



Kate DiCamillo

Louise, The Adventures of a Chicken
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Kate DiCamillo Q&A

1. Is Louise based on anyone? Is she based at all on you? Louise is entirely, absolutely her own ridiculous self. However, I must admit that I would like to be more Louise-like. That is, I would like to be insouciant, and daring and somewhat oblivious. **2. Have you ever gotten caught up in adventures of your own, like Louise does? Have any of your adventures made your heart beat fast?** For me, writing is the adventure. Finding a story, telling a story, those things are capable of making my heart beat fast in my (featherless) breast. **3. Returning home is an important theme in Louise. What's your home like? Do you have a friend like Monique who asks where you've been?** My home is cozy and warm and filled with light; and I have a lot of friends who ask me where I have been and I always answer them in excruciating detail. They usually wander off before I can manage to finish telling them everything, absolutely everything, that has happened to me. **4. What was it like to work with Harry Bliss? Pirate, circus performer, or fortune-teller—which one, if any, is he?** Harry Bliss is a circus performer and a fortune-teller and a pirate. In addition, he is a tuba player, a bronco buster, and a tightrope walker. He is a genius, and it has been an utter delight to watch him bring Louise to glorious life. **5. How do you come up with your characters? Are they ever based on people you know?** Characters just kind of pop into my head. I have yet to base a character on someone I know. But I guess when the characters stop popping into my head (oh man, I hope that never happens), I might be forced to steal from real life. **6. What is your writing process like? What's a typical day for you?** A typical day goes like this: up at 6 A.M. (earlier in the summer), stumble down to the coffee machine, stumble back upstairs with a cup of coffee, read some poetry, write in my journal, come back downstairs and write two pages of whatever story I am working on, trying, all the while, not to despair. When I'm done with the two pages, the rest of the day is given over to office work: answering mail, email, etc. **7. How important do you find humor to be in writing for children?** I find humor to be important in writing for me. Being human is a hilarious, heartbreaking affair. Stories should reflect that. **8. Who has inspired you in your writing?** Every good book I read inspires me, every good short story, every beautiful poem. So I guess I am inspired by the people who work to tell me those stories, write those poems. **9. Of all the characters you have created, which do you personally relate to the most?** I guess the character who is most like me, or who I am most like, is the narrator in *The Tale of Despereaux*: a heartbroken smart aleck who wants to tell you a story. **10. How is writing a picture book different from writing a novel? Do you like one better than the other?** Man, picture books are hard. Every word counts. Page turns matter. What doesn't get said is even more important than what gets said. Novels are easier because you can hide your mistakes better. But I love doing both: picture books and novels. **11. What's next for you?** I've been told to say "lunch." And it is 11:05 on a Sunday afternoon as I type these words. So I am hoping that lunch is what's next. I love to eat.