

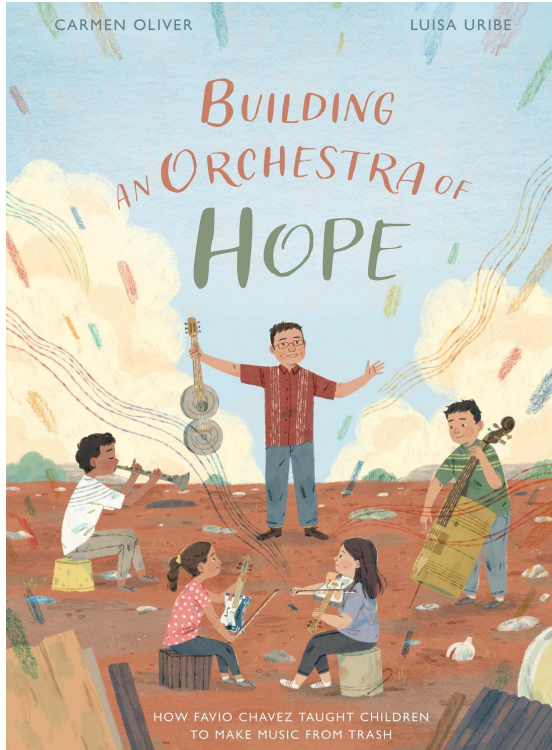
Three Tips to Becoming a Successful Writer

By Carmen Oliver

What makes a successful writer from an unsuccessful writer? Here's a few tips that I think separates the successful writer from the unsuccessful writer.

Write About What Interests You

Write about what you are interested in. Or something important that happened to you. Or maybe it's something you care about like family, or a cause, or an injustice. Use your voice to tell the story you want to tell. It develops confidence. It unleashes your imagination. It gives you some control. It makes you more invested in the storytelling.

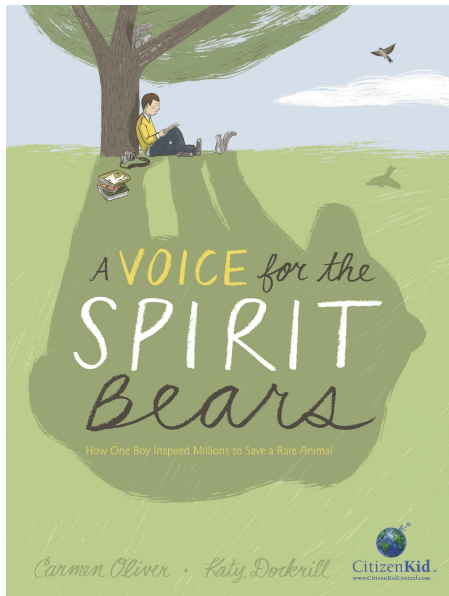


When I'm visiting schools, students often ask me where I get my book ideas. This is always one of my favorite questions because the answer taps into one of my passions in life and leads me to my second tip about being a successful writer.

Read, Read, and Read Some More!

My grandmother instilled a love of reading in me. She was my favorite reading buddy. She would read to me for hours. She would answer my questions about what we were reading. She would read the same book to me over and over again until I felt confident that I could ahem, “read” it on my own. She and my mother were both avid lovers of wild animals and they opened my eyes to animals from all corners of the world with their magazine subscription to *National Geographic*. I loved looking at the pictures and they would tell me fun facts about each animal. They purchased subscriptions for me to book clubs and magazines like *Highlights for Children* (often found in school and public libraries too).

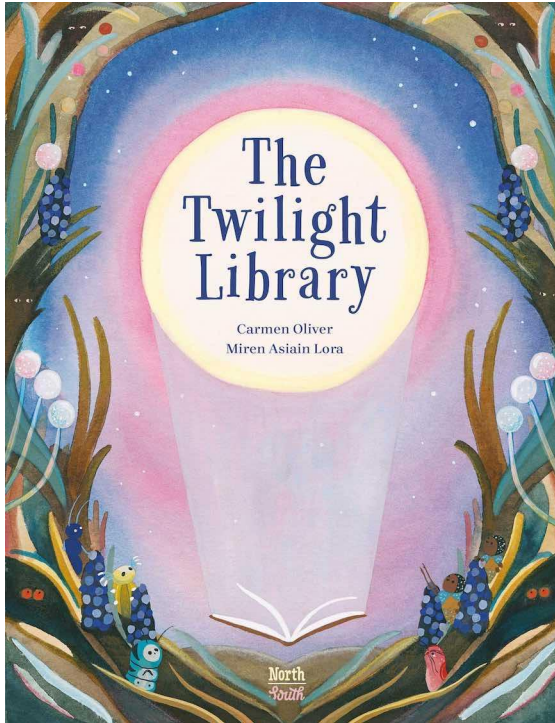
Reading is the cornerstone to becoming a successful writer. Honestly to becoming successful in whatever you want to do. Books have so much to teach us. We learn about pacing, word choice, the five senses, emotion, tension, voice, setting, and problem solving. Sparks fly when we read. Imaginations burst open. We empathize and understand more. And we get ideas for our own stories from what we read.



When I was doing research about spirit bears for the book *A Voice for the Spirit Bears: How One Boy Inspired Millions to Save a Rare Animal*), my daughter was a fifth grader and was going to be a reading buddy at her school. I thought to myself what if the kindergartner she was assigned to didn't want to be her buddy? Because she already had her own reading buddy. And what if that reading buddy was a bear? A real bear. What could happen? That was the spark for the idea for *Bears Make the Best Reading Buddies*. Imagine what would have happened if I'd been reading about camels!

Butt-in-Chair

There's an old saying we writers like to use called "Butt-in-Chair." It means you have to sit there and do the work. Period. Show up. Stay late. No running to the kitchen for a snack every 5 minutes. Or texting. Or surfing the web. No one is going to do the work for you. I tell writers all the time that everyone has their own unique stories to tell. Each of them has experiences I've never experienced before. They all have something important to say but if they don't sit in a proverbial "chair" and drop or type the words onto the paper/screen – we'll never hear it. It's hard work to ignore a chocolate fudge brownie craving or a morning matinee, but sitting in your chair, writing sentence after sentence gets it done. It's hard work, but it's worth it!



What makes a successful writer? It's ordinary people who show up every day and do the work. They don't talk about being a writer, they write about it. And they don't give up until they get it right. It's really that simple; interest+reading+Butt-in-Chair = Writer.

Tag Line:

Carmen Oliver is the author of many award-winning picture books for children including *A Voice for the Spirit Bears: How One Boy Inspired Millions to Save a*

Rare Animal, a Junior Library Guild Gold Standard, *Building an Orchestra of Hope: How Favio Chavez Taught Children to Make Music From Trash*, a Junior Library Gold Standard (Oct 25, 2022), and *The Twilight Library* (Sept 6, 2022). She's also the author of the *Bears Make the Best Buddies* series (*Reading, Writing, Math, Science*). She also teaches writing at [the Writing Barn](#) and [The Highlights Foundation](#) and loves speaking at schools, conferences and festivals. She lives with her family outside of Austin, Texas. To connect or learn more about Carmen and her books visit www.carmenoliver.com or [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).