



Hey Writers,

Often during a Q&A a student someone will ask, “Why do you like being a writer?” or “What’s so good about being a writer?” Here’s my answer: I never have to decide what I’m going to do when I grow up. As a writer, I can be everything. And everybody. When I’m writing about Stargirl, I’m Stargirl. When I’m writing about Maniac Magee, I’m Maniac Magee. When I’m writing about Cinnamon the rat, I’m Cinnamon the rat. Like an actor, you writers don’t just rubber-stamp your characters—you participate in them, you inhabit them. You’re not just writing *about* them, you’re *writing* them, creating them, giving birth to them on the page. You *become* what you write. You *become* that goofy, always-in-trouble kid you dreamed up. You *become* that group of terrified kids on the runaway school bus. You *become* the snaggle-toothed monster lurking in the clothes closet. And the better you become these creations, the better you write.

In short, you are a storyteller. Is there anything better to be? Long before alphabets were hammered in stone, humans huddled around fires listening to storytellers give their brutal lives meaning and direction and drama. The human race has always looked to its storytellers to find out the shape and direction of itself. When you tell a story, when you write a story, you take your honored place at those ancient nightfires. It is more than embers that warm the huddled listeners—it is your words that warm the heart and send the soul winging like firedust into the stars. As the poet Muriel Rukeyser wrote: “The universe is made of stories, not atoms.”