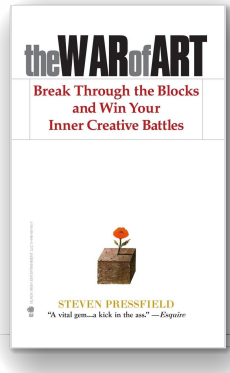
the WAR of ART

Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles

STEVEN PRESSFIELD *Rugged Land, 2002 · foreword by Robert McKee*

"It's not the writing part that's hard. What's hard is ***sitting down to write.****"*

"Most of us have two lives. The life we live, and the unlived life within us. Between the two stands Resistance." The book names that force, shows its disguises, and lays out how a professional beats it — every day.



BOOK ONE

RESISTANCE

Defining the Enemy

An invisible, internal force that radiates from any work you mean to do and tries to stop you. From age 24 to 32 it drove Pressfield across the country thirteen times. Hitler, rejected by Vienna's art academy: *"it was easier for Hitler to start World War II than it was for him to face a blank square of canvas."* (His own word: overstatement.)

WHAT SETS IT OFF · 11 TRIGGERS

Any creative calling · **launching any entrepreneurial venture** · any diet or health regimen · spiritual growth · tighter abs · breaking a bad habit · **education of every kind** · moral courage · helping others · commitments of the heart · a principled stand. In short, *"any act that rejects immediate gratification in favor of long-term growth, health, or integrity."*

> *"Rule of thumb: The more important a call or action is to our soul's evolution, the more Resistance we will feel toward pursuing it."*

ITS 13 TRAITS

INVISIBLE felt, never seen
INSIDIOUS lies, seduces, bullies
IMPERSONAL a force of nature
UNIVERSAL everyone has it
PLAYS FOR KEEPS it aims to kill
ONE DIRECTION only blocks the higher path
RECRUITS ALLIES the crabs in the bucket
INTERNAL not your spouse or boss
IMPLACABLE never lets up
INFALLIBLE points to what matters
NEVER SLEEPS Fonda vomited at 75
FUELED BY FEAR your fear is its juice
STRONGEST AT THE FINISH the bag of winds

ITS DISGUISES

- **Procrastination**: *"I am going to write my symphony; I'm just going to start tomorrow."*
- **Trouble, drama, victimhood**: crises that feel like action. Cheap thrills: judge them by the hollowness afterward.
- **Criticism** of others; **grandiose fantasies**; **rationalization**: *"It's one thing to lie to ourselves. It's another thing to believe it."*
- **Fear is a compass**: *"The more scared we are of a work or calling, the more sure we can be that we have to do it."*

BOOK TWO

TURNING PRO

Combating Resistance

THE AMATEUR	THE PROFESSIONAL
plays for fun · part-time · a weekend warrior · waits to feel ready	plays for keeps · full-time · there seven days a week · acts despite fear

We are already pros at our day jobs. Bring the same ten habits to the real work: **show up every day · no matter what · stay all day · for the long haul · high, real stakes · accept pay · don't over-identify · master technique · keep a sense of humor · take praise or blame in the real world.**

> *"I write only when inspiration strikes," he replied. "Fortunately it strikes every morning at nine o'clock sharp."* — Somerset Maugham

HOW A PRO BEHAVES · 17 MARKS

Patient (twice as long, twice the cost) · seeks order · demystifies · acts despite fear · no excuses: *"Resistance is like a telemarketer; if you so much as say hello, you're finished"* · plays it as it lays · prepared · no showing off · masters technique · **asks for help** · separates self from instrument · **doesn't take failure personally** · endures · self-validates · knows her limits · reinvents · recognized by pros.

TWO WORKING TOOLS

- **The Principle of Priority**: *"(a) you must know the difference between what is urgent and what is important, and (b) you must do what's important first."*
- **You, Inc.**: run yourself as a company — the boss holds a Monday meeting with the worker.

HIS ROAD TO PRO

- **LATE 20s** — 26 months to finish a first novel. It never sold. Mentor Paul Rink: *"Start the next one today."*
- **5 YEARS, HOLLYWOOD** — nine spec screenplays, none sold.
- **AGE 42** — first paid job after 17 years: *King Kong Lives*. It flopped. *"I had not yet had a success. But I had had a real failure."*
- **10 MORE YEARS** — *The Legend of Bagger Vance*.

BOOK THREE

THE HIGHER REALM

Beyond Resistance

Pressfield's belief: once you do the work daily, allies show up — he calls them the Muse and angels; a reader may call them talent or the unconscious. *"When we sit down each day and do our work, power concentrates around us."* He says a prayer to the Muse aloud before every session.

EGO VS. SELF

Resistance lives in the Ego; creativity in the Self. *"The Self wishes to create, to evolve. The Ego likes things just the way they are."* The deepest fear is not failure but **success** — outgrowing your tribe.

HIERARCHY VS. TERRITORY

HIERARCHY	TERRITORY
work judged by rank, applause and what others think. *"For the artist to define himself hierarchically is fatal."*	work for its own sake. Claimed alone, by work; returns exactly what you put in.

Test: when anxious, do you call six friends or go back to your work? And: *"If I were the last person on earth, would I still do it?"*

THE HACK

Second-guesses the audience. *Bagger Vance*, a golf novel everyone expected to fail, worked because *"I trusted what I wanted, not what I thought would work."*

HIS DAILY RITUAL

Lucky boots and talismans, the Muse prayer, sit down around 10:30, about four hours. Then: *"All that counts is that, for this day, for this session, I have overcome Resistance."*

Use it Monday

- Name the one project you keep avoiding. That is the one that matters.
- Book a fixed daily block for it, before email: important before urgent.
- Hold a 15-minute Monday You, Inc. meeting with yourself.
- Near the finish line, expect a surge of doubt and push through.
- Judge the day by one thing only: did you sit down and work?

Read with care

- He calls ADD and similar conditions "marketing ploys" and hints illness comes from an unlived life. Ignore that.
- Book Three is faith — angels, the Muse. McKee's foreword disagrees.
- His fear-as-compass rule is about callings; around real danger, fear is a safety signal.
- He treats seeking support as Resistance; dated examples (Armstrong).

HOW THIS PAGE WAS MADE. Read in full from the 2002 Rugged Land ebook of *The War of Art*. Every quote checked word for word against that text by script. The cover shown is the 2012 Black Irish Books edition.

"Don't cheat us of your contribution. Give us what you've got." STEVEN PRESSFIELD