

A common maxim among writers is the phrase, “easy reading is usually very hard writing.” Part of what makes good writing is spending the time, often mid-sentence, to interrogate our thinking. Although an efficiency economy justifies much of technology, taking a bit longer to write something well yields treasure that can be far more valuable than an instant essay. It also teaches us to recognize our own voice, as well as to consider how we will be read by others. As we look anew at text that has become too familiar, we can make what we write more nuanced, more compelling, or more persuasive. When we compose, rewrite, and edit our final drafts, we have occasion to imagine how our future readers will respond, an exercise in empathy that pulls us outside ourselves. What might originally have evoked yawns may, after careful, humane input, draw tears.

If, on the other hand, we allow a machine to write for us, we bypass the chance to grow through writing, which, in its most glorious moments, can be a kind of revelation. Sometimes, especially when we are writing journal entries for our own reading, or letters or talks to move others, we may find ourselves following a train of thought that is not of our own making, one that leads to a better place where we learn new truth. This thoughtful, creative mode of writing trades prompts for promptings, and rather than being relieved of an onerous task, we instead find ourselves transformed through writing that can, and does, change our very souls.

—J. Scott Miller, Dean, BYU College of Humanities,
“But Can It Make You Cry?” *Humanities* magazine, Spring 2023, prologue.