



Fellow Writers,

You might already know that I wrote my first book when I was 12 years old, in 7th grade.

To be honest, I've told that story so many times that it's beginning to seem as much like fiction as my current list of 60-plus titles. It's true, of course, which is probably why the NaNoWriMo Young Writers Program people asked me to write to you.

My credentials as a one-time kid author (I'm 44 now, FYI) are also the reason I get so much mail, both "e" and "snail." A lot of it is straight fan mail, which is great--I write for an audience, so that kind of input is vital. But many of the people who get in touch with me are authors like you, explaining your problems, complaining about your frustrations, and asking for tips: "I start out awesome, and then hit the wall;" "my characters come to life and try to hijack the story;" "I have tons of ideas, but when faced with blank page or blank screen, I veg."

I can't tell you "The Secret." It probably doesn't exist. What I can do is let you know what worked---and still works---for me.

The best way to become a writer is to write. A lot. And read a lot too. Those two activities help you develop fluency with language. Your writing will go down more smoothly, and I guarantee it will read more smoothly as well. (It also makes writing easier, and what could be wrong with that?)

Pick a topic you like. Your teachers might assign stuff that bores you, but this is *your* project. Write about something that interests you. If you can't entertain yourself, you won't have a prayer of entertaining total strangers.

Don't let anyone discourage you. Friends who think writing is uncool; parents who always wanted a dentist in the family; people who think that

carpel tunnel syndrome isn't as glamorous as a football injury.

Whatever. Tune out the peanut gallery.

A final word: It's true that anyone intelligent can write intelligently. The trick is to write something that someone else will want to read. I'm not sure, but I think the ability to do that is what people call "talent." I believe that writers like yourselves---who are determined to tell your story against all odds---have what it takes.

Read. Write. Revise. Edit. Write more. Never give up!

And when you're out there in print, the first fan letter welcoming you to the club will be from me.

Gordon Korman