



October 1-15

Dear Readers,

My earliest memories are of books and stories. My grandparents brought us books every time we saw them and I grew up on a healthy diet of nonfiction picture books, Nancy Drew, Trixie Belden, the Bobbsey Twins, and the Hardy Boys. And I grew up on family stories: road trips with dogs, cats, and chickens; growing up in a Deaf household; fighting in World War II; a meet-cute over a shared library book. To me, family stories were as powerful, transformative, and magical as the fiction I read in books.

In a way, I write to remember. To memorialize. To challenge the stories I absorbed. To interrogate how family stories change the way I see myself.

In part, that's how I came to write *The Girl with the Red Balloon*.

Ellie Baum, the protagonist of *The Girl with the Red Balloon*, believes she's the sidekick in every story, including her own, until she accidentally time-travels back to 1988 East Berlin. There, a conspiracy of history and magic sweeps her up, and unlocks a family story she's heard for years but no longer believed: that her grandfather survived the Holocaust thanks to a magical red balloon.

The story Ellie's grandfather shared with her, and her story, are both magical, and so is the adventure you're about to begin. I am overjoyed that *The Girl with the Red Balloon* is OverDrive's next Big Library Read. I hope you enjoy the story and, more importantly, I hope you swipe to the last page thinking about your family stories, the magic of your own story, and the magic of storytelling. I tell stories to remember. You may read stories to adventure. Libraries share stories to transform.

Isn't that magical?

Sincerely,

Katherine

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