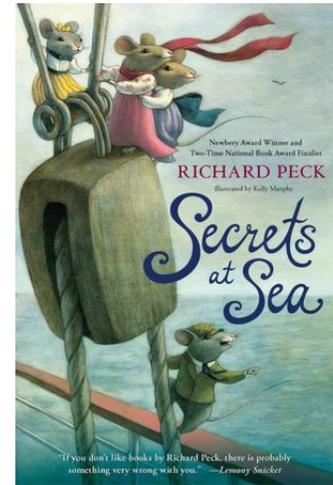


YOUR FRIEND, RICHARD PECK (A LETTER TO YOUNG READERS)

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the journey and All Aboard my newest book. The title, [SECRETS AT SEA](#), announces the story of a voyage. And those characters on the cover are Helena and her sisters Louise and Beatrice and their brother Lamont. All with beady eyes and long gray tails. Mice. And any story of mice, any mouse tale, has to have a cat--a ship's cat, one-eyed and raggedy-eared.

I can't tell this story. I'm too big to live within the walls and to fit under doors and to travel in the handkerchief drawer of a steamer trunk. And so Helena, the oldest-sister mouse, spins this yarn about a family setting sail for the adventure of their lives. A voyage to find their futures.



All my stories are about journeys, and I'll tell you why. I met two boys when I was in fourth grade at Dennis Grade School in Decatur, Illinois. I didn't meet these boys in class; I met them in the library, within the covers of a book. Two boys on a raft down the great American river, two boys on the journey of their lives.

They were Huck and Jim in Mark Twain's [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn](#). As soon as I read that book and floated off downriver on that raft with those boys, I knew what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. I wanted to live in a magic world of words. I wanted to read and teach and write and read some more.

Nobody but a reader ever became a writer, and I reread [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn](#) every year. And every year it's a different book. It lives on my desk, a companion in the quiet world of sitting in an empty room, listening for the voices of your characters.

Once upon a time, sixty-eight years ago, I opened a book and fell into my future.

I hope the very same thing happens to you.

Sincerely,

[Richard Peck](#)