

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Reading Worksheet B continued*

No. One can't write such things to a person who will be sitting across the dinner table from you on Sunday, suggesting another helping of peas. Privacy is required. Distance. And a different kind of gift for which to say thank you.

Of course, many authors are, in fact, dead. They are not drinking coffee, chewing a pencil stub, or stroking their beards—not in this world, at least. Yet how alive they are—Anne Frank, Malcolm X, John Steinbeck, and others—how accessible, how available, to each young reader.

What a gift they bring, author and reader, to each other.

Here's another unwritten letter from me to someone who changed my life:

*Dear Harper Lee. Thank you for writing To Kill a Mockingbird. I became Scout when I read the book and I have been Scout ever since. She (and you) taught me about innocence and honor. Thank you for never writing another book about her and her brother.*

I have grandchildren now. I can watch with delight as they turn pages that invite them into the lives of Scout, Jody, Francie, Corn-Tassel, Holden, and others I have never met. But I can't participate in their friendships between writer and reader. Those are private.

The phrase *Dear Author* is not just a simple formal salutation. It's a wish that touches on a love affair. List to it with envy and with awe.

*Lois Lowry*

### DISCUSSION POINTS

1. As a child, what was Lowry's concept of a "writer"? How has her understanding of who authors are changed over time?
2. What does Lowry mean when she says even dead author are "alive" and "accessible" to young readers?
3. Lowry shares snippets of letters of she *might have written* to authors. The letters are from different stages of her life. (a) How do the authors and the stories they tell change as Lowry ages? (b) What does this tell you about literature and a person's response to it?
4. Lowry says she wrote thank you notes to relatives who gave her Christmas gifts but that the gifts authors gave her were "different." What does she mean?
5. What does Lowry mean when she says the relationship between an author and a reader is private?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Use Lowry's letter as brainstorming model. List three books you read at three different periods of your childhood. Consider, for example, a book you read or a parent read to you when you were seven years or younger. Then move forward in time to a book you read when you were nine or ten, and then move forward once again to a book you read when you 12 or 13.

Next, answer these questions:

- How do the books' characters and conflicts differ?
- What did you find appealing in each instance?
- Most importantly, explore how the books you liked changed as you yourself changed, grew older?