



# Writing **BLUE HIGHWAYS**: The Story of How a Book Happened

*William Least Heat-Moon*

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# Writing BLUE HIGHWAYS: The Story of How a Book Happened

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The story behind the writing of the best-selling *Blue Highways* is as fascinating as the epic trip itself. More than thirty years after his 14,000-mile, 38-state journey, William Least Heat-Moon reflects on the four years he spent capturing the lessons of the road trip on paper—the stops and starts in his composition process, the numerous drafts and painstaking revisions, the depressing string of rejections by publishers, the strains on his personal relationships, and many other aspects of the toil that went into writing his first book. Along the way, he traces the hard lessons learned and offers guidance to aspiring and experienced writers alike. Far from being a technical manual, ***Writing Blue Highways: The Story of How a Book Happened*** is an adventure story of its own, a journey of “exploration into the myriad routes of heart and mind that led to the making of a book from the first sorry and now vanished paragraph to the last words that came not from a graphite pencil but from a letterpress in Tennessee.”

Readers will not find a collection of abstract formulations and rules for writing; rather, this book gracefully incorporates examples from Heat-Moon’s own experience. As he explains, “This story might be termed an inadvertent autobiography written not by the traveler who took Ghost Dancing in 1978 over the byroads of America but by a man only listening to him. That blue-roadman hasn’t been seen in more than a third of a century, and over the last many weeks as I sketched in these pages, I’ve regretted his inevitable departure.” Filtered as the struggles of the “blue-roadman” are through the awareness of someone more than thirty years older with a half dozen subsequent books to his credit, the story of how his first book “happened” is all the more resonant for readers who may not themselves be writers but who are interested in the tricky balance of intuitive creation and self-discipline required for any artistic endeavor.

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