**People discover themselves, and their vocations, in great children’s books**:

Dr. Perri Klass, pediatrician: *Harriet the Spy*. “I went through a very long phase – in fact I’m still not out of it – of carrying a spy notebook.” It taught her to observe.

Jay Leno, Comedian: *Mike Mulligan and his Steam Shovel.* “The more people came, the faster Mike Mulligan and Mary Anne dug.” “That line made sense to me. I was always a show-off.”

Steve Wozniak, Co-founder, Apple: *Tom Swift.*  (The author was a pseudonym, “Victor Appleton II.”) “Tom Swift showed me that inventing things might bring many kinds of rewards.” With Steve Jobs he invented Apple I and Apple II.

David McCullough, Historian and Author: *Ben and Me*. Discovered his first revisionist historian at age six, in the mouse who lives in Ben Franklin’s house. “In the writing of history and biography, one has to call on imagination – in the sense of transporting oneself into that other time and the lives of those other people, all vanished, distant and different.” McCullough still reads the book to himself and his grandchildren.

Brad Paisley, Country singer: *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. He loved the character so much that he named his first child William Huckleberry Paisley, to inspire in him a spirit of adventure, of taking chances. “When I wrote the name on the birth certificate I said to Kim, “Keep this pen. This is a reminder to him of the power of the pen. With that pen I changed his life – when I wrote his name down. That is what writers like Mark Twain do; they change people’s lives with the power of the pen.”

Steven Pinker, Scientist: *The Cat in the Hat Comes Back*. “I still remember the series of little cats nested in a bigger cat’s hat – Cats A, B and C down to Z. That image forced me to think about nested sets, infinitesimals, Zeno’s paradox, and other concepts that I studied much later in mathematics.”

Kathy Bates, Actress: *Impunity Jane*, by Rumer Godden. “Like her, I wanted the whole world to be open to me. I didn’t want to live like a doll in a dollhouse.”

Eric Rohmann, Author: *Charlotte’s Web.* “Reading this book, I’m transported to that [third grade] classroom. I am a boy again. A book isn’t just words and pictures. Reading is magnanimous. A book becomes the person who is reading it.”

Fred Rogers, (Mr. Rogers) *The Little Prince.* He kept its most famous quote on the wall of his office to remind him of how much there was to appreciate in each person. “What is essential is invisible to the eye.”

Jim Trelease, Author: *The Call of the Wild*. Until then, I’d always been aware I was reading a book, that is, I’d yet to be “lost” in one. Jack London gave me my first dose of “virtual reality,” decades before the phrase was coined… Nearly all lifetime readers experience this with a singular book at some point…and we spend the rest of our lives trying to duplicate or surpass it.”

**Let’s talk about books! For more reading ideas, visit my website:** [**www.backtothebestbooks.com**](http://www.backtothebestbooks.com) **Marilyn Green Faulkner**