



Tangible Feedback

How do we avoid less than constructive criticism?

It's something all writers need to move toward a finished product. Feedback. How does an outside eye interpret what we've written? Is our intention clear? Are we headed in the right direction? Feedback acts as a mini-window into how an eventual audience will respond.

This is easier said than done. It's hard to find individuals who excel at constructive criticism. And bad feedback can end work on a project. How do we receive consistent, constructive feedback?

Set the Context

When you hand off your book, your play, your story for feedback the worst thing you can say is “Give me your opinion. I want to know what you think.” First of all, this puts a lot of pressure on your responder. It’s a huge task to read and give a blanket opinion. Also, asking for an opinion doesn’t provide any information for your responder. How long have you been working on this piece? Where are you in its development? What are you looking for?

Set the context for your responder. Establish what you’re doing and where you are: “This is the second draft of my first play. It looks at body image in teens, I want to market it to schools.” And even more specifically, **give your responder a job**. Opinions are subjective and hard to pin down. Your responder may not like your work. That doesn’t mean they’re right, or that your work has no value. Instead of asking for an opinion, set a specific task: “Do you connect to the main character all the way through, or is there a point you lose empathy?”

A task gives your responder a single focus. That focus will give you tangible feedback you’ll be able to apply to your writing. And that will get you closer to the finish line.