

# More Letters to Authors



To Mr. Shel Silverstein:

Dear Mr. Silverstein,  
How about . . . Dear Shel, (?)

Hi! Guess what . . . I'm a dreamer, a wisher, a liar, a hope-er, a pray-er, a magic bean buyer, and a pretender, and—well—thanks for the invitation! It came a long time ago. I don't even remember when, but it was some Christmas. My brothers and I tore open the wrapping paper and met those two little kids peering over the edge of the world. It was us! I was the girl, Paul was the boy, and I guess David could have been the dog.

Today I took *Where the Sidewalk Ends* off the shelf again. The white cover doesn't stay on too well anymore, and it's really not that white now either. I'm still the girl; I'm seventeen. Paul's still the boy; he's fifteen. David's thirteen and, yes, he's probably still the dog. We're still past the EDGE KEEP OFF! Sign. For that, I thank you!

Do you know that you have been everywhere with us? That Christmas we took our brand-new book to all of the family visiting places. We read the poems to our little cousins. When the adults were busy doing adult things, we read the poems to ourselves. At night Mom or Dad read them to us. (Sometimes they still do.) You came with us on long car trips. We sat by your fire and your flax-golden tales when the rain put the campfire out.

You know what else? We've been everywhere with you. We've built the treehouse, the free house, the secret you and me house. We did the home-made boat. We've been acrobats. We've had gashes and rashes and purple bumps. And I just know that you used the poem "Sarah Cynthia Silvia Stout would not take the garbage out" only because you hadn't yet thought of "Andrea Christine Veronica Urb would not take it to the curb."

Next year I'm going to college. Guess who's coming with me.

I'll try to remember the forgotten language. I promise. And I'll enter this abandoned house once more. And I'll be king if the world was crazy because, you know, your nonsense still makes sense now. I find more wisdom and more life in a poem written on the neck of a running giraffe than in many of my long-winded textbooks.

So, Mr. Shel Silverstein, thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! I'll remember you when I'm listening to the mustn'ts. And don't worry—you're not off the hook yet.

Andrea Urbiel, 17

Dear Ellen Raskin,

It all started in my classroom when we were going to read a book entitled *The Westing Game*. The assignment at the time struck me as boring, because I figured the book would be a family adventure or science fiction. But I was not aware that behind the title page was something that would change my perspective on reading and writing forever. I became addicted to every word, every page. The outside world suddenly meant nothing to me as I entered a new, make-believe world that allowed my imagination to be set free by taking me away from all the drab and dreariness to a place alive with excitement and intrigue.

Mr. Hou, the cook. When he was first introduced, his bad temper and grouchiness made me suspect him of murdering Mr. Westing. But later I found out I was tricked, because he was quite innocent. This brought to my attention the question of whether or not we could be this misled in real life. Since human feelings are fragile and easily bruised, I decided I would from now on make the effort to walk the extra mile and get all the facts before I wrongly accuse someone of something they may not have done.

In the past year, I have noticed pieces of the book in various places in my life. One big example is a short mystery I wrote after reading the book, *Waiters, Guitarists and Hosts, Oh My!* The idea of creating a mind-boggling puzzle for others to enjoy was so exciting to me. Not only could I get others to stretch their imaginations, but it also gave me a chance to be as creative as I pleased in bringing a bunch of silly words to life. Now after personal experience, I think I understand what gives such oomph to writing; the need to hear children laugh, the need to know confused minds are working on solutions to problems, and especially the need to encourage someone to pick up that pen and paper and create a world of their own, like you encouraged me. And for this same reason, if you're walking down the aisle in the library someday, and you happen to see a book on the shelf with my name on it, just remember this letter I sent to you and you'll figure out the reason why it's there.

Robin Jebavy, 13

On a Jacksonville, Florida, bookstore:  
Rare, out-of-print, and nonexistent books

