

Phyllis's Story



If you weren't a writer, what would you like to be?

If I weren't a writer, I might be a farmer, or a naturalist, or a singer (if I could carry a tune). Maybe an explorer, or a dancer (if I didn't trip over my own feet). So many possibilities! What I love about being a writer is that when I'm writing I can be all of those things for a time—a sailor who's never seasick, a polar explorer, a lighthouse keeper. I get to enter into these imagined lives and live them while I'm writing about them. What could be better than that?

Have you ever thrown a manuscript away?

I throw lots of things away, or else I file them under "practice." All writing is practice, all writing makes us better writers, just as practice allows a basketball player to sink those three-pointers or a musician to hit all the right notes. Sometimes a story that I end up discarding will give me a word or a phrase that leads me to other stories, sometimes I let the whole thing go. That's not even counting the writing I do just for me, without any end goal of a finished story or book. That's just playing, and it makes me so happy when I can do it.

What's the hardest part of writing a book?

For me the hardest part is finding the heart of a story. Something might draw me in, make me want to write about an event, or a character, or a place, but unless I can find some emotional connection, some reason why this person or place or happening matters to me, then I can't really make it matter to a reader. If something matters to me, my job is to make it matter to readers, too.



Quick picks:

Soup or salad: *I love both—soup in the winter, salad (especially from my garden) in the summer. After a snowy winter, what could be more beautiful and tasty than the first spinach, lettuce, or peas coming up in the garden?*

Revision: *I love revision because the hard work of finding the story is done, and now I get to figure out how to tell it better. And I hate revision when the story refuses to do what I want it to do.*

Early bird writer: *I'm definitely early bird. I'm often up and writing at 5 or 6 a.m., and by ten o'clock most nights I'm sound asleep in bed.*

Longhand or computer: *Sometimes I use one, sometimes the other. A lot depends on where I am and what I'm writing. I mostly use computer these days, but I've written drafts with crayons and on the back of church programs—whatever is handy when the story strikes.*

For more about Phyllis, visit her website [HERE](#).