

## MARCH 2016 BEHIND THE CURTAIN JOURNAL ENTRY

### *THE GOOD AND BAD OF DISTRACTIONS*

BY CHILDREN'S AUTHOR JENNIFER PHILLIPS

I had a short plane trip in February. With no Internet, I was wonderfully productive there and back. I did a lot of revisions, outlined a new story and, in a bolt of inspiration, wrote a first draft for a completely new picture book idea.

This got me thinking about distractions—good and bad—in the writer's life. This causes a lot of writers grief. But distractions can be a good thing, too.

#### Good Writerly Distractions?

Noticing the kid **who's** reorganizing the candy by packaging color at the grocery store. Forgetting your **"important reading"** while you drink in the colors of a beautiful sunset on your way home from work on the bus. Turning frustration about being stuck in the **doctor's** waiting room into a chance to collect interesting first names and people behaviors.

In short, being a writer involves paying attention as you go about your days, stockpiling ideas and sensory details you might use. Good distractions.

#### Bad Writerly Distractions?

Toggling obsessively between your writing and your email/social media. Quick online research turning into a few other "quick" things. Hunkering down at the local coffee shop but then frittering away a couple of hours with nothing to show.

Being a writer means unhooking from distractions when you really need to write. **There's** always other stuff to do. Find me the person who **doesn't** have a list and **I'll** put them to work in my house.

My spring commitment is to reproduce the flight experience on the ground. No phone or email for focused periods. No task list just off the side making me feel guilty. Just me with my ideas and my words. **I'll** reward myself with a cup of piping hot tea or coffee. But only after I kick out some good stuff and take my writing time seriously.

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