Imagine a New World

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Humility is essential for survival—and kids give us plenty of humility.

- Boy who sent me sneaker w/note: "Not very smart after all"
- [Possibly tell "Dear Sir/Madam" story.]

As much as I have yet to learn about kids, and I'm learning all the time (not just from school visits, but from the five at our home), / *do know:*

Imagination is power. Nothing less than the power of Creation.

And: The first step to surviving in this world is *often finding some way to imagine a new world.* More than escape: for if you can imagine something new, you can start to create it.

From a writer's standpoint, fantasy must be more real than real. All the senses engaged; basic rules of the world must fit. Hard to do—but if it works...a new world is born!

Two specific examples—from just the last few weeks:

(1) Visit to a school in Brooklyn, New York, with Barbara Kiefer of Columbia University:

- Tough kids in a very tough place. But: Classroom is a haven for them—and for their imaginations. So alive! So real! These kids, who had every excuse to be downtrodden and despairing—were wholly alive. They could imagine. They could create. These kids could *not just get through the day—they* could *affect the quality of the day.*

(2) Visit to the Gwich'in Athabascan tribe in Alaska: Invited as an observer.

- Above the Arctic Circle; at Solstice; camped on Yukon River banks; ate lots of smoked salmon—and swatted lots of mosquitoes.

- These are "The people of the Caribou"—and it showed in their *dances,* their *songs,* their *metaphors,* even their *calendar of seasons.* Regaining their unity as a people—coming *together like the caribou,* ultimately, 150,000 running. But they have experienced some very hard times.

- *Yet* their stories provided them with an *anchor, a connection—both* with *their land, their place—and with their traditions, their way of life.*

(I am reminded of a quote by Martin Luther King: "We are *all* connected." *But to reach out to other lives, we must first imagine them.)*

In both these very different places, I met kids dealing with great troubles—helped by the power of stories.

- Sometimes *ancient tales,* but always told in *new voices. Their own.*

These kids are discovering—and expanding—their own imaginations. And therefore their power to create, and recreate, the world around them.

In a very real sense—just as we are what we eat, we are what we imagine.

Also, by imagining, they are making choices. And seeing that *their choices matter.* And therefore—*they themselves matter.*

These kids know that their *struggles* are real. Through imagining, they find that their *hopes* are *also* real.

(In my books, my characters have met challenges by changing into other people, other creatures, trees, stones, beams of light.)

Right now, I am dealing with a very tough kid in a very tough time: *Merlin.*

In *The Lost Years of Merlin* epic, the opening scene creates the key metaphor: A boy washes ashore, strange coast, knows nothing about himself—let alone his inner magic. *He must discover that along the way.*

(He must learn about love, grief, power; about human frailty as well as ideals; about dark and light, masculine and feminine.)

Tivo examples:

(1) Climbing a tree to escape; violent storm; rebirth. [READ: LYM]

(2) Lost all his power; to survive, becoming a deer—very hard [READ: FOM]

[Possibly tell—"Where Is Grandpa?" story. The ability to imagine truly rescued me.]

Thank you for encouraging that *power of imagination,* for it is truly *the power of Creation.*