

Stage important tools:
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Stage One of the creative process, according to author Keith Sawyer, is Preparation. This stage offers the creative person two important tools: the language with which to create, and the context for that what he or she creates. Preparation involves research into what has come before. In the case of a painter, for example, research into the works of painters that have lived and worked before her cements her process in a historical context, and also ensures that she does not reinvent the wheel. During this initial stage the creator keeps his mind open to ideas and suggestions and gathers clues. In Sawyer's words, " without first learning what's already been done, a person doesn't have the raw material to create with. Creativity results when the individual...combines these existing elements and generates some new combination" (Sawyer 59).

Stage Two involves Incubation. In Sawyer's mind the incubation stage represents " the least understood stage in the creative process" (Sawyer 61). Incubation typically relates to the bubbling of ideas just below the level of conscious awareness; wherein the ingredients collected from stage one are combined and given time to gestate.

Incubation of ideas also occurs when the creative person engages in activities not directly related to his work. Sawyer describes an important adjunct to the incubation stage as " cross fertilization," wherein ideas from multiple projects simmer concomitantly. Stage Three of the creative process according to Sawyer is Insight. Insight essentially combines the first two stages. With a thorough grounding in what has come before, the creator allows her mind to incubate ideas until one or more ideas generate a

creative insight. Stage Three refers to the “ subjective experience” of producing the idea (Sawyer 59).

In Sawyer’s understanding “ creative insight is never 100 per cent original. What makes an insight novel is the way that these existing ideas are put together” (Sawyer 67). Stage Four refers to Verification. This stage evaluates the creative insight from the previous stage and decides if it warrants further study or elaboration. Elaboration “ takes the raw insight and molds it into a complete product” (Sawyer 69).

Stage Four represents the most difficult stage of the creative process, as this is the stage that becomes fully conscious. Once conscious the fledgling idea becomes subject to the creator’s self judgment, insecurity, self doubt and lack of faith, all of which have killed many a good idea prematurely. Often the best ideas bypass the Verification stage and jump straight from incubation to elaboration. Evaluation and verification often jettison ideas deemed commercially invalid, or those that appear complex or heavily taxing emotionally or psychologically. A committed creator often struggles in the evaluation phase, especially if his or her career flounders.

To a certain extent however evaluation and elaboration work hand in hand, since as Sawyer points out “ it’s often hard to tell if an insight is a good one without elaborating it at least part way” (Sawyer 70). Creativity, though it often defies logic, does not happen in moments of magical inspiration. Creativity rather remains the result of hard work and concentrated attention.

The creative person essentially prepares his life for the work to formulate, and it rarely arrives in one solid block, but rather accrues slowly and steadily over weeks and months.

Works Cited

Sawyer, Robert Keith. "The Stages of the Creative Process." Explaining Creativity: The Science of Human Innovation. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. 58-70.

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