

# Academic writing

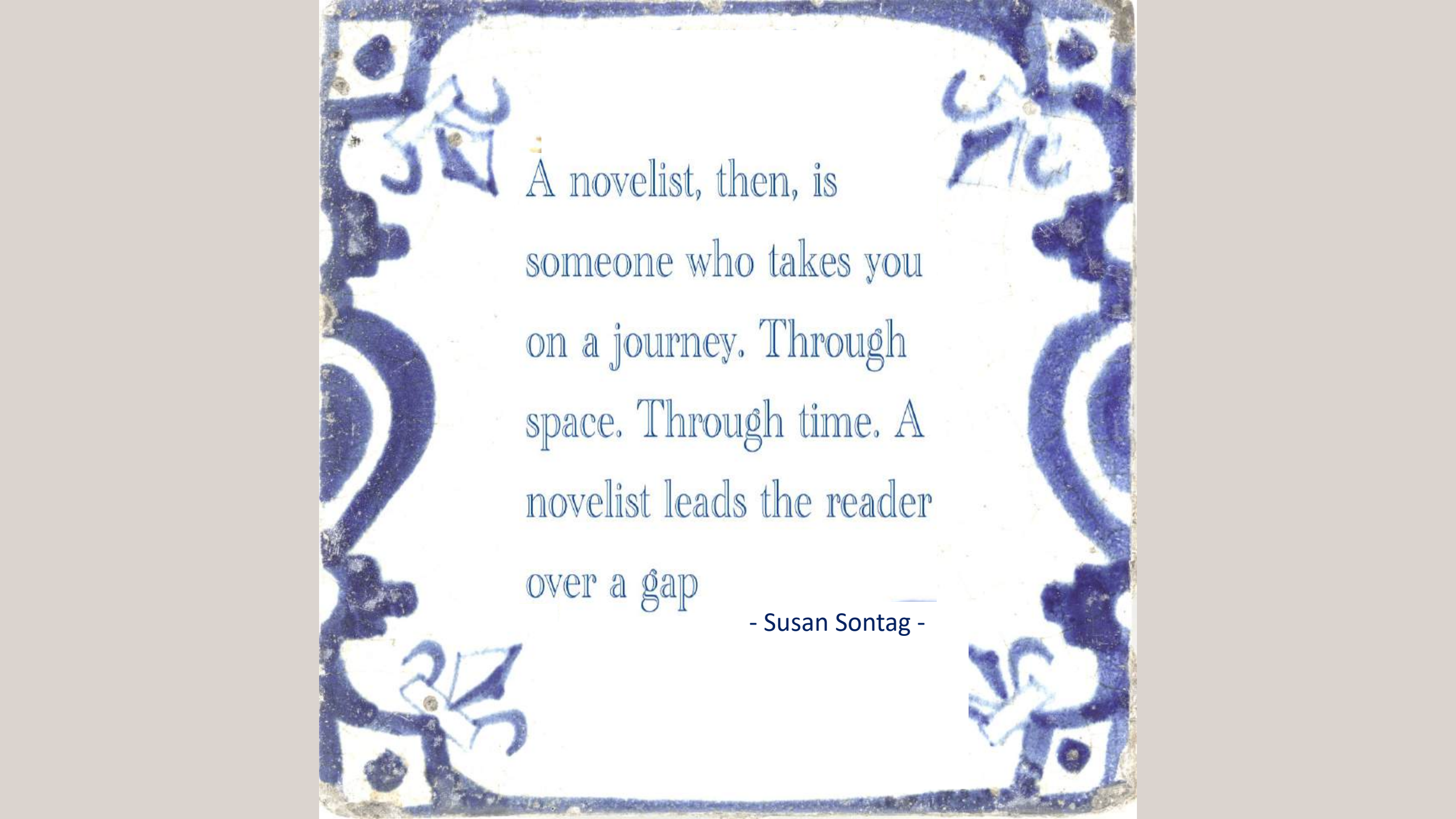
Dr Aleydis Nissen | 13 March 2024



**Universiteit  
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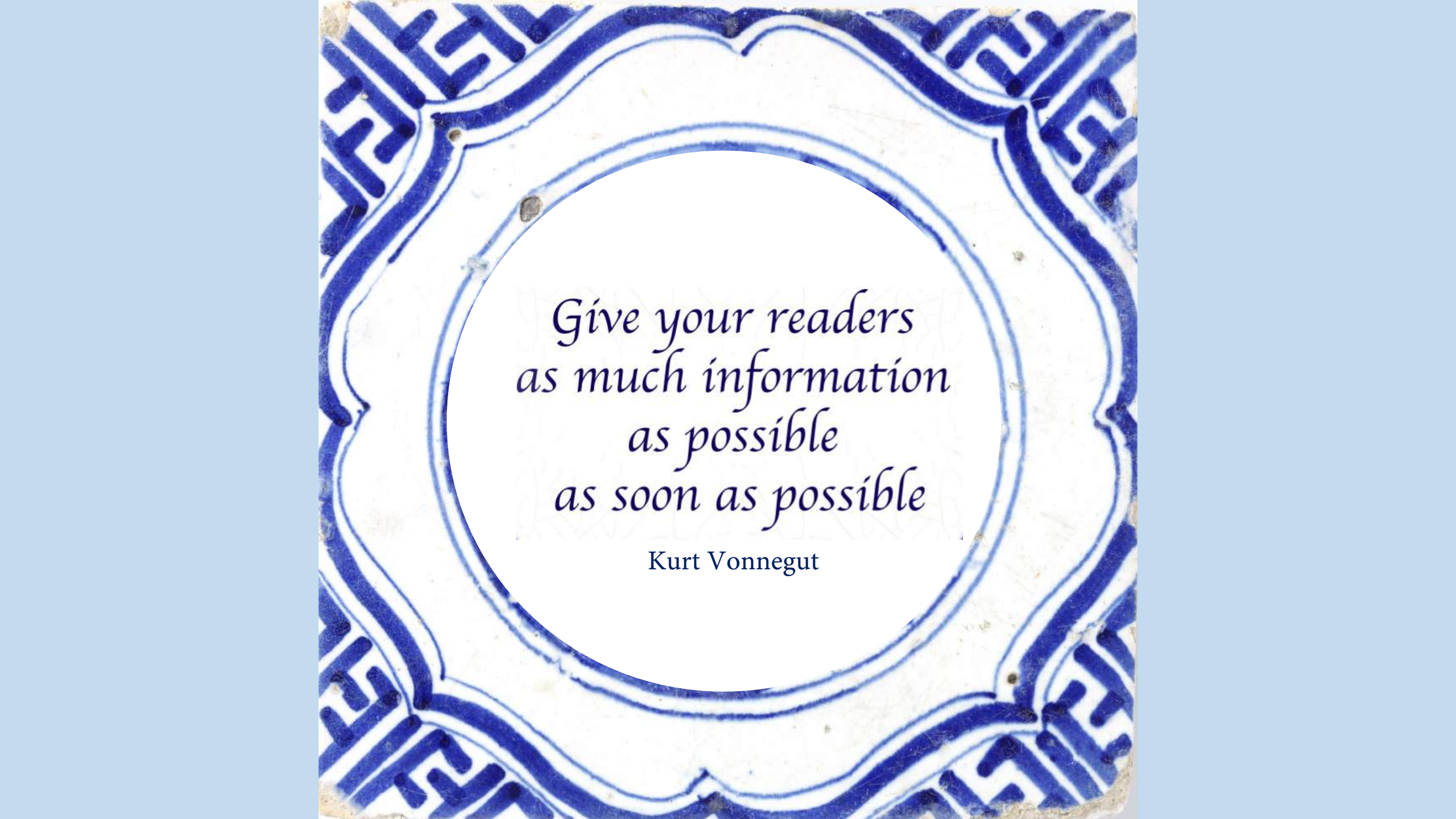
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Today, we will have a group discussion on academic writing guided by 12 statements from accomplished writers. They are not academics, but then again, they do not need to be.



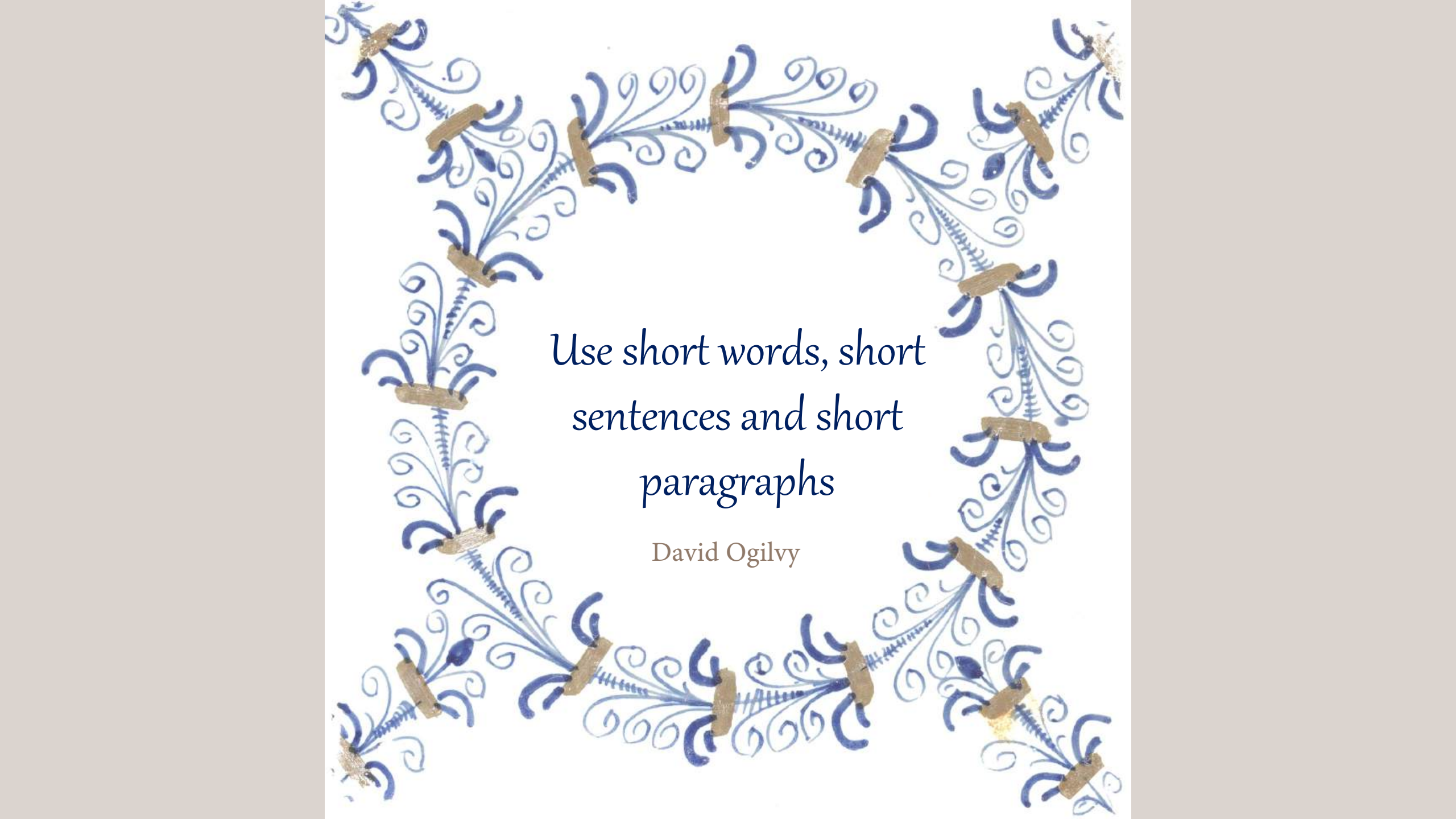
A novelist, then, is  
someone who takes you  
on a journey. Through  
space. Through time. A  
novelist leads the reader  
over a gap

- Susan Sontag -

The image shows a decorative book cover. The background is a light blue color. In the center, there is a white circle with a blue border. Inside this circle, the text is written in a dark blue, cursive font. The text reads: "Give your readers as much information as possible as soon as possible". Below the text, the name "Kurt Vonnegut" is written in a smaller, dark blue, sans-serif font. The book cover itself has a blue and white geometric pattern, possibly a Greek key or meander design, which is visible around the edges of the white circle.

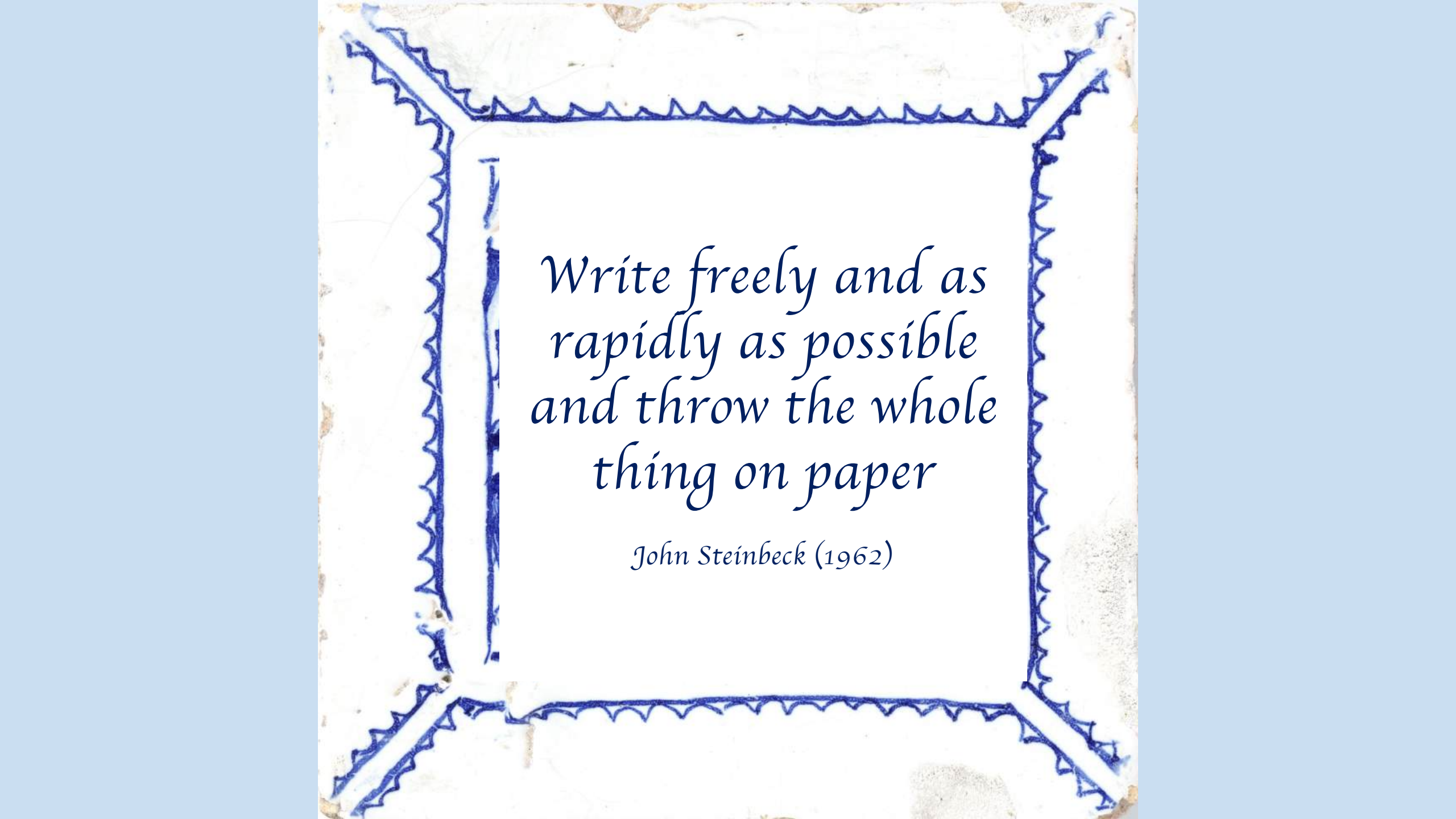
*Give your readers  
as much information  
as possible  
as soon as possible*

Kurt Vonnegut



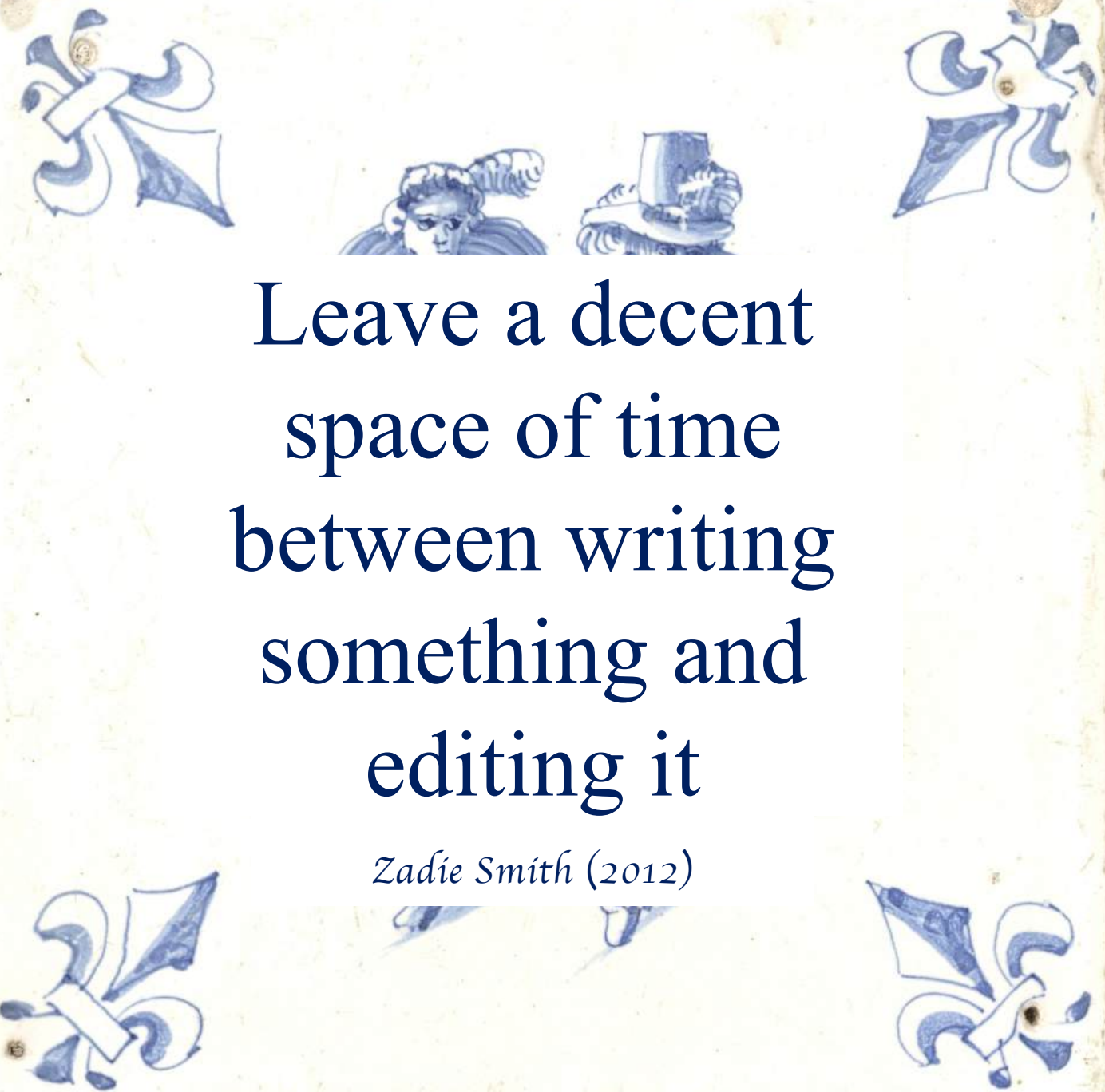
Use short words, short  
sentences and short  
paragraphs

David Ogilvy

The image shows a piece of aged, yellowed paper with a blue ink decorative border. The border consists of a double-line pattern with a scalloped or zigzag edge. The text is written in a cursive script. The quote is centered and reads: "Write freely and as rapidly as possible and throw the whole thing on paper". Below the quote, the author's name and year are written in a smaller, simpler font.

*Write freely and as  
rapidly as possible  
and throw the whole  
thing on paper*

*John Steinbeck (1962)*

The page features four decorative blue ink illustrations. In the top-left and bottom-right corners are stylized fleur-de-lis symbols. In the top-right and bottom-left corners are illustrations of a figure sitting at a desk, writing with a quill pen. The text is centered on the page in a dark blue, serif font.

Leave a decent  
space of time  
between writing  
something and  
editing it

*Zadie Smith (2012)*



schrijven

is

schrappen

GODFRIED BOMANS






don't  
worry  
about  
the bad  
drafts

Miranda July (2018)



*If it sounds like  
writing... rewrite it*

*Elmore Leonard (2001)*



la riuscita ... di regola  
vuol dire una paziente  
ricerca del "mot juste",  
della frase in cui ogni  
parola è insostituibile

Italo Calvino (1985)





*Making lists of words,  
to thicken my active vocabulary.*

*To have puny, not just little,  
hoax, not just trick,  
mortifying, not just embarrassing,  
bogus, not just fake.*

Susan Sontag





πολὺ δὲ μέγιστον τὸ μεταφορικὸν εἶναι.  
Μόνον γὰρ τοῦτο οὔτε παρ' ἄλλου ἔστι  
λαβεῖν εὐφυΐας τε σημείον ἔστι  
τὸ γὰρ εὖ μεταφέρειν τὸ τὸ ὅμοιον θεωρεῖν ἔστιν

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It is far better to use metaphors, not just any image,  
but those that reveal similarities,  
demonstrating a witty mind

- Aristoteles -





Break any of  
these rules  
sooner than  
say anything  
outright  
barbarous

George Orwell (1946)

For further reading on academic writing, consult  
*The Craft of Research* by Wayne Booth et al. (2016)

# References

Susan Sontag, 'As Consciousness is harnessed to Flesh: Journals and Notebooks 1964-1980' (edited by David Rieff 2012)

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Aristoteles, Περὶ ποιητικῆς (own translation) (335 BCE)

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various references sourced via Maria Popova from [The Marginalian](#); design from [rijksmuseum.nl](#)

Wayne Booth, Gregory Colomb, Joseph Williams et al., 'The Craft of Research' (4th ed, 2016)