about writers, writing and the profession. I was hoping to find more of the latter in CBOW rather than "...some of the most passionate letters Bukowski ever wrote, and this volume of correspondence is as easily compelling as any other of his collections." Does Delbritto mean his other books of letter collections or something else? This book, and others like coming forth this year and next are to commemorate what would have been Hank's 95th birthday this year. Instead of buying the repackaged works, I think we'd all be better off remembering him with Black Sparrow book of his poems and bottle of good wine.

I absolutely enjoyed the insights and the drawings, but it's an oddity on my Bukowski shelf. RE: Kindle edition - the drawings are included in the digital edition and they are generally well formatted. I bought the Kindle version and then found a .50 cent copy. Comparing both, I would recommend the kindle version for ease of reading, especially since the letters are generally very short and can be enjoyed during a commute or while killing time in a cafe. I tended to read the letters in the same short, focused burst that I read his poetry. IMHO - I like the Kindle version.

Bukowski wrote frequently on the topic of writing in his published poetry, short stories, novels, and collections of letters. And then along comes this - a collection of previously unpublished material - with about half of it doing nothing more than just dancing around the topic (if that), while so much of the aforementioned published work lands directly on top of it (about as "on top of it" as you can get as in "here's what to avoid as a writer and here's what to put to use"). As for the stuff in this collection that does pertain either directly or semi-directly to writing, almost all of it has already been addressed in the aforementioned published material. You'd be very hard-pressed to find something of original worth in this. On the other hand, Bukowski was always a terrific letter writer (witty, crazy, self-revealing), so the entertainment value definitely comes into play with this collection.

I don't understand the bitterness and disappointment in most of the reviews here at . A book featuring Bukowski in his own words talking exclusively about writing was bound to be published

sooner or later. No one's scraping the barrel nor expecting to get rich. The editor no doubt put it together out of pure love for the man's work. There's not a chance in hell he's gonna rich from it. I believe other pieces that have already been published---poems & letters---should have been included. I think relying exclusively on unpublished letters short-changed the project and caused it to fall short of its fullest potential. The book was a xmas gift. I enjoyed it very much. However, I would not have paid nearly twenty dollars for it. I would have waited for it to come out in paperback. I enjoyed the book because of Bukowski's voice on the page. I didn't read it to learn how to write nor to find out what Bukowski had to say about writing. I already knew what he thought about writing from having consumed his books of poetry and letters published by Black Sparrow in the 1990s. There are a couple of other new books called On Cats and On Love. I honestly have no desire or inclination to read them. I think they are silly ideas. I'd rather read about his thoughts regarding Death, Suicide, and The Meaning of Life. He wrote a lot about those subjects. Given that there are still thousands of pages of letters & poetry that have not yet been published, I am sure the esteemed editor of On Writing could put together a very nice collection of writing by Bukowski the Philosopher. But I won't hold my breath.

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