

Steven Pressfield: The War of Art Book Summary

the**WAR**of**ART**

**Break Through the Blocks
and Win Your
Inner Creative Battles**

BLACK IRISH ENTERTAINMENT LLC 0-446-881487



STEVEN PRESSFIELD

“A vital gem...a kick in the ass.” —*Esquire*

[CLICK HERE FOR THE Written Summary](#)

[CLICK HERE FOR THE YouTube Summary](#)

[CLICK HERE FOR THE Audio Podcast Summary](#)

[CLICK HERE TO Follow us on Instagram](#)

[CLICK HERE TO Subscribe to our Weekly Book Summary Newsletter](#)

The Book in Three Sentences

1. Resistance is what keeps us from sitting down and doing our best work
2. Most of us have two lives: The life we live before we turn pro and the life after
3. Resistance hates it when we turn pro

The Five Big Ideas

1. "Resistance cannot be seen, touched, heard, or smelled. But it can be felt. We experience it as an energy field radiating from a work-in-potential. It's a repelling force. It's negative. Its aim is to shove us away, distract us, prevent us from doing our work."
2. "If you take Resistance at its word, you deserve everything you get."
3. "The awakening artist must be ruthless, not only with herself but with others."
4. "The best and only thing that one artist can do for another is to serve as an example and an inspiration."
5. The power to take charge is in your hands; all you had to do is believe it.

The War of Art Summary

- "It's not the writing part that's hard. What's hard is sitting down to write."
- "What keeps us from sitting down is Resistance."
- "Most of us have two lives. The life we live, and the unlived life within us. Between the two stands Resistance."
- "It was easier for Hitler to start World War II than it was for him to face a blank square of canvas."
- "Resistance cannot be seen, touched, heard, or smelled. But it can be felt. We experience it as an energy field radiating from a work-in-potential. It's a repelling force. It's negative. Its aim is to shove us away, distract us, prevent us from doing our work."
- "If you take Resistance at its word, you deserve everything you get."
- "Henry Fonda was still throwing up before each stage performance, even when he was seventy-five."
- "The warrior and the artist live by the same code of necessity, which dictates that the battle must be fought anew every day."
- "The highest treason a crab can commit is to make a leap for the rim of the bucket."
- "The awakening artist must be ruthless, not only with herself but with others."

- “The best and only thing that one artist can do for another is to serve as an example and an inspiration.”
- “We don’t just put off our lives today; we put them off till our deathbed.”
- “This very moment, we can change our lives. There never was a moment, and never will be, when we are without the power to alter our destiny.”
- “The working artist will not tolerate trouble in her life because she knows trouble prevents her from doing her work. The working artist banishes from her world all sources of trouble. She harnesses the urge for trouble and transforms it in her work.”
- “The more scared we are of a work or calling, the more sure we can be that we have to do it.”
- “Resistance is experienced as fear; the degree of fear equates to the strength of Resistance. Therefore the more fear we feel about a specific enterprise, the more certain we can be that that enterprise is important to us and to the growth of our soul. That’s why we feel so much Resistance. If it meant nothing to us, there’d be no Resistance.”
- “If you didn’t love the project that is terrifying you, you wouldn’t feel anything. The opposite of love isn’t hate; it’s indifference.”
- “The more Resistance you experience, the more important your unmanifested art/project/enterprise is to you — and the more gratification you will feel when you finally do it.”
- “Rationalization is Resistance’s right-hand man. Its job is to keep us from feeling the shame we would feel if we truly faced what cowards we are for not doing our work.”
- “It’s one thing to lie to ourselves. It’s another thing to believe it.”
- “Resistance is fear. But Resistance is too cunning to show itself naked in this form. Why? Because if Resistance lets us see clearly that our own fear is preventing us from doing our work, we may feel shame at this. And shame may drive us to act in the face of fear.”
- “Resistance doesn’t want us to do this. So it brings in Rationalization.”
- “Aspiring artists defeated by Resistance share one trait. They all think like amateurs. They have not yet turned pro. The moment an artist turns pro is as epochal as the birth of his first child. With one stroke, everything changes. I can state absolutely that the term of my life can be divided into two parts: before turning pro, and after.”

- “The amateur plays for fun. The professional plays for keeps. To the amateur, the game is his avocation. To the pro it’s his vocation. The amateur plays part-time, the professional full-time. The amateur is a weekend warrior. The professional is there seven days a week.”
- “Resistance hates it when we turn pro.”
- “Someone once asked Somerset Maugham if he wrote on a schedule or only when struck by inspiration. ‘I write only when inspiration strikes,’ he replied. ‘Fortunately it strikes every morning at nine o’clock sharp.’”
- “The artist committing himself to his calling has volunteered for hell, whether he knows it or not. He will be dining for the duration on a diet of isolation, rejection, self-doubt, despair, ridicule, contempt, and humiliation.”

What exactly are the qualities that define us as professionals?

1. We show up every day.
 2. We show up no matter what.
 3. We stay on the job all day.
 4. We are committed over the long haul.
 5. The stakes for us are high and real.
 6. We accept remuneration for our labor.
 7. We do not overidentify with our jobs.
 8. We master the technique of our jobs.
 9. We have a sense of humor about our jobs.
 10. We receive praise or blame in the real world.
- “The professional, though he accepts money, does his work out of love.”
 - “A professional acts in the face of fear.”
 - “The amateur believes he must first overcome his fear; then he can do his work. The professional knows that fear can never be overcome. He knows there is no such thing as a fearless warrior or a dread-free artist.”
 - “The professional understands that Resistance is fertile and ingenious. It will throw stuff at him that he’s never seen before.”
 - “A professional does not show off”
 - “A professional dedicates himself to mastering technique.”
 - “A professional distances herself from her instrument.”
 - “A professional does not take failure (or success) personally.”
 - “The professional loves her work. She is invested in it wholeheartedly. But she does not forget that the work is not her. Her artistic self contains many works and

many performances. Already the next is percolating inside her. The next will be better, and the one after that better still.”

- “A professional recognizes her limitations.”
- “A professional is recognized by other professionals.”
- “Making yourself a corporation (or just thinking of yourself in that way) reinforces the idea of professionalism because it separates the artist-doing-the-work from the will-and- consciousness-running-the-show.”
- “There’s no mystery to turning pro. It’s a decision brought about by an act of will. We make up our minds to view ourselves as pros and we do it. Simple as that.”
- “When we sit down day after day and keep grinding, something mysterious starts to happen. A process is set into motion by which, inevitably and infallibly, heaven comes to our aid. Unseen forces enlist in our cause; serendipity reinforces our purpose.”
- “The power to take charge was in my hands; all I had to do was believe it.”
- “We’re not born with unlimited choices. We can’t be anything we want to be.”
- “A hack, he says, is a writer who second-guesses his audience. When the hack sits down to work, he doesn’t ask himself what’s in his own heart. He asks what the market is looking for.”
- “Of any activity you do, ask yourself: If I were the last person on earth, would I still do it?”
- “Creative work is not a selfish act or a bid for attention on the part of the actor. It’s a gift to the world and every being in it. Don’t cheat us of your contribution. Give us what you’ve got.”

<https://www.samuelthomasdavies.com>