Writing is one of the occupations that mostly depend on creativity. One of the great examples is Japanese author Haruki Murakami, which creative flow will be examined through this essay. This essay firstly brings forward his life and work than, it analyses his writing style and themes. It also presents his running, discipline and routine and connects it with his work results. In conclusion, his overall activities are recognized as highly creative and original contributions to different aspects of modern culture.

**Keywords:** Haruki Murakami; magical realism; music; running; discipline; creativity.

1. **Introduction**

Haruki Murakami is among the world's prominent living authors. Accomplished author and translator, Murakami is also a great musician and marathon runner. Murakami combines Japanese and Western culture with rich eastern spirituality. His complex persona mirrors through his works making it a unique piece of art. In the course of his 20-is, Murakami ran a coffee house and jazz bar with his wife. During a baseball match, he felt the urge to write a novel, and there began his writing journey. His characters are young, ordinary men and women caught in extraordinary situations. Although magic is a constituent part of his novels, it's not used in a fantastic way or as a problem-solving tool, but rather part of every-day life or even cause of problems. Now in his seventies, Murakami’s abundant opus is recognized worldwide, awarded and appreciated.

2. **Life and work**

Born in Kyoto, Japan in 1949., during the post-World War II baby boom as an only child which parents taught Japanese literature. Murakami’s connection to spirituality and Japanese religion comes through his grandfather, who was a Buddhist priest. Since childhood, Murakami has been influenced by western music and literature, which distinguishes...
Murakami from the majority of other Japanese writers. Some of his influences are Jack Kerouac, Franz Kafka, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Kurt Vonnegut, Richard Brautigan, Raymond Carver, J. D. Salinger and Charles Dickens. As a student in Tokyo in the late sixties, Murakami developed a taste for postmodern fiction while looking on, quietly but sympathetically, as the protest movement reached its high-water mark. Murakami studied drama at Waseda University in Tokyo. After college, Murakami owned a small jazz bar in Tokyo with his wife Yoko, from 1974 to 1981. His appreciation and passion for good music are apparent in almost every chapter of every book he writes.

Fig. 1 Haruki Murakami [1]

Murakami didn’t write anything before he was 29. He got an urge to write a novel while he was attending a baseball game in Tokyo. He went home and began writing that night. Murakami worked on *Hear the Wind Sing* for ten months in very brief stretches, during nights, after working days at the bar. He completed the novel and sent it to the only literary contest that would accept a work of that length, winning first prize. At the age of 32, in 1981 Murakami closed his jazz bar and focused all his energy on writing.

Murakami achieved a breakthrough and national recognition in 1987 with the publication of *Norwegian Wood*, a nostalgic story of loss and sexuality. Murakami was a writing fellow at Princeton University in Princeton, New Jersey, Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts, and Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts.
3. Writing style and themes

Murakami’s diverse opus includes genres: fiction, surrealism, magical realism, postmodernism, Bildungsroman, picaresque and realism. Rejecting Japanese literature, art, and music at an early age, Murakami came to identify more and more closely with the world outside Japan, a world he knew only through jazz records, Hollywood movies, and dime-store paperbacks. Murakami’s style is defined by cross-sections of raw human experience, fused with one part dutiful realism and another part complete lunacy. His work is layered with rich subtext, meanderings, Freudian explorations of the psyche, and heavy doses of fate, sex, violence, and self-destruction. Murakami is the kind of author who makes you feel okay about not being okay. His fiction gives the reader a reason to keep pushing forward, but without the clear promise of bountiful plenty at the end of the line.

Rejecting the Japanese ideals of his contemporaries and predecessors, Murakami breathed new life into the Japanese coming-of-age narrative, using American rock ‘n’ roll and jazz as the framework on which he constructs his unique blend of dramatic realism and mythical story craft, and developing his voice by approaching his stories in decidedly “un author-like” fashion [2].

The theme of alienation and sense of loss is prominent in most of his novels. Often, the protagonists are people who follow societal norms while feeling nihilistic about anything they do. While this isn’t anything particularly new, this is very important considering the context of post-war Japanese society. After the Second World War, the Japanese experienced a difficult time of reconstruction, both physically and socially [3].

There are idiosyncrasies and recurring elements that occur in most of Murakami’s 14 novels and many short stories. The most consistent ones are mysterious woman, something vanishing, feeling of being followed, unexpected phone calls, cats, music, a secret passageway, train station, historical flashback. Cooking, etc. Cats appear in almost every Murakami work. This is motivated by his experience as a child when his father abandoned their cat at a far location and the cat was waiting for them at home when they came back.

His work often invokes surreal creatures or settings. From the talking cats in Kafka on the Shore (2002) to the city of two moons in 1Q84 (2009), from the character that sees her imaginary self in Sputnik Sweetheart (1999) to the girl that sleeps for years in After Dark (2004), often Murakami includes such fantasy-like settings that challenge our perception, yet somehow, you feel like they make sense.
Many of his novels have themes and titles that evoke classical music, such as the three books making up *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*: The Thieving Magpie (after Rossini's opera), *Bird as Prophet* (after a piano piece by Robert Schumann), and *The Bird-Catcher* (a character in Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute*). Some of his novels take their titles from songs: *Dance, Dance, Dance* (after The Dells' 1957 B-side song), *Norwegian Wood* (after The Beatles' song) and *South of the Border, West of the Sun* (after the song "South of the Border").

4. **Running, discipline and routine**

"When I’m in writing mode for a novel, I get up at four a.m. and work for five to six hours. In the afternoon, I run for ten kilometers or swim for fifteen hundred meters (or do both), then I read a bit and listen to some music. I go to bed at nine p.m. I keep to this routine every day without variation. The repetition itself becomes the important thing; it’s a form of mesmerism. I mesmerize myself to reach a deeper state of mind. But to hold to such repetition for so long—six months to a year—requires a good amount of mental and physical strength. In that sense, writing a long novel is like survival training. Physical strength is as necessary as artistic sensitivity. ” [5]

While running a jazz bar with his wife, Murakami was a heavy smoker and he was throwing out nearly three packs a day. After his newfound resolve to write a novel, he wanted to alternate all bad habits, which will eventually lead to his work being the best it can be. He first began running through his neighborhood. Gradually running become an integral part of his life, which led to him running at least one marathon per year since then. In his memoir *What I talk about when I talk about running*, he points out that running made him a better writer and change his perspective on life.

Murakami is also considered one of the most hard-working and disciplined writers. He writes every day for a few hours and rewrites his novels repeatedly so he doesn’t have any regrets when they are published.

Murakami thinks writing requires both mental and physical strength. And writing a long novel is like survival training that requires strength and mental well-being. He understands that physical strength is as necessary as artistic sensitivity.
“If I’m asked what the next most important quality is for a novelist [after talent], that’s easy too: focus—the ability to concentrate all your limited talents on whatever’s critical at the moment. Without that, you can’t accomplish anything of value, while, if you can focus effectively, you’ll be able to compensate for an erratic talent or even a shortage of it. . . Even a novelist who has a lot of talent and a mind full of great new ideas probably can’t write a thing if, for instance, he’s suffering a lot of pain from a cavity.

After focus, the next most important thing for a novelist is hands down, endurance. If you concentrate on writing three or four hours a day and feel tired after a week of this, you’re not going to be able to write a long work. What’s needed for a writer of fiction—at least one who hopes to write a novel—is the energy to focus every day for half a year, or a year, or two years. You can compare it to breathing.” [7]
5. Conclusion

Murakami states that the most important qualities for success are the talent, focus and endurance. All that Murakami is doing has been original and highly creative, and that is an indicator that his routine, hard work and strict set of rules that he repeatedly follows through years are fruitful and they result in highly creative work. The persistence of small repetition fuels dedication and the result is greater satisfaction. We can achieve creativity by challenging ourselves to push beyond our limits.

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