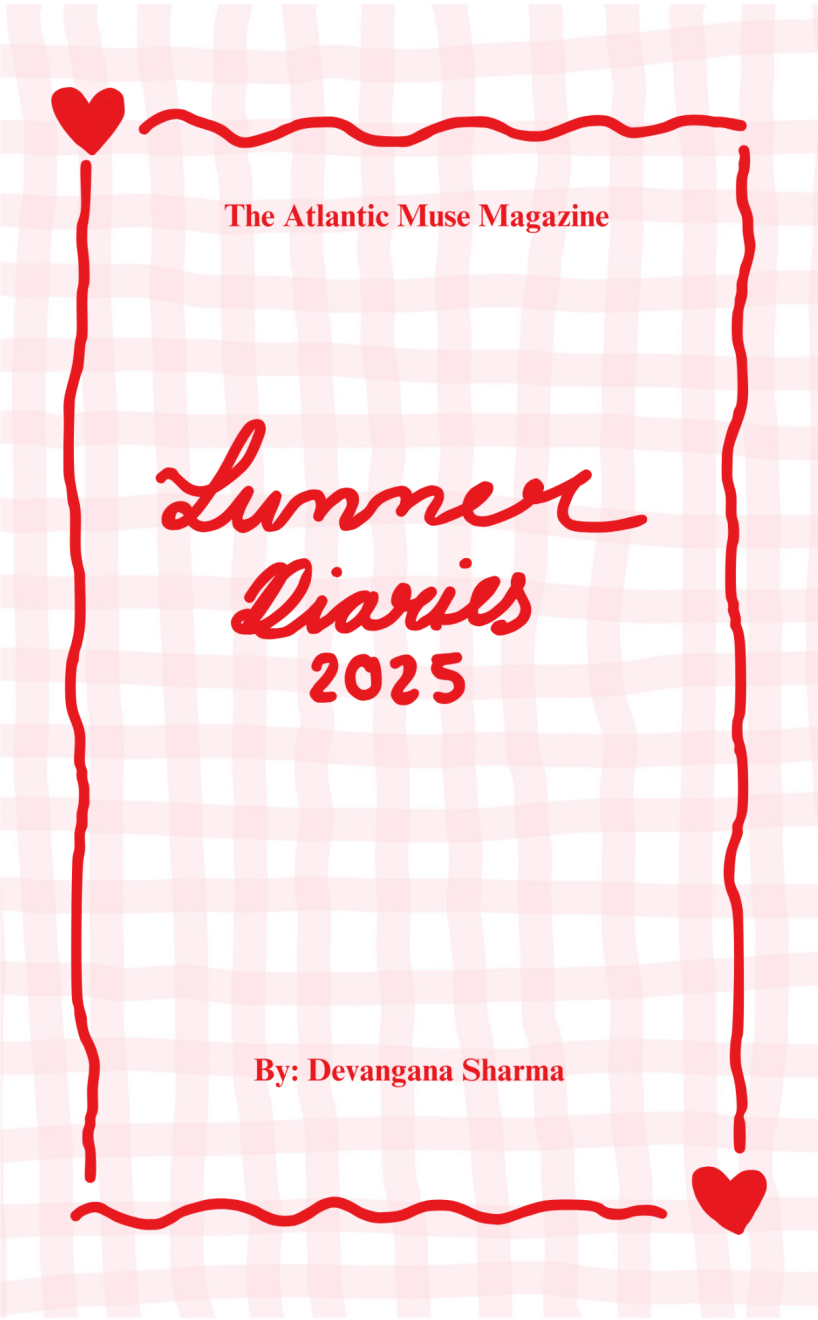




The Atlantic Muse Magazine

Summer
Diaries
2025

By: Devangana Sharma

The Complete Collection of Summer Diaries 2025

For those who hold on to August a little longer.

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1

*A Day in the Life of a Bookworm***Morning Rituals**

You wake up at 10:00 AM in a sea of pillows and plotlines. It's not because you are lazy, but because you stayed up till 3:00 AM finishing your book. Who said that if you love reading, you can't get beauty sleep? Not me! The sun streams through your blinds, as if it wants to read over your shoulder—who wouldn't love that?

Bam! You're right back into the story as you open *Are You Kidding Me* by Lesley Crewe. You remember that chapter you were reading just before dozing off. Your main character energy is fully engaged now. You haven't even brushed your teeth yet, but you know you have other priorities. It's barely 11:00 AM, and you feel like you've lived five different lives already. Now that's what I call productivity!

Afternoon Quests

Now it's time for brunch! Here, you can take two different routes. The first is more laid-back. If you truly enjoy your book (which I hope everyone does), then it can be disappointing to read a boring one in the summer. Back to the easy path—grab a handful of pretzels, along with some coffee or tea (preferably tea). When you think about it, it's a balanced meal!

The second option caters to the aesthetic Pinterest addict. Picture this: a cute picnic featuring a three-course meal, complete with a linen blanket and sunglasses you probably won't wear. You whip out *Nosy Parker* by Lesley Crewe and indulge in both food and fiction.

A Bookstore Adventure

Once you are well-fed, you spot a local bookstore on your way to

grab an iced coffee. How can you not go in? As a reader, you have an obligation to visit every book-related place you see! You swear you were just browsing, but it turns out there's a sale on a lovely limited edition book that calls your name. How could you resist?

Your to-be-read pile on Goodreads might roll its eyes, but you're only human! The heat is turning up, leading to a character meltdown. What do you do? You grab a popsicle and pop in an audiobook. With a mysterious and unbothered energy, you stroll around the block, even as you reach the climax of the story and feel your soul shatter into eighty-seven pieces. You're sweaty and sniffling—but isn't that dramatic?

The Magic of Night Reading

Finally, you've arrived at the end of the day. Don't worry, fellow readers; the night is just starting! You crack open a fresh book, inhaling that delightful scent that fills your mind and soul. Your fairy lights twinkle. Your blanket is cozy, and your pillow is cool on both sides. You think to yourself, "Isn't this what life is all about?"

Your twenty-minute reading session turns into two hours, then five hours, until the sun rises again. Yikes! You are trembling as you clutch your book—like it hurt you (which it did)—wondering, "What now?" What is time really when you're immersed in the mind of a fictional character while being desperately behind on sleep?

You bookworms have just mastered the day!

Not everyone understands it, but you do.

Embrace summer and its reading adventures!

In this beautiful whirlwind of summer reading, remember to enjoy every moment. Embrace your character transformations and don't shy away from delightful distractions. After all, life is too short to read boring books.

2

The Secrets of a Traveller and Reader

There’s a certain essence about summer that invites readers to vanish—not entirely, but just enough to let five books slip into your suitcase alongside a bottle of sunscreen. This season makes your current read a perfect travel companion for adventures and unexpected airport delays.

Ariela White, an *Our Stories Matter* Youth Ambassador for Digitally Lit, understands this feeling well. Every summer, and throughout the year, she immerses herself in different lives through her favorite genres: sci-fi and fantasy. As a lifelong traveler, she has visited fifty-three countries and territories. Ariela shares lifestyle content on her blog (arielaonthego.com) and Instagram (@arielaonthego). She also showcases her passion for books and art. When not reading, writing,

or creating art, you can find her cycling or rollerblading in beautiful weather.

In this confessional-style interview, Ariela shares her summer reading secrets—especially the ones tucked in between the lines.

Secret 1: What Does “Summer” Mean to You?

Exploring the Connection Between Travel and Reading

Summer means Canada.

“In the summer, I usually come back to Canada! I love Canadian summers, visiting the library, and reading with my friends outdoors. These activities go hand in hand; summer is a great time for reading.”

Secret 2: Do Your Reading Habits Change When You Travel?

The Transformative Nature of Reading on the Go

Traveling means reading more.

“I find that my reading habits change a little bit when I’m traveling! I actually read more when I’m on the go (which is most of the time). I read while waiting for something, on a flight, or during a road trip. Part of this is due to being on vacation, which gives me more free time. Reading is my favorite offline activity!”

Secret 3: What Kind of Books Do You Bring on Trips?

The Art of Curating Your Book Selection

Fewer books = fewer excuses.

“Sometimes I’ll bring a book that I’m in the middle of reading or one I’m struggling to get through. By packing fewer books, I feel motivated to finish one because I have limited

options. This method works pretty well for me.”

Secret 4: A Book as Part of Your Summer Landscape

Discover the Beach's Impact on Reading Choices

Beaches are a reader’s best friend.

“A book becomes ‘part of the landscape’ when you look at a view and think, ‘I should be reading.’ For me, this typically happens at the beach—any beach, really. I believe beaches epitomize summer.”

Secret 5: Do Your Travels Influence Your Book Choices?

The Connection Between Place and Literary Preference

Traveling sparks curiosity.

“Yes, it does! I like to travel almost aimlessly. That way, I’m open to anything. Sometimes, I take a tour or visit a museum I know little about. This expands my interests and tastes, so if I find a book related to what I’m learning, I’m intrigued.”

**Secret 6: How Do Books
Shape Your Travel
Memories?**

The Nostalgic Power of Literature

Reading fuels nostalgia.

“Absolutely! To be honest, I don’t always try to match a book to my trip, but it’s nice to do that! Books can carry nostalgia just like music. The memories associated with the books I read while traveling often translate to my memories of that trip.”

Reading transforms our experiences. Whether you’re reading while waiting for your next flight or flipping pages on a beach towel, Ariela proves that reading is a blend of serendipity and storytelling. Traveling acts as a guide to illustrating these tales. This summer, embrace the adventures of literature and let every book enrich your journey.

Dive into summer with books that not only entertain but also inspire. After all, the stories you choose can leave lasting impressions long after summer slips away.

3

Sun, Stories, and the Lit Crew

Sun’s out, books out. While some of us are busy *choosing between a beach day or a boardwalk adventure*, the Youth Ambassadors of Digitally Lit *Our Stories Matter* have already delved into this summer's most captivating Nova Scotia reads. With fantasy worlds that beat the July heat to detective stories, they have their bookmarks in the right places.

“Digitally Lit is a not-for-profit society that empowers Atlantic Canadian youth through digital literacy and storytelling. Our programs bolster community engagement with local books, stories, and art while celebrating diversity, advancing equity, and improving

accessibility in the region's creative industries.”
—<https://www.digitallylit.ca/>

Now you are probably asking: what are the coolest young readers of Atlantic Canada curling up with this summer? Look no further; your answer is right here (you *may* need to scroll). I have the titles and the tea ready to slip into your carry-on or display on your nightstand. It's time to get a pen and take some notes.

Julia Crocker
Instagram: @thebookishworm2



Name: Love, Life
Author: Berni Stapleton
Publisher: Breakwater Books
Julia’s Rating: 4/5
Excerpt: “Love, Life by Bernadine Stapleton was absolute poetry, it was so whimsical, magical, and full of imagination! I felt fully transported to the wonderful world of Italy while reading it!”

"A hilarious romp through love, food, and Italy. Do you love life? In this hilarious frolic through the hills of Italy, our heroine discovers the past is never really gone: it runs beside us our entire lives, just waiting to bite us in the arse. love, life is a made-up true fable about coming out, going back in, getting fat, Italian food, and stalking the Piazza Bernardini. It’s a haunting love story, transcending decades, countries, and heartbreak. A Newfoundlander in Italy offers the humour, optimism, and romantic yearning the world needs now. "

—Breakwater Books

Read full review at:
https://www.instagram.com/p/DLd1uuluUMv/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

Jorja Walker

Instagram: @chezzibooks



Name: Kira’s crossing
Author: Orysia Dawydiak
Publisher: Acorn Press Canada
Jorja’s Rating: 4/5
Excerpt: “What a great FIN-ale, haha get it? Kira’s Crossing...I enjoyed this book. It was a great story line to finish the series. I liked the twists and how Kira’s emotions were portrayed throughout the story.”

“Five years had passed since Kira discovered that she was a mermaid adopted by a fisherman and his wife. Her birth parents were merrow royalty who had been imprisoned by their enemies, the shape shifting Finfolk. The Finfolk had also taken over Merhaven, the hereditary undersea home of the West Atlantic merrows. Encouraged

by merrow clans and supported by the local fishing community, Kira decided to join a Merhaven recovery mission. Also volunteering for the operation was Janus, a mysterious, handsome young merrow from the North Sea, as well as several Spegars, large merrows from across the Atlantic, who hunted with spears. In the chaos that followed the mission, Kira found herself on an unexpected journey that would take her across the continent and a fight for her own survival.”

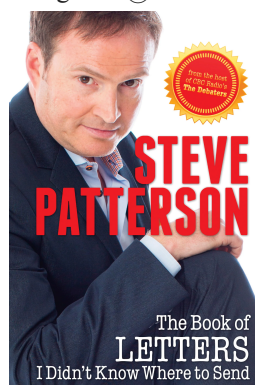
— Acorn Press Canada

Read full review at:

https://www.instagram.com/p/DLi2qYVJKqr/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==

Rain

Instagram: @rainsbookreviews



Name: The Book of Letters I Didn't Know Where to Send
 Author: Steve Patterson
 Publisher: Goose Lane Editions
 Rain's Rating: 3.5/5
 Excerpt: "The Book of Letters I Didn't Know Where to Send delivers well-crafted humour and smart observations with a distinct voice. While its more dated political references may not land for every reader, Patterson's wit, honesty, and originality make this collection an enjoyable and memorable read."

From the political to the personal, from the philosophical to the mundane, no subject — or target — is off limits. Patterson's letters may not change the world, but frankly, it's too early to tell. In these letters, he pleads, begs, cajoles, grovels, and always makes a compelling argument. He would like men to stop wearing Spandex bike shorts. He would like airlines to stop selling seats they don't have. He would like gluten to explain itself. He would like his nine-year-old self to know everything will be all right..."

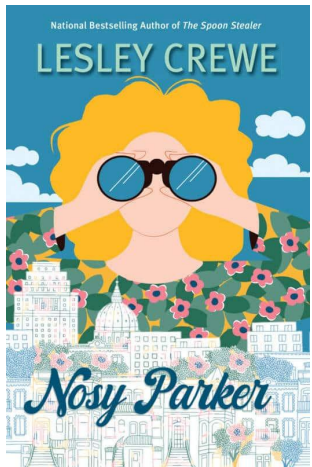
— Goose Lane Editions

Read full review at:

<https://www.digitallylit.ca/product-page/the-book-of-letters-i-didn-t-know-where-to-send>

Fifi Chen

Instagram: @fifisbookworld09



Name: Nosy Parker
Author: Lesley Crewe
Publisher: Nimbus Publishing
Fifi’s Rating: 4/5
Excerpt: “I enjoyed this novel so much! This book had me hooked from the start, and it was super hard to put it down!”

“It’s 1967 in Montreal, the Expo is in full swing, and Audrey Parker has just moved with her dad to Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, a whole new neighbourhood full of different kinds of people to spy on. Audrey is a lot of things: articulate, disarming, forthright. And, as her father reminds her often, indecently nosy.

Audrey scribbles every observation down in her

notebooks — from which foods her new teacher eats for lunch, to how blue the water is in Greece, to what time the one-legged man across the street gets home. She is certain she will soon root out a murderer or uncover a mystery. But there’s only one mystery that really matters to her: her mother. Who was she? How did she die? Why won’t her father ever talk about her?

Over a year of Audrey’s life, we bike with her through the streets of NDG, encountering stray animals, free-range kids, and adults both viciously cruel and wonderful. And we walk with Audrey across the threshold from childhood to adolescence, where she will discover the truth about her mother.

Balancing humour and sadness as expertly as ever, author Lesley Crewe — who has so often captured Cape Breton perfectly on the page — turns her incisive observations for the first time to the NDG of the 1960s, where she grew up.”
— Nimbus Publishing

Read full review at:
https://www.instagram.com/p/DLM5o1Ysd06/?utm_source=ig_web_c

copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZ
A==

Violet Nam

Instagram: @bookshelfaesthetics



Name: Lost & Found in Lunenburg
Author: Jane Doucet
Publisher: Nimbus Publishing
Violet’s Rating: 4.5/5
Excerpt: “Doucet writes with warmth, infusing humor into moments of vulnerability and grief. Her descriptions of Lunenburg are so vivid, you can almost smell the salt air and hear the buzz of conversation at the local cafe.”

A quirky, tender work of contemporary fiction about grief, love, and starting again at middle-age set in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, from the author of The Pregnant Pause and Fishnets & Fantasies.

“That’s the problem with loving someone, isn’t it?” said Margot with a ghost of a smile. “If you have a heartbeat, you’re bound to get your heart broken. Not just once, but over and over again... But the joy that happens in between the meetings and the partings makes it all worthwhile.”

Rose Ainsworth, the affable protagonist in Jane Doucet’s debut novel, The Pregnant Pause, is back in this candid, compelling look at midlife love, loss, and new beginnings. Rose and Jim, her husband of almost twenty years, have been living happily in Halifax, Nova Scotia, since moving from Toronto more than a decade earlier. With a satisfying career, two sweet rescue mutts, and her family nearby, Rose’s life is golden — until one day, her world unexpectedly implodes.

Widowed suddenly soon after her fiftieth birthday, Rose is addled by grief. Could that be why three months later, she decides to buy her friend Wendy Hebb’s sex shop in the tiny coastal community of Lunenburg? As she rushes to rent her house and store her belongings, her older sister,

Daisy, worries that Rose is running away — from the home that she and Jim lived in together, and its constant reminders of what she’s lost.

When Rose lands in Lunenburg in a furnished condo with a year’s lease, a colourful cast of local characters keeps her from drowning in grief: a long-lost quirky cousin with a mysterious health condition; a busybody septuagenarian widow who pushes Rose to join a bereavement group; and a handsome restaurant owner who stirs feelings in Rose she isn’t ready to face.

As the condo’s lease creeps closer to its expiration date, Rose must make a choice — continue carving out her new life in Lunenburg, or move back to her Halifax home? Jane Doucet’s trademark heart and humour, along with the return of beloved characters from *The Pregnant Pause* and *Fishnets & Fantasies*, make *Lost & Found* in Lunenburg feel like a long-overdue catch-up with old friends.
— Nimbus Publishing

Read full review at:
https://www.instagram.com/p/DK5paCNsw3O/?utm_source=ig_web_

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Summer doesn’t last forever—but the books you read definitely do. Every title in this list was chosen with care and maybe a little chaos (in true summer spirit), but trust me, if it made the cut, it’s worth the hype. These stories aren’t just recommendations; they are time capsules that represent what it means to be young, curious, and completely lit (pun intended).

Until next time,
Stay *booked*.

4

*Your Guide to Making a Colour
Palette—Using Emotions*

What does being calm look like in a colour? How can you paint joy without drawing a smile? From designing a book cover to buying a new purse—emotions lead our colour selection. Sometimes a palette is more than just an aesthetic; it’s the feeling that it brings us.

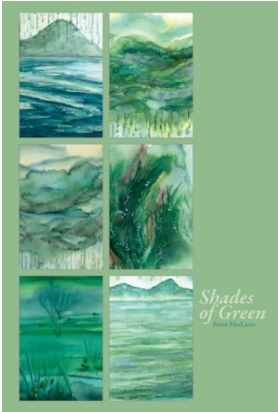
Let’s explore how colour palettes don’t just look good—but also feel good.

Calm
Reading a book in the rain.

Colours: sage green, muted lavender, pale blues, and warm greys.

These colours don’t yell or shout; they are soft-spoken. Using a calm palette helps to promote stillness and a sense of centralization. The

use of muted tones and low contrast is great for meditative, self-care, and healing visuals. It’s all about saturation, saturation, and saturation. Even a loud colour like orange can become serene if it turns into terracotta vibes.



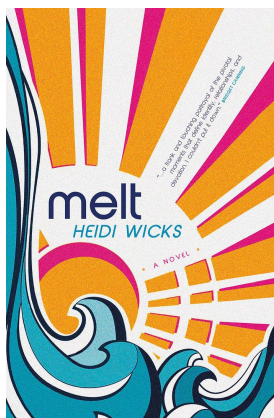
Shades of Green by Brent MacLaine
(Acorn Press)

Energy

The need to rearrange your entire room at 3 am.

Colours: fiery reds, electric blue, Aperol spritz orange, and hot pink.

Think of *any* colour that you can't miss, and your job is *done*. These hues can be a bit much at times and are definitely overstimulating. *Yes*, use with caution. When used at the perfect opportunity, heads will turn and attention will be captured—more like taken hostage.



Melt by Heidi Wicks (Breakwater Books)

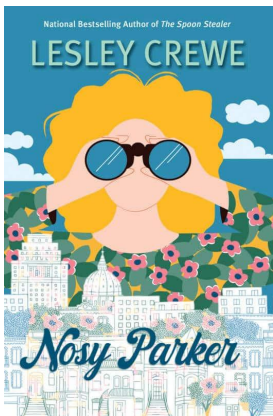
Joy

Summer days, sunshine, and the beach.

Colours: butter yellow, eggshell blue, tropical greens, and peach.

This set is a careful balance of being out-there but still introverted enough to not give you a headache. It can range from pastels that you have to squint to see to hues that can hardly be ignored.

Joy is a subjective emotion because people can get joy from multiple colours; that's why it's important to maintain an equilibrium between polar ends. These friendly colours are an open invitation for spontaneous plans and endless adventures.



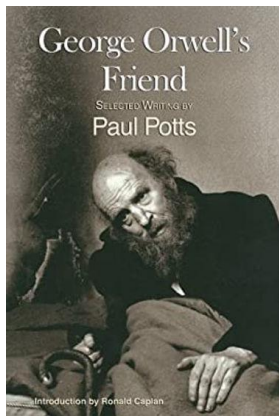
Nosy Parker by Lesley Crewe (Nimbus Publishing)

Sadness

When you are channelling Monday blues.

Colours: deep blues, faded mauve, soft charcoal, and cool greys.

We always have days when we need comfort. That's where the sad palette comes in to support: dark and moody on the cooler end of the scale. They are edgy enough to understand your melancholy and offer hope. It's perfect for those cloudy days when everything feels out of place and all you want to do is curl up in bed. This palette gets you; let it be there for you too.



George Orwell's Friend: Selected Writing by Paul Potts (Breton Books)

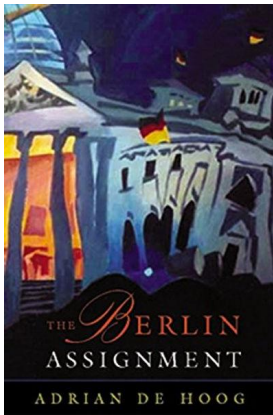
Dramatic

For maximum feelings.

Colours: crimson, black, burnt gold, deep violet, and cream white.

The boldness of drama is always *intentional*. It's cinematic and emotionally charged, often by using contrast. The grey area between the competing colours is where the emotions are truly amplified. Their

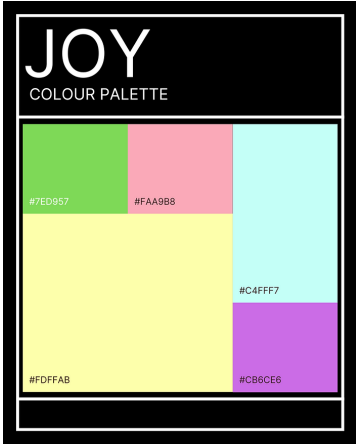
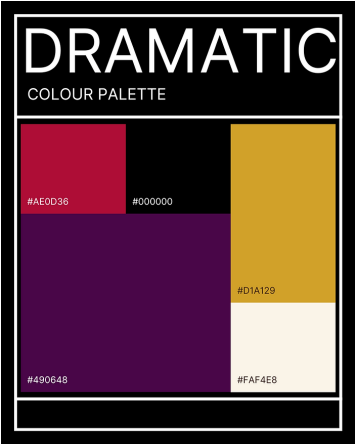
reckoning works well for cover art, theatrical visuals, or anything inspired by Florence + The Machine. A pro tip is to let a dark colour dominate and to pick a lighter colour to highlight important elements.



The Berlin Assignment by Adrian De Hoog (Breakwater Books)

In a world filled with colour picker tools and hex codes, emotions are one of the strongest tools we have. You don't need to know every single rule in the book. Just let the colours talk. When a palette feels right, your audience will feel it too.

Now go on and feel the colour.



5

6-Step Summer Reading Slump Prescription

Bored? Read all of your favourite books? Can't move on to another book? Sounds like a reading slump.

We have all been here—the awkward in-between stage after reading a mind-blowing book or an exhaustingly mediocre book. Don't worry! There is nothing permanent about this, and it can easily be treated. It's a great opportunity to switch up your reading habits, try something new, and perhaps fall in love with reading even more. Here's how you can ease back into your favourite hobby, of course, a little chaotically.

Say it with me: reading slump be gone

Step #1: Re-read a Comfort Book

Sometimes, reading a new book can be overwhelming and feel too *daunting*. It feels like a commitment you aren't ready for. But a comfort book? That is a

whole other story. Think hard: what's the book that gives you a feeling of warmth? Yes...that book is your key to butterflies. Going back to that familiar and cozy place is like reconnecting with an old friend; no small talk is needed—ever.

My personal favourite? *Hit and Mrs.* by Lesley Crewe is an all-time classic. It's hilarious and emotional at the same time and includes just the right amount of action for the story to feel like a hug from the literary world.

Step #2: Try Something Short and Sharp

You don't need to dive headfirst into a five-book series where each novel is eight hundred pages. Not at all. Novellas, essays, and short stories are *perfect*. They get you invested but don't bore you. Just finishing *something* helps you gain momentum again.

I recommend reading George Orwell’s *Friend: Selected Writing* by Paul Potts. It is reflective and short enough to read in one sitting, but it has an *after-effect*. It’s the kind of writing that makes you pick up a pen (or another book). Don’t underestimate the power of the small but mighty. Your entrance to reading again doesn’t have to be grand; it can be something unexpected.

Step #3: Genre-Hop

You might be wondering, island-hopping is one thing, but how exactly will genre-hopping help? Well, it’s just simple psychology... If you are way too invested in historical fiction or fantasy, then maybe some light romance will help? Switching up your scenery—a mental one at least—can help get you excited again.

Step #4: Set the Vibe

Get a candle, some cozy blankets, tea or coffee (my personal favourite is tea), and make a playlist. The more inviting your setting, the more likely you are to read. Plus, it will all just be wasted effort if you don’t even end up reading.

Step #5: Scroll...With Purpose

Hear me out. I am not saying to open Instagram or TikTok and go on a doom-scrolling session about non-reading-related things. Watch thirty-second clips of your favourite influencer ranting about their book, watch fancasts, and scroll past a beautifully annotated page. Want to hear an insider’s tip? I heard Digitally Lit Youth Ambassadors post some awesome content—no favouritism, of course. The inspiration is all out there. Just let it find you.

Step #6: Have a Break (Maybe even a KitKat)

If nothing works, just take a break. You don’t need to force yourself too much, because the results of that won’t be all that successful. Fake-enjoying books is also not going to get you anywhere. If your brain wants a rest, take a break. The right book will come to you when you are ready. And if you are bored? Participate in bookish activities like making bookmarks, creating playlists *again*, curating mood boards, and designing fan art—there is *so* much to do.

Reading slumps are not a sign of failure. They’re just plot twists in

your story—completely harmless.
It might take a few days, a week, a
month, or even a full year.
But when you are ready...it will be
like the slump never existed:
poof...gone.

6

Essentials for a Writer's Desk

Does your desk reflect your mind? If that's true, then mine has quite the story to tell. It's a part workspace and part sanctuary. Every object on it has a reason for being there, even if that reason is: *I just didn't feel like moving it.*

Here's a look at my desk's essentials, and why they matter more than they should.

Desk Essential #1: The Books

There is a stack of books; I insist on keeping nearby. Some that have yellow stick tabs, receipts—oh shoot! I have been meaning to return this shirt, though that's going to be hard when the receipt is covered in highlighter ink. At least it's pastel; it says something about my trustworthiness. Right?

Some books are for inspiration, specifically, my coveted copy of *Maud Lewis—The Life, Art, and*

Legacy of Maud Lewis by Ray Cronin. Some are just for entertainment, such as *Hit & Mrs.* by Lesley Crewe. Some are there to judge me—*when are you finally going to read me?* They ask.

Desk Essential #2: The Planner

Next to the books is my planner. Its presence? Overwhelming and daunting. I have used mass mediums to write out my life's biggest tasks: a pen, pencil, marker, and Sharpie. Some functions are crossed out three times—I guess I was *really* done with cleaning up my room. Others have migrated from one day to another—I guess I *really* didn't have time for those.

Desk Essential #3: The Candle

There's also a candle: *Cactus Bloom*. Of course, I have to follow the lead of every writer, reader, and

artist. I light it in the hopes of writing something meaningful, but it ends up being a mood placebo.

Desk Essential #4: The Tea

A mug sits nearby, filled with authentic chai made by my father. It’s his way of showing love. Somehow, the warm scent of this delicious concoction finds its way to me—a mixture of ginger, cardamom, cloves, and sugar—breaking the mental fog. He doesn’t say much, just places it, and gives a nod. But to me, that gesture is everything, a ritual I will endlessly follow.

Desk Essential #5: The Laptop

In the middle sits my heated laptop. Its keys are ready to be clicked, and ideas are ready to be poured. Half of its memory is taken up by drafts, good copies, and in-progress works; the other half is eBooks. My 2025 vision board greets me every time I open it. As of right now, a blinking cursor waits for me to finish this article.

Desk Essential #6: The Notebook

Beside my laptop is my notebook, *just a notebook*. I fill it with words

that are interesting and inspiring. If ever in need of a creative refresh, I look to this journal. It’s my draft’s draft, filled with wrong spellings, odd punctuation, and run-on sentences. After making all the edits to a piece, I look back at this notebook and see the growth that happened.

It’s amusing how neat my desk appears from a distance, but if you look closely, there are a few moments of chaos. It’s nothing catastrophic, just the kind of chaos that shows “I was thinking.” I always thought that a desk had to be a certain way. But I realized that’s not the case. A little mess is needed. It’s not failure in any sense, just a sign of movement, of thought. It’s a balance between my distractions and routine. That’s fine, more than fine. That’s exactly how a desk should be: *almost* perfect.



Pink Panther Desk.

7

My Creative Writing Routine

It always starts with an idea. Not a lightning bolt or an Eat, Pray, Love epiphany, but just a whisper.

It could be a sentence I overhear at the coffee shop: “I was shocked! He literally spilled wine on my white shirt.” This is prime gold, not just gossip. How could he stain her shirt red?

It could be a picture that haunts my life like the ghost of Christmas past. Or a conversation that lingers in my mind, like the bitter taste of embarrassing moments.

Suddenly, I find myself with my notebook out, writing furiously in my journal like I am a literary emergency responder. The cursive arrives before the ink touches the crisp cream paper (nothing says serious writer like some loops and curves).

Mornings are fueled with the hope of writing the next Gatsby; inspiration is my green light. Afternoons turn into three cups of tea and me contemplating life choices. And nights? A burst of magic. The world may be asleep when it’s dark, but my laptop and I are surely busy.

This isn’t just my creative writing routine but an old Hollywood affair.

Step 1: Find Inspiration

Here’s a secret: If the idea isn’t there, then I am not either. I am envious of the artists who practice their art every day for an hour. I just can’t if it doesn’t *click*. It’s like my creativity curls up in bed wearing pyjamas and busies itself in the latest episode of The Summer I Turned Pretty.

So what do I do? Find inspiration. Sometimes I find it at the oddest of places, like the claw machine at my nearest movie theatre or through a lover's spat at Walmart. This process would be a whole lot faster if inspiration were on Google Maps.

My current muse (mind tattoo) is a quote by Tina Turner. I was recently reading *The Sweetness in the Lime* by Stephen Kimber, and the lyric "What's Love Got to Do With It?" decided to buy up some space in my brain. For someone (me) who appreciates a good romantic gesture and classic romantic comedies like "How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days," this quote felt like a plot twist. Mind you, it's the very first part of the book. Naturally, I had thoughts, many to be specific. Naturally, I need to immortalize them through writing utensils.

Step 2: Get a Journal

Typing first drafts on a laptop just feels physically *wrong*, almost like drinking hot chocolate in the summer.

I need paper. Ink. The drama of writing things out physically is truly cinematic. Right now, I am obsessed with the Maud Lewis journal from Nimbus Publishing. The cover alone makes you want to become a published author. Plus, journaling provides you with the opportunity of being found years later and someone gasping at your work, saying, "So this is how it all began."

Everything physically starts from this notebook, making it a gem of a piece.

Step 3: Write a Draft

Ah, the daunting first draft. Both chaos and magic. My first draft is terrifying to any writer, cluttered with plot holes and ideas that take a snack break every ten minutes. And how could I forget metaphors that result in raised eyebrows (from me) and pure disgust (sometimes)?

With my Tina Turner quote, I began thinking about mystery novels with romance subplots like *The Last Time I Saw Her* by Alexandra Harrington and *Foreign Affairs* by Nick Wilkshire, where mystery has a romance subplot. It's comical in itself, using whodunnits to represent the biggest whodunnit of all.

When I get stuck, I grab a random word, like “orange” or “beach,” and force its essence into the story. It’s either genius *or* a disaster! But I am a firm believer that there’s beauty in every mess. Plus, disasters make for better stories later anyway.

Step 4: Type Draft Electronically

This is the stage where “I get serious,” metaphorically, of course. The words from the page go into the blank document with a blinking cursor. It suddenly feels all so official even when the writing itself is still a big mess.

I have a love-hate thing with this step. The red underlines and random spaces between words are enough to drive me crazy. I need the mistakes to go so I can focus, but I know that if I edit everything too soon, it ruins the flow. So I try, try, and try to behave (keyword: try).

Step 5: Edit

Let’s pretend I didn’t correct a few spellings in my writing before getting to this stage. Trust me, I tried to stop myself.

Editing is where my inner perfectionist wakes up, grabs a coffee, and gets to work. I begin with organizing the piece into shape, wrestling with new and old thoughts. The worst part is when I have to erase some of the prettiest sentences, just because they don’t fit (sigh). Then I get to my favourite part: correcting the grammar. I tackle the punctuation and typos that are invisible to the human eye.

It’s long. Slow. Slightly torturous. But the “Tortured Writer” energy is the perfect addition.

Step 6: Design and Catalogue

This step is my guilty pleasure.

Once the writing is done, I dress it up like it’s going to the Met Gala. Fonts get switched, and colours get tested. When it all feels right, it gets saved to the esteemed folder on Google Drive. To be just a little extra, I print the piece also

because its physical presence is something special. If you don't think that is going "above and beyond," I also physically and digitally label each of them.

It's not just about saving words. It's about knowing that my work matters and that I put in the effort just for myself.

Creative writing is a performance: a puzzle, a piece of therapy, and an art. Some days it can be the easiest thing in the world. Words will be tumbling out of my brain before I even realize what I am writing. Other days, it feels like lifting the sky, which I know can be pretty daunting, from my knowledge about Percy Jackson novels. But this confusion is where the enjoyment truly lies.

This is more than a routine; it's a love story. Like any love story worth telling, it usually ends with a happy ending.



Essentials for Creative Writing

The End