Dear Mr. Gutenberg,

Even though it has been 570 years I would like to thank you for inventing the printing press. I wonder if you know how much impact your invention has had? Just this morning I read the sales flyer from my grocery store, I checked the weather forecast in the newspaper and read about what’s happening in my town. I saw a poster for a missing dog. I read the back of the milk carton and a funny joke in Reader’s Digest. Did you have any idea, when you came up with the idea of printing words to make copies of a text, how this would change the world?

Without your invention I might not have a calendar on the wall, a magazine with pictures of far away places or a book to curl up with. Especially the books are something I want to thank you for. When I was little my mom read me fairy tales before I went to sleep. Stories about poor peasants who got a goose that laid golden eggs, tales about a magical donkey or a wicked witch. Those stories weren’t just entertainment. They had been passed down by generations and taught me right from wrong, good from evil.

Sometimes I crawled in bed between my mom and dad in the morning. Then my dad told me stories. Wonderful stories about two naughty boys who did all sorts of things children are not allowed to do. I loved those stories. At night, in my own bed, I imagined I was one of those boys, even though I am a girl. I made up adventures, scary and wild. When I learned how words and sentences work, how to read those black
scribbles on a page, a whole new world opened up. I pretended to be the lonely orphan whose grandfather died. I lived on the top of a mountain in Switzerland, a country I had never seen. I was strong enough to lift a horse up onto the front porch of my little house, in which I lived all by myself. I traveled to Narnia, Terabithia and many other worlds.

Now that I am older I still devour books all the time. Reading allows me to make my own pictures in my head in a way that TV or video games never can. Screen technology is something that changed the world, too. But it happens to you on the outside. Reading happens on the inside. To me, as a reader, the printed word is a more powerful tool than screen technology can ever be. My brain grows when I read and makes the possibilities endless. Besides reading books, I started to make up poems, about flowers and tigers and clouds. I wrote my own stories down. Thanks to your invention, my stories were printed and published and shared with readers around the world. Did you ever dream that this would happen?

You must have dreamed of big things when you came up with the printing press. Did it take you long to perfect it? You didn’t have how-to books then so you couldn’t just look up how to build a printing press. I know you wanted to find a way to print so that you could help spread the words of the Bible. I’m glad a book inspired you.

And another thing. Did you know that, because you invented book printing, libraries would come into existence? I guess you didn’t have libraries back then. Or maybe you did but each book must have been hand written. I love my local library. I can go there any time and choose books to take home. And it’s free.

Books are like lollipops. I savour them. When I pick up a new book I smell its pages, I read the back and front covers. I linger over starting the story and then, when it’s a really good tale; don’t want it to come to the end. But when it does, the characters I have met stay with me for a while. Each book I read changes me.

So, thank you, Mr. Gutenberg, for inventing the printing press. I don’t know what I would have done without you. I hope your heaven is filled with good books.

Sincerely,
Avid Reader
© Margriet Ruurs
Treasure Chest

Open the cover of the book in your hands,
a bridge to unknown and wonderful lands.
Travel through countries of wisdom and fun,
nights full of darkness, days full of sun.
Turn each page full of wonder,
follow its road to up yonder
where mountain tops talk to the sky
whispering a wondering ‘why’?
Treasure chest of make-believe places,
meeting new and familiar faces.
Reach for a book on the shelf -
Discover the world, discover yourself.

Story submitted by Canadian Global Campaign for Education.
Visit the GCE-Canada website
http://www.campaignforeducationcanada.org/gaw

NOW YOU’VE READ THIS, GIVE SOMEONE ELSE THE CHANCE

Write your name for those who can’t
www.campaignforeducation.org/bigread
(If you can’t get online, use the page at the back of this book)