

Career Exploration Report

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Introduction:

As an English major with a creative writing concentration, the question “what’s your job going to be?” popped up all too often. I never knew how to answer; my career options were unknown to me. Sure, I’d written some poetry and started a few novels, but I did not know how to turn my love of writing into a sustaining career. I did not realize how the field of creative writing allowed for plenty of job opportunities. Upon conducting some research, I discovered all the possibilities that were available to me. I have compiled all of my findings below into the two main categories I am interested in: printed works and media and film.

Printed Works:

Behind all the stories we’ve ever read is someone’s mind creating it all. From Ayn Rand to J. K. Rowling to William Shakespeare, people who have a way with words and ideas in their heads can reach incredible heights. Here are just a few of the jobs available for creative minds:

Job Descriptions

Author — Perhaps the most well-known job for creative writers, authors write novels, short stories, poetry, or any other form of creative work. In order to become an author, you must be able to create captivating characters and a plot that will keep readers engaged. Typically, an author will work with a publishing company in order to market and sell said work, though self-publishing is another option (Beelineweb.com).

Book Editor — Clearly labeled in the name, book editors edit and develop another person’s work so that it is ready for publishing. Most work with a publishing company, but others take charge and go off on their own. Either way, becoming a book editor means having a special eye for detail that goes beyond grammar skills and allows an author to improve the work as a whole (Beelineweb.com).

Journalist — Journalists are reporters who go out to find newsworthy information and use it to write articles, scripts, and podcasts. They are capable of working with various kinds of media. Usually, journalists begin as entry-level reporters before gaining enough experience to find out which field they wish to write in (Beelineweb.com).

Ghostwriter — As the name implies, ghostwriters serve as “an ‘invisible’ contributor to a piece of content. You write it; your client gets to claim the credit for it” (Beelineweb.com). Ghostwriters can work with any number of people from authors to celebrities and more. No matter what, this particular field offers many opportunities for writers as they assist in transforming their clients’ thoughts into a voice (Beelineweb.com).

Travel Writer — A more mainstream job, travel writers work for themselves and write for magazines, guidebooks, or travel blogs (Beelineweb.com). Their main job is to describe various locations as if they’ve lived there for their entire lives, bringing a new and unique perspective in order to draw in tourists from around the world. Of course, if you love to travel, this may be the job for you.

Skills Recommended

Obtaining any one of the jobs listed above is no simple task. Writers must have a special skill set in order to set themselves apart from others. Below is a list of education opportunities and skills a writer should have:

- Ability to Take Criticism
- Attention to Detail
- Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Grammar Proficiency
- Organization
- Reading/Writing Proficiency
- Strong Work Ethic
- Understanding of the Publishing Process

*Internships are also highly recommended; as a writer, you will need to gain experience in all aspects of writing. The best way to do this is by working with someone talented in the field. Most importantly, just keep writing; good or bad, writing and publishing work will give you experience.

Salaries

There are several variables when it comes to determining the average annual salary of writing jobs. Below is a list of rough estimates from my research, according to trade-schools.net:

- Author** — For authors, an average annual salary really depends on the success of their book; the average is around \$73,000
- Book Editor** — About \$70,000 per year
- Journalist** — Approximately \$56,000 a year
- Ghost Writer** — Anywhere from \$15,000 to \$150,000+ per book
- Travel Writer** — About \$37,000

The Film Industry:

When it comes to the film industry, most minds turn immediately to the big shots living it up in Hollywood. Finding a career in this field can seem like an impossible dream; after all, the sheer amount of talent is intimidating. What most don't realize, however, is that while actors and actresses are certainly a major part of a movie, there are several other positions of the movie-making process within reach.

Job Descriptions

Film Critic — As the name clearly implies, film critics watch movies and write reviews about them. Some of the most well-known film review companies include Rotten Tomatoes and IMDB.

Screenwriter — In terms of telling a story, screenwriters are the crux of the film industry. They are responsible for writing the script of a movie or television show; this includes all scenes and dialogue (“Film Career Information”).

Script Analyst/Reader — Script analysts and readers essentially have the same job with a few minor differences. They examine all kinds of materials and decide whether or not they should be used in production (“Film Career Information”).

Script Supervisor — Though it may seem like they do very little, the opposite is actually true. Script Supervisors are the bridge that ensures consistency between script and filming (“Film Career Information”).

Showrunner — Though not directly writers, showrunners are in charge of the writing and execution of a television series. They do everything from running the Writers' Room to guiding directors and the crew and working with studios/networks (“Film Career Information”).

Skills Recommended

Working in the film industry is, for the most part, a fast-paced and high-energy job. Situations commonly arise and people must be able to deal with them. Below is a list of education opportunities and skills someone working in the film industry should have:

- Ability to Take Criticism
- Communication/Flexibility
- Critical Thinking
- Grammar Proficiency
- Leadership/Teamwork
- Organization
- Reading/Writing Proficiency
- Strong Work Ethic
- Time Management
- Understanding of the Production Process
- Understanding of Screenplay Format

*Experts in the field also highly recommended obtaining a Master of Fine Arts degree as well as attending a film school. Many of the good schools can be found in big cities such as Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York (“Film Career Information”).

Salaries

There are several variables when it comes to determining the average annual salary of film industry jobs. Below is a list of rough estimates from my research, according to careersinfilm.com/film-careers:

Film Critic — Around \$47,000 annually

Screenwriter — Approximately \$70,000 to \$100,000+ depending on the cost of the project

Script Analyst/Script Reader — \$25-\$90 per script to \$1,750/week or \$40,000 to \$65,000

Script Supervisor — \$500 to \$4,000 per week (\$78,000 annual)

Showrunner — Anywhere from \$30,000 to \$300,000+ per episode

My Interest in Creative Writing:

I’ve had a vast imagination my entire life. Throughout grade school, I would go on roleplaying adventures with my friends every day after school. I was also a major bookworm, reading through all the Magic Treehouse and Harry Potter books. In seventh grade, I wrote my first fairy tale. In eighth grade, I began writing my first novel. Throughout high school, I began writing poetry along with two more novels. By my senior year of high school, I realized that writing was my true passion. I could never see myself not writing. There’s something magical about piecing words together to create stories that people may read in my very own books. Not only that but after witnessing the profound success of Disney with both Marvel and Star Wars, working in film seemed like a dream to me. I have the talent, I can make the connections, I thought. All I need to do is keep writing. To this day, I have many writer friends who manage their own projects as well as assist me in mine. In time, with their help, I hope to complete my books and possibly move on to film.

How to Reach My Goal:

Over the years, I have developed several skills considered valuable to the creative writing field. I can accept criticism and use it to further improve my work. I like to think of myself as proficient in my grammar and reading skills and especially my writing. All those English and creative writing classes have taught me much; not to mention all those childhood years spent experimenting. Of course, there are still things I have to learn, such as how to be a leader and how the film industry and publishing companies operate. I have to work on confidence. I should start finding internships and looking at film schools if I’m serious about being a screenwriter. Of course, first I must introduce the world to my creations; that’s the most vital thing. By publishing in *The Scout* and *Broadside*, as well as continuously gaining experience in all I do, I hope to someday make it as a renowned author or screenwriter. I want to be able to show people, especially my family and friends, all my completed projects on the big screen or have them read my stories.

Works Cited

- Beelineweb.com. "Yes, You Can Make Great Money as a Writer! Here's How." Trade, Trade-Schools.net, 13 Aug. 2019, www.trade-schools.net/articles/jobs-for-writers.asp.
- "Film Career Information and a Complete List of Film Schools. Actor, Director, Producer, Screenwriter Career Information and More." Careers In Film | Film Schools & Colleges, www.careersinfilm.com/.