

Friends of Silence

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“Is there enough Silence for the Word to be heard?”

Dear Friends ~ I can still remember the sensations—the reverberations—as a young child cradled in my mom’s lap listening to one Berenstain Bears book after another. There was the way her breath tickled across my ear, and the vibration of her voice moving from her chest, against my back. The first summer I joined my in-laws on their lake vacation, I observed an aunt, huddled with her 8-year-old beneath a blanket on the couch, where she read a Tolkien novel to him. I wonder if her now-grown son remembers how she did all the voices and stopped to answer each of his questions as the story unfolded.

It’s been eleven years since I began reading aloud to my own kids. It has become the spiritual practice I never anticipated: those shared, quiet moments facing (sometimes) hard and (often) beautiful truths about the world—about who we are. I’m most grateful for the ways these stories offer young people courage, imagination, and language when the adults in their lives simply don’t know how to say it.

“You’re finding out something as you read vitally important for making your way in the world,” Neil Gaiman writes, “And it’s this: The world doesn’t have to be like this. Things can be different.” ~ Joy



It is easy to forget how mysterious and mighty stories are. They do their work in silence, invisibly. They work with all the internal materials of the mind and self. They become part of you while changing you.

~ Ben Okri in *BIRDS OF HEAVEN*



All that I hope to say in books, all that I ever hope to say, is that I love the world.

~ E.B. White

Maybe you have to know the darkness before you can appreciate the light.

~ Madeleine L'Engle in *A RING OF ENDLESS LIGHT*

It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.

~ Antoine de Saint-Exupéry in *THE LITTLE PRINCE*

There ain't no way you can hold onto something that wants to go, you understand? You can only love what you got while you got it.

~ Kate DiCamillo in *BECAUSE OF WINN-DIXIE*

**Fairy tales are more than true:
not because they tell us
that dragons exist,
but because they tell us that dragons
can be beaten.**

~ Neil Gaiman in *CORALINE*



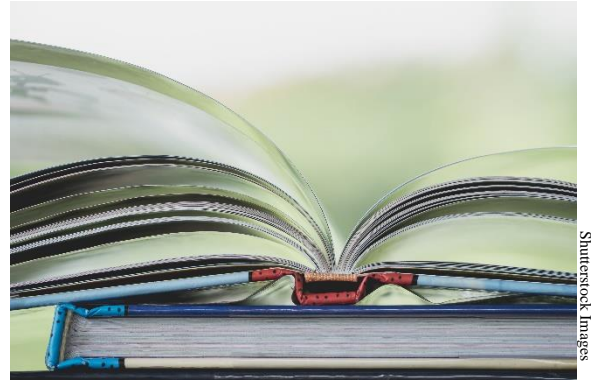
As children we did not grow up steadily, one day at a time. Occasionally, we would leap forward. Getting separated from our mother in the supermarket and—holding panic at bay—finding her on our own could make us instantly feel a year older. It is the same way we felt when we rode off alone on a bicycle for the first time.

While most of these experiences left me exhilarated, there was one leap forward that produced less welcome emotions. When I was eight years old I began to consider the possibility that Santa Claus was not real. Embracing this suspicion made me feel grown up, very suddenly and also very unhappily. Leaving behind a belief in Santa meant I would never again experience the enchantment that accompanied the days leading up to Christmas. The exquisite, almost unbearable anticipation of a fairy tale coming to life, a fairy tale that included me, would be gone forever.

This didn't feel like growing up. This felt like losing something—like being thrown out of the land of miracles and hearing the gates close behind me.

I wanted back in. Fortunately, the Polar Express pulled up to my house that Christmas, taking me on a trip that did lead me back. There is a seat on the train for you.

~ Chris Van Allsburg



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**It is very risky.
But each time a child opens a book,
he pushes open the gate
that separates him from Elsewhere.**

~ Lois Lowry

A good story gives shape to the human experience and touches us in our innermost places. It picks us up right where we are and leaves us somewhere else — changed, transformed, more awake and alive and aware.

~ Sarah Mackenzie in *THE READ-ALOUD FAMILY*



Artwork by W. age 10

You never know ahead of time what something's really going to be like.

~ Katherine Paterson in *BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA*

Read the books they don't want you to. That's where the good stuff is.

~ LeVar Burton

Your imagination will create many friends.

~ Grace Lin in *FORTUNE COOKIE FORTUNES*

You must do something to make the world more beautiful.

~ Barbara Cooney in *MISS RUMPHIUS*

There will be times when you walk into a room and no one there is quite like you... until the day you begin to share your stories. And all at once, in the room where no one else is quite like you, the world opens itself up a little wider to make some space for you.

~ Jacqueline Woodson in *THE DAY YOU BEGIN*

Apparently there is nothing that cannot happen today!

~ Mark Twain

Who in the world am I? Ah, that's the great puzzle.

~ Lewis Carroll in *ALICE IN WONDERLAND*



Artwork by W. age 10

No book is really worth reading at the age of ten which is not equally – and often far more – worth reading at the age of fifty and beyond.

~ C.S. Lewis in *OF OTHER WORLDS*