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People, oh my people! (And by “my people,” I mean all of you authors and illustrators who believe in the power of stories, and in the beauty of communities formed by and around those stories).

Let me tell you a story. Last year, Sherman Alexie came up with *Indies First*, the super-excellent idea of authors supporting independent bookstores by going into their favorite store and being booksellers for a day. That is: spend a day on the floor selling books, answering questions (“Your grandmother gave it to you when you were five and it had a red cover with white words on it and you think that maybe it was about an octopus who ran away from home but you’re not sure, it might have been about a dog? Sure, I can help you find that book.”)* unpacking boxes, answering phones and generally being helpful bookstore bunnies. Sherman Alexie asked; and on Small Business Saturday in November 2013, over 1,000 authors answered by showing up at their local independent bookstores. Rumor has it that everybody involved had a fabulous time.

So, we are (with the express permission of Sherman Alexie, mind you) stealing this idea and running with it. In honor of Children’s Book Week I would like to ask all authors and illustrators to volunteer at your favorite independent bookstore on May 17th. Come in and read a story (a story that you didn’t write) out loud. You can read from that one where the pigeon (“Come on, I’ll give you five bucks”) wants to drive the bus. You can read the first (very funny) chapter of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* out loud. Or you could read about the miracle of garbage trucks in *I Stink!* Who knows, you might even feel compelled to read aloud from *Stinky Cheese Man*. Some people do. The point is to show up and to read aloud, to celebrate stories and to celebrate the indies who work so hard to put our stories in the hands of readers.

Sign yourself up, or call your local independent and ask them if you can come to their store on May 17th and tell them a story. Come on, I’ll give you five bucks. I’ll be your best friend.

Yours,

Kate

PS. Learn more about *Indies First* [here](#).

*The book in question: *Rimson, the Runaway Octopus, a Tale of Tentacles and Glory*