

Stay true to your voice, *especially* if it's different

Find your voice. Those three little words rank right up there with “Read, read, read” and “Don’t give up” as the advice most often given to newbie writers.

Finding your voice isn’t the hard part; it’s staying true to your voice once you’ve found it, believing that it’s good enough to be published. We authors are big on self-doubt. That self-doubt starts in the author cradle, when we’re first starting out. Chances are if you’re a writer, you’ve always known deep down that you wanted to be one. But when you read a certain book or series by a particular author, you knew you *had* to be one.

That’s how it happened to me.

I read Mary Stewart’s Merlin novels and I knew I wanted to do that. I wanted to write like *her*. Guess what? There was no way in a hot place that I was going to write like Mary Stewart. Why? Because I’m not Mary Stewart. But when I first got the writing bug, she was my ideal of how a great author should write. Absolutely gorgeous prose. And if I couldn’t write like her, then I’d never be a great author or even a good one. I tried to write like her, and then like several other authors whose work I fell in love with over the years—three manuscripts worth of trying. Those books are in my office closet now, never to see the light of day. Why? They weren’t me; it wasn’t my voice. As a result, the words just lay there on the page. It was me trying to be someone I wasn’t.

I write quasi-traditional fantasy. I say “quasi” because my characters use modern speech. Yes, they wear doublets and fight with blades (and bombs and buckets and whiskey bottles), but for the most part, they talk like us. I’ve heard my books called *The Lord of the Rings* meets *The Sopranos*. Definitely not like Mary Stewart, or any of the other authors whose work I admire. It’s like me. I don’t do fancy speeches and lush descriptions. I can’t do it; and now I don’t want to. I write like my heroine Raine Benares talks—straight-shooting, plain-spoken, snarky with a dry and twisted sense of humor.

That’s my voice. And that voice was what sold my series, first to my agent, and then to my publisher. They offered representation and bought my books because they were different.

So if your voice is different from anything out there, don’t try to change it. You’re unique and so is your voice. Embrace it and run with it.

Being different can mean being published.