

RAR 121 – Kate DiCamillo on Reading Aloud for Connection

Sarah: How? I mean what does reading aloud? ... Let me try that again ... Tell me more.

Kate: You took a short cut, Sarah!

Sarah: That's a copout if I've ever had one.

Sarah: You're listening to the Read-Aloud Revival podcast. This is the podcast that helps you make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books.

5:35 Kate DiCamillo is here!

Well, if you've been listening to the Read-Aloud Revival for very long at all you know we love the work of Kate DiCamillo. In fact, we recently had her on for a Premium Member Author Access Event where we all read *The Tale of Despereaux* with our kids and then we made these big simmering pots of soup and Kate came live online and did a video stream answering the kids' questions. It was a luminous hour. So, luminous in fact that I just had to ask her to come back so that you, our podcast listeners, could hear from her as well. Kate DiCamillo is the author of many beloved and award-winning books, *The Tale of Despereaux*, *Flora and Ulysses*, *Because of Winn-Dixie*, *Raymie Nightingale*, the hilarious *Mercy Watson series*, and a brand new beautiful book called *Louisiana's Way Home* ... ooh, as well as new picture book called, *Good Rosie*, which is illustrated by Harry Bliss—which is always fun—his illustrations are always fun. Kate's delightful and brilliant and we're going to talk about reading aloud today. Kate, I am so glad you're here, thanks for coming on the Show.

Kate: That's a lot of adjectives for me to live up to there: delightful, brilliant, and then it was "a luminous hour." I have to say it was luminous for me to be with ya'll. I really, really enjoyed that. And you know that there's nothing I like better than talking about reading aloud.

Sarah: In a video I saw recently of you on PBS.org (and we'll link to this video in the Show Notes—so listeners, you can go watch it because it's really, really wonderful. It's this short, beautiful piece.) Anyway, Kate, in that video you said "Reading aloud ushers us into a third place, a safe room. It's a room where everyone involved: the reader and the listener, can put down their defenses and lower their guard. We humans long not just for story, not just for the flow of language, but for the connection that comes when words are read aloud. That connection provides illumination. It lets us see each other. Oh, tell me more about this.

Kate: I've been doing this for eighteen years now and so in going out and talking to people about stories and then having the honor to read aloud from one of my books to a group of people it makes me remember the power of being read to. I remember my mother so clearly reading *Ribsy*, Beverly Cleary's *Ribsy*. I have one of those flash bulb memories of this: I grew up in Florida. We were in the Florida Room which is, kind of, like a porch-like room that a lot of houses in Florida have, and we were sitting on the couch. My mother was in the middle, my brother was on side of her, I was on the other, the dog was at our feet, and it was the first time that I had seen an adult laugh until they cried, this is my mother reading aloud part of *Ribsy*, and so it gave me I think about this moment a lot because it unified the three of us (or the four of us if you count the dog) but it also gave me a chance to see my



mother as a person. Does that make sense? Because a lot of times you don't do that when you're a kid. I just saw her as a human being responding to the story and it was really moving for me in a lot of different ways. So that's a long, not at all succinct, answer. And then as I talked about that piece on PBS I have been fortunate enough to have teachers read aloud, and that wonderful of, kind of like, subterranean connection. Actually, when you and I did the webcast, you had something that I should have written down about the power of reading aloud that I thought was brilliant. I wonder if you can pull that out of your hat again? About what it does, the connections.

9:29 'Same side of the table'

Sarah: I don't remember exactly what I said that time. One of the things that comes to mind as you're talking is how it puts us on the same side of the fence, or on the same side of the table. I know that when I'm at odds with my kids, or they're at odds with each other, and we sit and we share a story we're rooting for the same hero or heroine, and we're nervous about the same parts, we're weeping at the sad parts, and we're laughing. I remember reading *Bud, Not Buddy* with my kids...

Kate: Oh, that's such a good book!

Sarah: Isn't it? There's that scene (I think I've talked about it on the podcast before) where there's the backwash in the pop bottle.

Kate: [laughter] Yes!

Sarah: And it's so funny. I've got tears streaming down my face. My husband comes in. He's like, "What are you guys all ... ?" My teenagers and I were just cracking up. And so then we read it to him. And he, who has not heard any of the rest of

the story, is just cracking up. And so I think it just reminds us that we're all on the same team, we're all on the same sides. We forget that we're rooting for each other. It places us hand in hand when we can't manage to do that any other way.

Kate: Yes, it does. And it does that for a big group or for a small group. And part of it, I think, is probably just because it's so much a part of who we are as human beings. It's that sitting around a fire and telling a story is as old as we are, and it just has so much power.

10:54 In a new light

Sarah: I think you talked in that same PBS video about your experience of watching somebody who had been a bully to you respond to a story and you were able to see him in a completely new light.

Kate: It's the same as seeing my mother as not my mother but as a person. And it seems like a really odd point to make but I think as a kid, it's like when you see your teacher grocery shopping in the store, and you're like, "Whoa! What are you doing here?"

Sarah: "You eat food? Wait!" It's out of context, right?

Kate: Right. And it's just that thing of there's so much more, just like there's so much more to the person who tricked me everyday because I got to see him as somebody who was like me, somebody who was literally on the edge of their seat waiting to see what happened in *Island of the Blue Dolphins* (you know that book, don't you Sarah?).

Sarah: I do.



12:03 Trying to get to the table

Sarah: Your Facebook page is so beautiful. It's especially beautiful because Facebook is very noisy. It's like the noisiest place online but your page is like this little quiet refuge there, and I love your post so much. I actually change the setting so that they show up first. So they're always at the top of my feed and they just, sort of, set the tone for when I'm going to be on Facebook. Recently, you wrote about how someone had pointed out to you that many of your stories end with "everyone gathered around the table sharing food." So, tell me more about that? Why do you think that is and do you set out to do that intentionally?

Kate: No, you know this from talking to me before, that I don't set out to do anything intentionally because if I did I would surely mess it up. It's that thing of writing behind your own back, but there is some part of me that is always trying to get to that table. And, like at the end of, I did a Christmas picture book called *Great Joy* ...

Sarah: I love that book.

Kate: ... and this is like the very first time that I was aware of it on my own was with the two-page spread that (it's a wordless two-page spread) that ends that book where everybody's in the church social hall and everybody's warm and safe and they're together. And I remember looking at Bagram Ibatoulline's art for that and thinking, "this is the thing I'm always trying to do with a story—is to get here and to a warm, safe place where everyone can put down their guard. And a table (I'm a big fan of eating) and I'm a terrible, terrible cook—I can't cook at all—I have so many people in my life who are fantastic cooks and it is one of the great privileges of my existence to get to go and sit around a table with

people that I love, and so to me, it's one of the best places so I'm always working toward that place.

Sarah: Do you remember when you wrote that manuscript did you have an illustrator note that had them finishing at the table specifically?

Kate: With which one?

Sarah: With *Great Joy*?

Kate: I don't think there's a table in *Great Joy*, I'd have to pull it out, it's just that it's that feeling.

Sarah: Yeah.

Kate: It's not a table but it might as well be a table.

Sarah: Got it.

Kate: And there's this light in that room and yes, I did in the author notes, say that I wanted it to end with no words and with that image...

Sarah: The image of them altogether.

Kate: Yes, the image of everybody altogether. Maybe there's food somewhere in the background in that but ...

Sarah: I should go and look but it's downstairs right now but if I go down there my twins will stop me and not let me come back. They're 5.

Kate: And if I move the dog is going to follow me. So we both have to stay exactly where we are.

Sarah: So, listeners, you're going to have to go see for yourself.

18:45 Not getting in the way of the story

Sarah: This is one of the things I've been thinking a lot about lately, last night actually. When we engage with kids about books from a teaching



perspective I think a lot of times we ask questions like, ‘Why did the author use this metaphor?’ or ‘Why did the author choose that language?’ or ‘What did this symbolize or what did the author mean?’ And when I talk to authors like really beautiful authors like Katherine Paterson, you, Jonathan Auxier, Lois Lowry—so many of these authors of these books we love, I hear something that makes me wonder about that way that we tend to engage with our kids in books. So, let me just give you an example so you know exactly what I mean. I’ve heard educators say that when we read a book we should be trying to figure out what the author meant, like what the main message of his or her book or what he was trying to say or she was trying to say. But when I talk to authors it feels less like the author’s setting out on this mission to say something that the reader’s supposed to dig out, like the author’s not necessarily setting out with this theme or this point or this intentional use of motifs or whatever, but what I feel like I hear is that the stories just sort of come out of the author’s organic human experience, just overflows onto the page and that those things that bubble up to the surface of the story (whether that’s a theme or a point or a motif or whatever—those literary forms or devices, whatever we want to call those) those almost always surprise the author as much as anyone, so I’m just curious, I’d love to hear your thoughts on that, mostly because I’m finding myself really wary of asking my kids questions like, ‘What did the author mean?’ because I don’t want to get in the way of how the story can meet my child in a way that it didn’t meet me. So, I’m just, kind of, curious to see what goes through your mind when I bring that up?

Kate: Well, you should sit down and make yourself comfortable because I have a lot to say about that. But, I also want to make it clear that I would never presume to talk for Katherine Paterson or Lois Lowry—this is my experience. My experience starts way before I ever wrote anything when I was in school and I would read a fantastic short story and it would fill my soul and then I would turn the page and what was waiting for me? Fifteen questions, and my heart would sink all the way down to my toes. So, you’ve got a kid who loves to read and who loves this story that she just read, and I don’t want to answer those questions. I never wanted to take it apart that way. I would talk about I would like and I did like to sit around to talk with people about how the story made me feel but the questions about the author meant and why they did this and why they did that, even as a reader I have a hard time with that. As a kid, as a reader, I had a hard time with that. All of that which is to say (and you know where I am on this) I have no idea what I’m doing, so the story is smarter than I am, and my job is to get out of my own way. That means to put my ego on the backburner, to put all my fears (which are ego) on the backburner, and to let the story lead me through the story, not to think ‘OK, this is the phrase that I should use here in order to convey this message,’ because I couldn’t work that way and I would mess the story up if I tried to do that. So, I’m always chagrined to hear that those questions are being asked.

Sarah: Well, I heard an author recently, Jonathan Rogers say (he was talking about writing), he said, “We should approach our writing as a far more tilling ancient soil not as a miner digging for gold.” And as readers, I think, there’s that metaphor of, ‘Can we just till this ancient soil and not mine for gold?’ I think it’s harder to quantify



so I know that as parents or educators we have this ... let me give an example. My son just finished reading Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* ...

Kate: What a book.

Sarah: And I just couldn't ask any questions that I thought might minimize the impact that the story itself would have on him so I just asked him, "So tell me about what happened in the story." And he just went fifteen minutes solid, big, long sentence. This, and this, and can you believe that? And you could see the way that his voice changed (he's 13), the way his intonation was, with the way he held his shoulders at different parts, kind of the impact that it had on him, and so I feel that as a reader. And so I'm just wondering, I'm just thinking this is a question we should set out to think about as anyone who's educating kids—we don't want to get in the way of the story. And I've always been curious to know if authors are frustrated when they hear, say a teacher, say "What was the author trying to say?"

Kate: I am. I'm frustrated because I think, 'Gosh, I don't know what I was trying to say.' And always to me that is so patently clear is it is a team effort, me and you, the collective you the reader, the story doesn't exist when I turn it in. It exists when it becomes a book and somebody else reads it and I'm not there to stand over their shoulder and say, "Did you like this part? Did this part work for you?" It's a communal effort and my job is to do it and to then let it go and then it becomes yours and you bring yourself to it. And for *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, it makes me think of (I didn't read *Bridge to Terabithia*—I was too old, so I came to it as an adult) and I loved it and it was just so beautiful and so my best friend's son was a huge reader and he was 9 or

10 and I was talking to her and I said, "You have to get Luke *Bridge to Terabithia*, I think he'll really love it, and so she did and he read it and when he finished it, she heard a door slam (that was his room) and him coming out of his room and standing in front of her sobbing with his t-shirt wet from the tears and saying, "I will never, ever forgive Aunt Kate!" Back into the room again, slamming the door. And it's just like, there's more in that because he's an adult now and I've talked to him about that response, and in what was going on with him, and there's more in that then there is in the fifteen questions at the end of the story. That story became a part of him and he still refers back to it (he's a teacher now) when he's talking with students. So, and fifteen questions can't get at that, that letting a reader have their experience with the story, honoring their experiences, does get added. Does that make any sense?

Sarah: It does. As you said, *Bridge to Terabithia*, I know you and I both love Katherine Paterson, *A Sense of Wonder*. I had it right next to me because I knew I'd have it, so I thought, 'Mmm, we're probably going to reference this,' and it made me think of this, this is from page 59, she wrote: "But when I write a story it is not an attempt to make children good and wise. Nobody but God can do that and even God doesn't do it without the child's cooperation. I am trying in a book simply to give children a place where they may find rest for their weary souls."

Kate: That's beautiful. Everybody should have that book, *A Sense of Wonder*.

Sarah: I wish—it's out of print—we need to bring it back into print because it's hard to find and I just love it so much.



Kate: Like you, I refer to it all the time and earlier when we were talking, when I was saying that thing about writing behind your own back, she retells The Crane Wife Story in there about how the Crane wife makes the beautiful cloth and that you're not supposed to look when this is going on and then she pulls this back to this is the way it is with writing—you don't want to look at it too closely because then you'll catch yourself doing it. It's a beautiful, beautiful metaphor she uses. I could sit here and waste your time and mine and go and get the book and try to find it but if I got up the dog would follow me ...

Sarah: I have it in front of me. I don't know where that part is.

Kate: Here I am, moving quietly into the office. Oh, how do you think it's going to go?

[Laughter]

Kate: OK, *Sense of Wonder*...here it is... because I know I'll have it marked. I found it.

Sarah: Oh good. You're fast.

Kate: And I think we have the same edition. I'm on page 210. "This is what art is all about. It is weaving fabric from the feathers you have plucked from your own breast but no one must ever see the process only the finished bowl of goods. They must never suspect that the crimson thread running through the pattern is blood. They must stop analyzing and talking about the process. I've got to keep those paper doors shut and so I should, but not because critics or reviewers or readers are nosy outsiders who have no right to peer in, no. The rude fellow with a hand on the door is myself. When she sets out to spin a story the spine heart is involved and a fragile magic. I must trust the weaver of thoughts and dreams within and leave her to work as she

will. Reason and greed and impatience and curiosity must be kept in check. All's some day I may wake up and find the Crane wife has flown away." It's really, really fabulous. Katherine Paterson.

25:11 The Great Conversation

Sarah: Oh, I know. It makes me think, too, we talk about books about being a part of this great conversation. Books talk to books that have gone before and we're all in this great conversation with ideas. I'm wondering as an author of really beautiful meaningful and fun stories, depending on the story or depending on the scene, it can even be scene by scene, what floors me with your books is that I can be laughing out loud one minute and then have tears fourteen paragraphs later and I think, 'How on earth did she just do that?' But what does it mean for you, what does it mean to be a part of that great conversation?

Kate: Oh, it's everything. It's everything. To say that it's a dream come true doesn't even approach it because I never would have – as a reader, because that is above and beyond everything else who I am, a reader – to be able to come to the table as a writer, too, and to meet other readers that way and to have my heart interact with other hearts it floors me. Everyday it floors me. I can never get over it that I get to be a part of this.

Sarah: Do you feel like when you're writing a story does it feel like a conversation with books that have come before or do you think, I'm wondering, too, if all those books that you've read before have just become a part of who you are and this new story just, sort of, comes out of that? Well, I think Tolkien actually has a phrase for that. Doesn't he call it "The leaf mold" where



you have all these composting inside of you that you've come across as they, sort of, compost and then they come out as something more beautiful.

Kate: Well and not even more beautiful but just part of the conversation. And so it's like I'm talking with those books unwittingly because they're so much a part of me, and in talking with those books then those books—my stories—we get to interact with the readers and it's getting to take part in a procession and to say a procession is interesting to me because a lot of times I'll say to my friends when I'm in the almost-final draft of something and it really the hardest time for me because I feel like I'm walking along, I'm a big footed clumsy small person trying to carry this beautiful thing and not spill what's inside of it, and so I can see myself just as part of the procession trying to carry that thing. Does that make sense, Sarah, or are you like rolling your eyes?

Sarah: No, it does make sense. And you said during our Author Access Event that a story as you're writing it feels like you have this ball of light inside of you. Right?

Kate: Right. And then when you're in that last part of it, it's outside of you now, and so it's like something that you're responsible for and you don't want to mess it up and so it's just like this precious thing that you're trying your best to carry forward.

28:19 Themes and stars

Sarah: You know, I was just thinking, I kind of remember you saying when you came to my town and did an event at our local bookshop I think I remember you saying something about

your first, or one of your first classroom visits, after *Because of Winn-Dixie* came out.

Kate: I know the story that I probably told because I tell it a lot. Is it about themes?

Sarah: Yes. Will you tell us that one?

Kate: Sure. So, it was super exciting for me to get to go and do a school visit. I was still working at a bookstore at the time so school visits were just like, what? I'm going to come in there and talk to the kids about the book I wrote? It's like yes, sign me up! So, I went in there and I don't know what I thought was going to happen, I didn't have a presentation or anything. I thought, 'OK, they want to talk about the book—that's great.' And so I stood up (the very first time I did this) I stood up at the front of the room with a teacher and she said to the kids, "OK, we're going to talk about the themes in this book." And, I'm like, 'Oh no.' Literally, I could feel sweat rolling down my side because I'm thinking what are the themes? Clearly, I didn't prepare for this at all. And mercifully, she was a wonderful teacher and the kids were smart kids and together the kids started helpfully shouting out the themes and she put them up on the board and then when I got out to the car I wrote them all down and went and did a school visit the next week, and I'm like, "Alright kids, we're going to talk about the themes that are in this book." I didn't know they were in there. And those themes that that first group of kids put up on the board I can see how they can play out and virtually I remember a lot of them: forgiveness, friendship, family. I mean, those are the preoccupations of all of my stories.

Sarah: Well, Jonathan Auxier, he's written several books, but his newest book is my favorite. I don't know if you've read it yet.



Kate: No, I haven't. I've heard wonderful things. I've met him and I've read his other books and I'm yet to read this one so I'm very excited to read it. *Sweet*.

Sarah: So for listeners it's called *Sweet*. I was thinking about a conversation I had with him for the podcast where he said that a lot of times he said he doesn't even know what a story's about until afterwards until someone tells him back.

Kate: That happens all the time where readers, young or old, point out things that you're not even aware of. And, sometimes it's wishful thinking, like with *Edward Tulane*, a lot of the kids will write and say that the old doll in the shop was the doll that braces father shattered. It's like, no, I don't think so. But then there are other things like connections. One kid wrote me (this is a long time ago) and it keeps on happening: what is it with you and stars? They show up in every one of your books. And it's like, good grief, that's so true. And I was never aware of it at all but I went back and this kid detailed, page number and book, and it's just like again and again and again it shows up and so that goes to the whole conversation, then it's me having a conversation with a reader but then also it goes to thing of writing behind your own back and the thing of the story's not complete until it goes into the readers hands—it needs the reader to complete it and to see the patterns and the shapes.

32:02 Microscopes, telescopes and flashlights

Sarah: Yeah, so it can fully come alive. It reminds me as an adult reader I was recently reading *Jaber Crow* by Wendell Berry...

Kate: Oh, Wendell Berry, please fill my heart, yes.

Sarah: And as I was reading it, the musician Andrew Peterson's songs, a couple of them came into my mind. I couldn't get them out of my head actually. And I re-read the passage I had just read and then I looked up Andrew Peterson's lyrics and he's a friend of the podcast so I shot off an email and asked him. "Am I totally off base here? But there are two songs on this album that I think may have been inspired by Jaber Crow." And he told me, "Woah! Jaber Crow is my very favorite. It's probably the book that informed me or has formed me more than any other. I never intentionally did that but now that you've pointed it out I can see it like a neon sign. And I thought, 'That is amazing.'

Kate: That's it exactly. So it's just like it goes to the story being smarter than we are and that whole thing that it helps us. A kid said to me (I put this on Facebook so you probably ...)

Sarah: I saw it first, in fact. [Laughter]

Kate: She's like, "Are stories microscopes or telescopes?" And maybe it was something that a teacher said to her but I fully believe that a kid can come up with this on their own because they're not as intimidated about making those big leaps and I said, "Oh, I think that they're probably both." And she said, "But they're always flash lights, right?" And it's like, "Yeah." And so, it's a flash light for yourself, too. I mean, when you wrote the musician then it gets to turn because he gets to turn the flashlight back on himself and see.

Sarah: Yes.

Kate: And so, I'd be lost without getting to do this and to be a part of the community that does this.



Sarah: And well, actually so, I have my reading journal right next to me and as you were talking about that flashlight I thought, ‘mmm, pretty sure I just wrote a quote from *The Tale of Despereaux* about that. And I did. Here it is, from page 81 of *The Tale of Despereaux*: Stories are light. Light is precious in a world so dark.

Kate: And that’s the other thing—I’m obsessed with light. It comes up again and again and again, and along with the stars.

34:21 Character wants versus needs

Sarah: So there was another question that at the Author Access Event that a child asked that I wanted to ask you here. She asked you how come not everything is fixed at the end of your stories? And you shared something that I think really resonated with all of us about the difference between what characters want and what characters need. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Kate: As a kid, as a reader, when things were tied up really neatly I felt condescended to because I felt that it’s that thing where kids can look around and see the world and see how messy it is. And so, I’ve always had an aversion to everything being just so at the end of a story because the world is a messy place. Art is pattern and life is chaos so there’s pattern in art but it doesn’t necessarily mean everything need to be tied up neatly which then goes back to why doesn’t Opal’s mother come back which is the lament that I hear all the time and really beautiful questions from kids. It’s not a demand but it’s a lament. And, things aren’t perfect and we wish for certain things but there’s beautiful things sitting right in front of us and if we’re lucky we will look

around and see what it is here. Opal, this happens beautifully in the movie version of the book, where she looks around and she sees everybody. It’s not what she thought she wanted at the beginning of the story which was her mother, and she’ll always miss her mother, but look, here are these beautiful people and she’s in a room with them, sitting around, singing, and that is grace. And so grace is offered to us again and again and it might not be what we think we want but it’s there and we need to be present for it.

36:16 More Mercy

Sarah: Well, I know some of our listeners will be outraged with me if I let you go without asking you two questions. First, I know we have a ton of listeners who want to know if there are more *Mercy Watson* books coming?

Kate: Well, there’s that *Mercy Watson* as a piglet story, so that’s a picture book so it’s how Mercy finds the Watsons and how the Watsons find Mercy and that’s going to be this spring, and also, Mercy is not done with me and I am not done with her. So, stay tuned.

Sarah: Yes, *A Piglet Named Mercy* is coming out this spring. Of course, when this podcast airs it’s the end of January, you’ll have to wait a couple more months but I’ll put a link in the Show Notes so you can find it and so you can look at the absolutely delightful cover art by Chris Van Dusen, who we love here as well.

Kate: Oh, he is amazing.

37:10 Writing advice

Sarah: And then the other question I wanted to make sure I asked you was for writing advice

because we have lots of listeners who want to improve their craft, to get better at writing, tell stories that matter, kids and adults alike, what would you say to them?

Kate: My advice for whether you're a kid or whether you're an adult is always the same. One, you should read as much as you can and you should be thrilled to get that assignment about reading as much as you can because that's everything. It's like you internalize a narrative arc and it becomes a part of you and it's that thing we were talking about how having conversations with all the stories that have come before us. So read a lot. And, you have to find some way to make a deal with yourself about how to do the work of writing because it is work. And, for me, the deal I made with myself a long time ago was to do two pages a day. I could get up as soon as I did the two pages. And that's still, kind of, what I stick to. I can do multiple sessions in two pages a day but always the deal is sit down and do these two pages and then you can get up. So, find a way to make a deal with yourself about how to do the work. And don't lie to yourself and say it's not work, you're not waiting for inspiration. You have to sit down and do the work. Am I giving too much advice, Sarah?

Sarah: No, keep going.

Kate: Always, always have a notebook with you. Pay attention to everything. It's all your business. And use that notebook to help you keep everything open. Your eyes and your ears and your mind and your heart. It all has to stay open so that the stories can get in and so that your heart can be broken, again and again, because that's how you tell stories.

39:01 A coffee invitation

Sarah: You mentioned during our Author Access Event that you have your coffee pot go off automatically ...

Kate: [Laughter]

Sarah: ... and you said it really quickly and I, over here, was having all these lightbulb moments where I was 'I would get out of bed if my coffee was made already,' and so, since then (it's only been a couple of weeks) every morning at 5:10 my coffee pot has gone off automatically and I've gotten up and gone downstairs and written. And I have thought, 'Wow, all I had to do is have coffee ready. I just needed someone to make my coffee.'

Kate: I remember, you're probably too young to remember this, but I remember when all of a sudden you could get those pots that you could get to turn on automatically. It was revelatory. But before that, there was a book by Brenda Euland, I can't remember the name of it now about writing. It's wonderful. It's on the writing shelf and I'm not going to try and find it but Brenda Euland. And she talked about if you can't get up and do this without coffee then make the coffee the night before and put it in a really good thermos (it will still be hot when you get up) and that's where I got the idea. Because if you go to make the coffee then you kind of wander off.

Sarah: Yes.

Kate: And something else happens and then something else happens. So if you're a coffee person the coffee has to be ready and waiting for you.

Sarah: It's so funny how it's an invitation. I can kind of smell it when my alarm goes off and I'm like, 'Oh, it's waiting for me. I just can't leave it.'

Kate: No, no. It's just like it literally, it's like a cartoon, where the steam pulls you down the stairs by the nostrils, right?

Sarah: Yes. So good. Oh Kate, thank you so much for coming on the Show. It is just been a delight. I knew it would be and I'm so grateful for your time.

Kate: I'm so grateful that we got to talk again. It has been a treat for me as well. And I mean it. And you know where to find me and thank you.

41:01 Let the Kids Speak

Now, it's time for Let the Kids Speak. This is my favorite part of the podcast where kids tell us about their favorite stories that have been read-aloud to them.

Child1: [Mom: what's your name?] Jamison. [Mom: and how old are you?] 4. [Mom: and where do we live?] In D.C. [Mom: and what is your favorite book that mommy reads to you?] *Give a Mouse a Cookie*. [Mom: *Give a Mouse a Cookie*. And why do you like *Give a Mouse a Cookie*?] Because it has a mouse. [Mom: because it has a mouse?] Yeah. [Mom: anything else?] And this book. [Mom: and this book?] It has a rocket in it. [Mom: it has a rocket in it? On the launch pad? Counting book about rockets. OK.]

Child2: [Mom: ok, what's your name?] Whittaker. [Mom: Whittaker. Can you say Whittaker? How old is Whittaker?] 1. [Mom: what is your favorite book?] *Llama Llama*. [Mom: *Llama Llama*.]

Child3: My name is Hunter Elijah. I am 8 years old and I live in Tijuana, Mexico. It's kind of weird that I speak English. My favorite book that was

read aloud to me is *The Green Ember*. The reason why I like *The Green Ember* so much is because it's so adventurous. Goodbye. I hope you have a good day.

Child4: [Mom: what's your name?] Madison. [Mom: and where do you live?] In Tijuana, Mexico. [Mom: and how old are you?] 6. [Mom: and what is your favorite book that was read aloud to you?] *Wonder Woman: An Origin Story*.

Child5: [Mom: what's your name?] Leah. [Mom: where do you live?] In Mexico. [Mom: and how old are you?] 3½. [Mom: Leah, what is the favorite book that has been read-aloud to you?] *Batman [**inaudible**] Book*. [Mom: and why do you like the Batman book?] It's from the library. [Mom: it's from the library?] Yeah. [Mom: what else do you like about it?] Batman in it. [Mom: Batman's in it. Anything else you want to say?] No.

Child6: Hi, I'm Becket and I'm from Maryland and my favorite books are the *Strega Nona* books and I like them because Big Anthony covers the whole town's square in pasta.

Hi, my name is Becket and I am 6 years old and I'm from Maryland and my favorite book is *Strega Nona* because Anthony covers the whole town square in pasta and he gets in really silly trouble.

Child 7: Hello, my name is Brynn. I'm 14 years old and I live in Rogers, Minnesota. My favorite book series, probably ever, is *The Melendy's* by Elizabeth Enright. I just really adore this series. It's really good, really funny. I really like this series because I can relate to the characters. It's really good, wholesome reading, and I love all the characters. I couldn't say I have a favorite. I really like Rush and Mona. Everyone's really good and I just love the series.

Child8: I'm Alex from Wisconsin and I'm 12. I love the book, *The Traveling Dress* by Elizabeth Dufek because the dress travels the world when a child goes to their forever home. And I'm in a forever family.

Child9: Hi, my name is Jane. I am 7 years old. I live in Texas. My favorite book is *Whatever After* series, and it's by Sarah Mlynowski, and why I love it, they're a land in fairytales.

Child10: My name is Justin. I'm 9 years old and I'm from Texas. My favorite book is *Jedi Academy* by Jeffrey Brown. My favorite part about it is that it's funny and it's a good comic.

Child11: Hello, my name is **[**inaudible**]** and I live in Texas. I am 8 years old and my favorite book is read-aloud to me is *Beowulf* because he is strong, courageous, and helps his king.

Child12: My name is Savannah and I'm 13 years old. My favorite read-aloud is *Cinder* by Marissa Meyer because the storyline's similar to Once Upon a Time which is one of my favorite TV series.

Sarah: Ah, so good, right? Now you know why this is a new favorite episode for me. Hey, the Show Notes are at ReadAloudRevival.com/121 and when you go to the Show Notes you'll see a lot of Kate DiCamillo's books, including her newest book *Louisiana's Way Home*. And, you'll also find a complete transcript. So if you are somebody who prefers to read rather than listen you can find transcripts to all of our episodes at the Read-Aloud Revival website or if you have a friend who isn't really a podcast listener but you think would enjoy what Kate had to say today, head to those Show Notes, and send her the transcripts because that's a really helpful way for people who are not into listening to podcasts. Which, if you're listening to my voice right now,

you probably are, kind of, into podcasts but maybe you know somebody who's not. Remember that you can get Read-Aloud Revival free book recommendations at ReadAloudRevival.com or by texting the word BOOKS to the number 345345. I'll be back in two weeks with another episode of the Read-Aloud Revival podcast. Until then, go make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books.