

2004 Letters About Literature Winners

Level I 4th-6th grade

First Place To Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, Shiloh
From J. Burns
Lourdes Public Charter School, Scio

Dear Ms. Reynolds Naylor,

In your book Shiloh I find many similarities in my life and in Shiloh's life. As a young boy, I was being mistreated like Shiloh was. I also got a second chance like Shiloh by being adopted. The fear Shiloh felt from the abuse of his owner was my fear and I felt like I was the one who wanted to grab Shiloh away from the cruel master and keep him forever so he could be safe as I am now.

When there are distressful parts in the story, you made me feel that it would always be miserable. But I know from my own life that there are people that can remove the sadness and fear. Marty saved Shiloh's life and my adoptive parents saved my life and eliminated the sorrow.

Your book made me live the fear and hurt Shiloh experienced but showed me I had the courage like Marty to get out of the situation, and show people that there are good people and joyful endings in life.

Sincerely,
J. Burns

Runner Up To Peg Kehret, Cages
From Brandon Busciglio
Whiteaker Middle School, Keizer

Dear Peg Kehret,

Trapped like an animal in a cage
Filling up with so much rage

Lying, spying, always hiding
Searching for a silver lining

Sometimes I feel so conceited
I stole something I can't believe it

Punishment is what happened

Punishment was so rapid

I stole something, that's what I did
I will never do it again

Punishment was hard, Punishment was tough
But inside I knew I deserved it and I had had enough

A book called Cages inspired me to write this poem. Someone I knew shoplifted and got caught. He was sentenced to community service for a month. I didn't know until it happened. He told me he hated it, wouldn't you? He finally finished it. He said he'd never do it again. I relate to Kit's friend. We were both worried.

Brandon Busciglio

Honorable Mention To Ben Mikaelson, Petey
From Kay Salzwedel
Whitford Middle School, Beaverton

Dear Ben Mikaelson:

The first time I looked at your book Petey I took one big look at it and said "No way, I'm reading that BIG book." But as I began the summer 5th grade I went to the library and checked out the tape and the book. It took me a month to read the book. Now it takes me a week because I get so involved.

My grandma just got put in assisted living. When I visited her the first time I was scared. But I thought to myself Trevor Lad, Joe and all the other care givers did, I can do. Then I met my grandma in her home and was so happy for her. The place was amazing. Then I hugged everyone I could get my hands on. I was so happy that she was being so well taken care of just Petey was later in the book.

You inspired me so much I want to start volunteering at the home. I think it would be good to start a fine relationship with an elderly person and inspire them to. Thank you. Thank you.

Your biggest fan,
Kay Salzwedel

Honorable Mention To Glenn Balch, Indian Paint
From Jordan Lewis
Fowler Middle School, Tigard

Dear Glenn Balch,

I have had one hard year. I have just recently read your book Indian Paint. Sure, I have read other books this year, but there is something special about this one. In this letter I am explaining why Indian Paint sticks out to me, to you, just as much as I am

explaining it to myself. So I hope you enjoy my letter.

The horse I want is very different than Shadow. But one thing they have in common is a free spirit. That is something I value. Your book helped me feel a greater connection between me and a horse I don't even know exists.

When I was reading Indian Paint, I felt so alive. I felt the same grief Little Falcon felt when he saw the black mare, dead. I wanted to get revenge on the mountain lion who killed her as much as Little Falcon did. Your book made me want to pick myself up and head out, in search of my big, black dream horse.

If I was recommending Indian Paint to some one, I would be able to describe some of your writing with the mountain lion scene. For some reason that scene sticks in my head. It might be because I lost one of my closest friends a couple years back. She had always been there for me. Just like the black mare for Little Falcon. But then she was just gone. I felt Little Falcon's pain.

Another reason I like your book so much is because Little Falcon has enough courage to leave his family in search of the horse he loves. I wish I could do that. But I would probably be going on a wild goose chase. The chance that I have of finding my dream horse is one in 1 million.

I also enjoyed your book because of how you went back and forth between what Shadow and Little Falcon were doing, thinking, and feeling. I could feel a cold shiver when I read about Shadow's first winter with the wild band. I could feel the same joy when I read about when Shadow trusted Little Falcon enough to let him swing up on to his back. Oh, that would be a great feeling, to sit upon the back of a wild stallion. Knowing he will trust you no matter what.

All in all your book is terrific. I haven't read any of your other books, but if they are anything like Indian Paint, then I'm sure I'll love them, too. I want to thank you so much for your marvelous gift to us kids.

Sincerely,
Jordan Lewis

Honorable Mention To Eric Kimmel, Website of the Warped Wizard
From Haley Sawtelle
Gilbert Heights Elementary, Portland

Dear Mr. Eric A. Kimmel,

Yikes its reading time, run away! That's what I felt like doing until I read your book Website of the Warped Wizard. I would grab a book and pretend to read or I would just read one or two words on a page.

I hated reading and would only read if I absolutely had to. I remember in fourth grade my class and I would gather at the carpet and sit listening to my teacher read. I didn't mind someone reading to me. If I was at home I wouldn't want to waste my own time reading, because I would want to go outside and play with my friends.

One day my mom said, "O.K. Haley it's time to read." I moaned and walked to my bookshelf. I wasn't reading any particular book, so I started reading your book,

Website of the Warped Wizard. I read a few pages and then I thought, "WOW! This is really interesting and I want to read more." The more I read your book the more I got interested in reading. I actually wanted to read!

I started reading thicker books. I never knew how much fun it would be to read. Thank you for writing the book, Website of the Warped Wizard and changing my life forever.

Sincerely,
Haley Sawtelle

Level II 7th - 8th Grade

First Place To Livia Bitton-Jackson, I Have Lived a Thousand Years
From Jessie Johnson
Athey Creek Middle School, West Linn

Dear Livia Bitton-Jackson,

When I first read your book, I Have Lived a Thousand Years, I didn't know what to think. By the third time through that week, I realized that your book struck me in a way that others did not. It was true. I have always been fascinated with World War II. I think that part of it is because my grandfather, whom I never knew, fought for the U.S. as a rear gunner in a SBD fighter plane. He was awarded medals and honors, even though he was barely an adult. I would always read books about the people here on the "home front", as it was so often called. When I read these stories, I would just pick up another book and say "too bad", not fully realizing or believing what had happened while Hitler was in charge.

I am one of those people who reads constantly, and often I find myself so immersed in my little worlds that I am completely shut off from the rest of humanity. Books are my escape, my refuge from the annoyances and demands of daily life. Even when I read about real events, however disturbing, it has always been a magical place for me to fly away to and never return. When I read your book, however, my perfect little world was shattered. I was for the first time in my life, not just a fascinated bystander swept up in the intrigue and suspense of a story. I was a victim of a horror that had taken place many years before my life began.

A girl no older than me had her life yanked out from under her, was forced to live a meager life, to leave all she knew behind. She lost everything to a man who hated her, who had never even met her, but who's intent was to slaughter her and so many innocent others. Millions were killed, but she survived. Why? She beat the odds and had the courage to take each day one step at a time.

5,820,960 was just a number. Then, your book thrust me into the world of reality, and I found 5,820,960 names. I found 5,820,960 loved ones that were lost in one of the worst wars ever fought. And I found one girl who was just like me.

Your book helps people like me prevent this disaster from happening all over again. Because it so easily could. Thank you for showing me the real truth, and not just letting me get away with another image of a story that was just "too bad."

Sincerely yours,
Jessie Johnson

Runner Up To Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, The Little Prince
From Alex Konen
Mountain View Middle School, Beaverton

Dear Antoine De Saint-Exupéry,

At first I found your book, The Little Prince, very confusing. What was a little boy's travels suppose to mean to me? Then one day, it hit me. The book was about life and growing up. It told me that I should cherish my childhood and not race to adulthood.

At this time in my life, it was exactly what I needed. I feel like everywhere I go I'm expected to be serious and responsible. I should be polite and knowledgeable. In other words, I should act less like a carefree child and more like a mature adult. I believe that in some ways I may have gotten off of the childhood bandwagon too early and now I'm stuck somewhere between adolescence and adulthood.

Your book was very encouraging and showed me that just because someone says something is one way, doesn't mean that that's always right. I should be myself and have my own opinions. The Little Prince was always curious and had an unlimited supply of questions. I wish that I could be more like him and not always accept the first answer I receive as the absolute right one. The Little Prince was also in touch with his imagination. He could see many different images in a single picture. I find myself neglecting my imagination more and more frequently. I let my eyes determine what something might be instead of my imagination.

The only part in the book I still don't understand is when the Little Prince had to leave. Did that symbolize the pilot growing up? The pilot spent time with his child (the Little Prince) for a few days and then had to fly back to adulthood? I guess it will make sense someday.

A lot of the time I find myself wishing I was older and more independent, but your book showed me that once my childhood is gone, it's gone forever. Thank you for reminding me I still have time before I enter the world of paying bills and endless responsibility. So I leave you now not as the adult that I was trying to become, but as the child I should be for now.

Once again, thank you for producing this piece of literature, which helps remind all ages of readers to remember the magic of childhood.

Sincerely,
Alex Konen

Honorable Mention To Roger Caras, A Cat is Watching
From Kelsey Ockert
Cumberland Academy, Lake Oswego

Dear Mr. Roger Caras,

Cats are always watching, through their marble eyes, sharp ears, and petite noses. My cat watches me, and I watch her. But when I watch her now, I see things I never saw before. I have been around cats as long as I can remember. I don't remember the first time I saw a cat, but I can remember the first time you unveiled my eyes.

I was at the library when I came across your book, A Cat is Watching. The picture and topic caught my interest. I liked the idea of a cat watching everything. So I slipped the book into my canvas library bag. When I got home I knew which book I was going to read first. I would read the one about the cats

I became engrossed in your book. I had fallen into one of those magical trances, where your eyes don't see the words in front of them, only their meanings. I read about what your cats thought. I read about how they saw the world. All this made me think about the cats I knew, and how they might be thinking of the world. Once I started to think like them, I started to understand them better. Of course cats feel like their mother is licking them when we pet their backs. I had never learned to think of life through a cat's point of view.

Then something happened. I started to think of the world through others' eyes. I didn't just look at things from a cat's point of view. I tried to imagine I was the children I baby-sit. I discovered this made baby-sitting much easier. Now I can pick out which books to bring baby-sitting, because I can anticipate the children's reactions. I can understand their parents' perspective on child rearing. This helps me make choices when the parents are gone.

There are so many people I meet. It helps if I can see things the way that they do. If I have a job that involves another person, I try to think of it through the other person's view point. For example, if I am house-sitting I try to make the house as pleasant as possible for the owners to come home to. When I look through my parents' point of view, I can usually find ways to help them out.

I will always remember that you taught me to see the world through another perspective. Like you, I think I will always enjoy figuring out what my cat thinks of me. I love my cat, I understand my cat, I watch my cat. Why shouldn't I? My cat watches me.

Sincerely,
Kelsey Ockert

Honorable Mention To An Na, A Step From Heaven
From Elise Veley
Athey Creek Middle School, West Linn

Dear An Na,

A good book isn't one that you simply pick up, read, and then get on with your life. It is one that changes you in some way, inspires you, and makes your imagination stretch to places it's never been. You can call me hard to please, but for me a good book is hard to find. In my circumstances, a good book is like love; it only comes around once in awhile, so when it does, you have to hold onto it and treasure it forever. Some of the many aspects of a good book are a heartfelt, profound theme, words that collaborate

together to produce a vivid picture, emotion, and characters that by the end of the book you know like a best friend and feel a strong connection with. Your book, A Step From Heaven, nailed every one of them in ways that dazzled my mind and made me lurk for more. From the day I picked your book out of thousands and thousands, I had made an astute decision, that would forever change me.

I've never really considered another person's point of view of the United States since I've lived here for every part of my life with the minor exception of six months. This hasn't let me perceive the lives of other ethnicities and really appreciate all that I have. I go to school each day taking for granted the fact that I can say whatever I want to. I have freedom and rights that I treat as unnoticeable as the hair on my head. I mean you just kind of expect those things to be there. Young Ju believes that America, which she knows as Mi Gook, is an extravagant, wonderful place. With this in mind, you would think that moving to American would make your life easy and everything you ever wanted it to be. I don't think anyone, including Young Ju and myself, realized how many difficulties would come in the beginning years of an immigrants' life in America.

I must admit to the fact that I myself am a Korean immigrant. The only difference between Young Ju and I, is that I came here at the age of six months, not a care or worry in the world, to a family who was gifted with the speech of English, a nice house, jobs that provided more than the necessities, and a life suitable for anyone. We both had families that loved us very much and only wanted the best for us. Young Ju has something that I don't have. If everyone could be half as compassionate, determined, caring, and kind as she is, the world would be a completely different place. The things that I have, but she doesn't, are things that she could have if she really wanted. The things she has that I don't are things that I could spend a lifetime to perfect.

There is so much to grasp from this book that I wish I could share with the whole world. It has taught me that nothing comes easily in life and that you must work to accomplish what you want. I believe that your book is the wings that will help you fly, and the glasses that will open your eyes to a whole new world.

A good book is a book that touches you in some way. An excellent book is one that touches you in a way that makes you want to get out in the world and take action. It makes you want to become a better person and has such a strong effect on you that other people will just stare and watch. I believe that your book is not a good book, but it is an excellent book. Thank you for writing such an empowering piece.

Sincerely,
Elise Veley

Honorable Mention To Eoin Colfer, Artemis Fowl
From Melissa Hollen
Rosemont Ridge Middle School, West Linn

I sat here for a while trying to think of what inspired me about Artemis Fowl. Just on the top of my head it was pretty hard. I never really thought about what inspired me about a 12-year-old, genius, and robber. Well after about a couple of minutes of silence I realized something! Artemis Fowl NEVER gives up! So many times while I was reading

I thought Artemis's whole plan was going down the drain, no way did I think that he could make his scheme work after the fairies had messed up his plan. Butler, Artemis's manservant, seemed to doubt the plan a couple times too, but that never stopped Artemis from doubting them himself. I realized to have faith in you and not just what others say really makes a difference. To believe that you can do what you want might make it so you really can! I started playing the guitar and almost stopped on the second day, it hurt my fingers and they couldn't move from string to string fast enough. I struggled practicing the guitar, I thought I would never be as good as my brother; I would never even be able to play a song. All I did was doubt myself. Then one day I just kept practicing until I could play a little bit of one song! Sure it was an easy song but I could move my fingers around just enough to make it actually sound like what I was trying to play. After a month I had two songs down pat, two easy songs, but hey, they were songs! See I was about to give up but I didn't! I kept to my plan, I was going to learn the guitar, and after painful aching fingers I had a happiness of success in me! I could play the guitar! If Artemis had given up during his scheme to get the gold he would have let himself down, he may not have had a good goal, but it was a goal. If Artemis had given up he would have been the kid who TRIED to complete the first cross species robbery; but instead he was the kid who DID complete the first cross species robbery, and that will be remembered. I realized it is also helpful to have a friend cheering you on along the way, doing things alone isn't as easy as have someone telling you not to give up. I know my brothers and friends always told me I was getting better and better and I would be pro soon, even though the pro part was a little far fetched it helped me to practice even more knowing that people believed I could master the guitar. So really Artemis Fowl inspired me more than I ever knew, and I thank you so much for writing it! I learned a valuable lesson that everyone thinks they know but they won't understand it completely until they really think about it. When you were writing it you might not have known that it would really inspire someone's life and change they way they look at things, but it did and I wanted you to know that I really admire your writing and I CAN'T wait to read more of your books!J

Sincerely,
from one of your readers that really appreciate your writing,
Melissa Hollen

Honorable Mention To Ron Koterge, Stoner and Spaz
From Kengo Tsutsumi
Rosemont Ridge Middle School, West Linn

Dear Mr. Koertge,

Out of all of the many books that I've read, your book has definitely been one of the most unusual; and yet one of the best. To see two completely different people come together to form such a friendship was truly surprising and awesome. Not only was it interesting to read about, but it was totally believable. Although it is probably unlikely that two such people would be in such a relationship, the way Ben and Colleen interacted with each other did not seem forced or phony.

I doubt that I'm the only person who can say that reading your book gave me a completely different perspective on the lives of others. Not only when it comes to being handicapped, but also to the world of drugs. I have to honestly say that before I read your book, I thought that anyone who did drugs must be stupid; a bad person. I thought they did drugs simply because they weren't supposed to. And I'm sorry to say that I considered myself better than any of them. I thought myself above them, because I knew what they were doing was wrong and that I would never result to such low means. In short, I would judge them; cruelly and unfairly.

Personally, I am quite ashamed that I would ever think such things, for after reading your book it was obvious to me that there just *might* be a reason why one would make such choices. I didn't know what was going on in their life, I didn't know what they had to go through, and therefore had no place whatsoever to judge them. For that matter, *no one* has the place to judge another in such a way. You can disagree with the choices a person makes, but like the individual. The character Colleen helped me to notice this: that someone can be an unique and amazing individual, even if they make choices that might be looked down upon by others.

Then there was the other side of the spectrum: Ben. Ben was quite unusual, for me at least, for I've never really come across a handicapped character who appeared (at least to others) to be *stuck up*. Another stereotype on my part: I never thought of someone with a disability such as that to think he was better than others. This may come out horrible, but it helped to remind me that handicaps are people too; that they manage to move past their disabilities and have a life. A life with cares, worries, and even love.

Growing up in such a well-off and sheltered town, I realize that it is sometimes hard for me (and some of the people around me) to get over diversity and realize that people may be different in the world, and yet they are just that: people. People with hopes, dreams, and feelings,

This book helped me to understand that even though two people may appear completely different from the outside, and to the rest of the world, they can still overcome their problems and differences and form a bond that is stronger than your everyday friendship.

Now enlightened,
Kengo Tsutsumi

Level III 9th - 12th Grade

First Place To J. D. Salinger, Catcher in the Rye
From Kara Ng
Valley Catholic High School, Beaverton

Dear Mr. J.D. Salinger,

I always thought that the mark of a good book is the ability to make you laugh or cry. Recently, I have discovered something more powerful: the ability to make you squirm. A good book does not merely provide a few laughs or cries, but instead pushes you to the limit, exposes all your skeletons, and forces you to examine all the things about yourself that you try so hard to repress. And Catcher in the Rye, does just that.

Holden Caulfield is one of the most annoying characters I have ever encountered in literature. He lies compulsively, complains about everything, points out the flaws in everyone, but neglects to change his own flaws. He calls just about everyone a phony and hypocrite, when he himself is the biggest phony and hypocrite of them all. I saw through his disguise from the very beginning. No matter what masks and lies he presents to the world, he is still just a lost teenager who is lonely and frightened out of his wits. I hated the fact that he could not just confront his insincerities, his own self, then move on with life.

During my first reading of Catcher in the Rye, all I could concentrate on was how much Holden irked me. I condemned all his flaws and shortcomings, while a little nagging voice in the back of my head kept reminding me that I have those same flaws and shortcomings. I too lie. I too complain. I too point out the flaws in others, while neglecting to change my own flaws. In the end, I was as much of a hypocrite as Holden.

The realization was quite unsettling. It forced me to look at the reasons why I acted the same way as Holden, only to find what I already knew but did not want to acknowledge. For most of my life, I have carried myself as if I was near perfect, completely sure of everything I did, and as if nothing could ever faze me. I did not want to admit that I had flaws, that I am unsure, or that I am frightened. I did not want to have any similarities to Holden. I did not want to show weakness. This book forced me to reexamine myself, free of all masks and illusions, whether I felt comfortable with it or not. Beneath the confident exterior, I was just a lost teenager frightened out of my wits. I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life. I don't know how I'd survive away from the shelter of high school and my parents. That initial annoyance towards Holden may have been my ego's attempt to stop me from discovering this corner of myself. Or, perhaps it was a reflection of how a part of me was disappointed in how I could just accept the fact that I am human.

I am reading Catcher in the Rye for the second time. Holden Caulfield is still one of the most annoying characters I have ever encountered in literature. He still lies compulsively, still complains about everything, still points out the flaws in everyone, but neglects to change his own flaws. Yet, these very qualities that annoy me so much, are also the same reasons why I now find him so endearing. Yes, so I know that he is flawed; so am I, and so is everyone else. Through reading Catcher in the Rye, I did what Holden could not. I confronted my insecurities and my own self and learn to move past them.

I still believe the true mark of a good book is the ability to make the reader squirm. Your book did not bother with pleasantries. You shattered my previous assumptions about myself, and forced me to examine parts of me I readily ignored. Thank you Mr. Salinger, for only when you broke me could I rebuild myself.

Sincerely,
Kara Ng

Runner Up To Mitch Albom, Tuesdays With Morrie
From Tiffany Schaffeld
Vale High School, Vale

Dear Mr. Mitch Albom:

I recently had the opportunity to read your book, "Tuesdays with Morrie." It is amazing how the thought of someone dying can bring you so much closer to them. After I completed reading your reflection of the time you and Morrie spent together, I decided that it was time to reach out to those that I had left behind, or not spent as much time with as I used to. Throughout school, I have had a second home, another grandparent, as you could say. Her name is Sola Staley, but she is most commonly known as Amuma, which means Grandmother in Basque. Amuma has always been there for me, greeting me with an inviting smile, lending a helping hand, a warm bite to eat, and a cozy place to stay.

As I have grown older, made new friends, gotten a car, and gained my independence, I had also grown apart from Amuma, and it showed. I didn't even visit her half as much as I had in the past, and she would call to see how "her Tiffany" was doing, just to make sure that nothing had happened to me, since I hadn't been by in such a long time. I would see her at football games, volleyball matches, school fundraisers, and church, but we hadn't spent quality time together in quite some time. In the past, we used to sit for hours eating wheat toast with her special homemade raspberry-peach jelly, and drinking freshly made raspberry lemonade, while discussing the latest events in our lives and in the world.

I seemed as if I only went there if I had nothing else to do, she was a last resort, I mean, really, who wants to hang out with an old lady who lives by herself? I grew too cool to visit Amuma anymore, there were things to do, people to see, places to go, I didn't have time to just sit around and talk, I was a busy, busy high school girl! I had practices, meetings, games, events, seminars, trips, and on and on go the excuses not to see her. I don't think I did it on purpose, but sub-consciously, I was pushing her out of my life.

After reading your book about your experiences with Morrie, I realized that I could not just sit by and let my relationship with Amuma pass me by, because what if something happened, what if she died all of a sudden, or was diagnosed with a terminal illness, she is over 80 years old, it is a possibility. She is an amazing woman whom I can learn so much from, I understood that I must go back; I must make time in my busy high school social life and schedule to see her, to let her know how important she really is to me. Amuma needs to know how much of an impact she has made on my life, and the lives of so many others in the area.

I wrote Amuma a letter, letting her know just how much she means to me. I told her about all the wonderful things that she has done for me throughout my life, I thanked her for always being there, with a smile, prayer, and a hug. I informed her of all the people who appreciate and love her for taking them in and caring for them when they have nowhere else to go. I have been to visit her more often and we spend so much more time together. I let her know that I love her dearly and that I can only hope that one day, I will be half the woman that she is. Thank you for your inspiration, you have made such a difference in my life.

Sincerely,
Tiffany Schaffeld

Honorable Mention To Bradley Trevor Greive, Looking for Mr. Right
From Caitlin Park

Valley Catholic High School, Beaverton

Dear Mr. Bradley Trevor Greive,

I have found that the idea of true love is everywhere in high school. From the awkward, blushing smiles of the more innocent to the bold flirtations of the more experienced, all teenagers hope to find love within these walls of learning. However, just as one will undoubtedly find these expectations of romance, one will also find the corresponding dose of heartbreak. Girls take to the bathrooms in flocks to cry or to complain, and guys sulk or pretend to punch the walls, all because of the way that their hearts were handled, without the kindness and caring that they deserve. I, of course, am no exception. Yet I have found that there is a profound difference in the way that I now view all these experiences of trial and tribulation when compared with how I viewed them a year ago. With certainty, I can accredit my ability to bounce back with cheerfulness and optimism to you, Mr. Greive, and the profound effect your book Looking for Mr. Right has had upon me.

It was last summer when I experienced perhaps the worst heartbreak of my whole sixteen years. During the long and painful ending to a relationship that had meant very much to me for a very long time, I grew internally depressed. I showed a cheery outside to the world around me, as I figured that no one else would understand my woes and more importantly, I figured that I had done something wrong and was paying the price. However, I soon found that I was greatly mistaken in keeping my sadness to myself when a close friend arrived at my home one day and handed me a wrapped package, exclaiming, "Open it! It's not your birthday, I know, but you need this." My surprise was evident as I peeled away the paper and read the words Looking for Mr. Right with Bradley Trevor Greive, *New York Times* best selling author in smaller print at the bottom. How *had* my friend known? I promptly sat upon the steps, opened the book, and read.

This new-found wonder enthralled me. From the clever wording and perfectly matched pictures which made me laugh, to the underlying themes of self-respect which gave me hope, each aspect helped me to realize that a book does not have to have a thick spine and complex wording to contain deep concepts and important ideas. Through this book I was reminded that while there are things in life that I simply cannot change, such as the inevitable occurrence of frustration at all things male or the moments of despair over the way things are going, life overall is truly a wonderful thing. I was reminded that I am special, worthy of the best, and that if my relationships are not oozing with perfection it is not because I am unsatisfactory, and it does not mean that I will never find happiness. After turning the final page and setting the book upon the ground, I was struck with the truth that had been revealed to me and how quickly my melancholy mindset had switched to one of joy. After all, I thought, I am wonderful, life is wonderful, and not even the darkest of days can change that.

So to you, Mr. Greive, I send my deepest and most heartfelt gratitude for writing a book that has truly inspired me and made my life that much brighter.

Sincerely yours,
Caitlin Park

Honorable Mention To Sharon Creech, Walk Two Moons
From Jessica Mannen
Valley Catholic High School, Beaverton

Dear Sharon Creech,

Before I read Walk Two Moons, I was a little girl who was shy and just beginning to cross the threshold into adolescence. I was fiercely independent. I hated to rely upon anyone other than myself, because I felt that I was the only one I could really count on. I had gotten to the point where I refused to confide in my parents or friends, and I was carrying all the weight of my pre-adolescent life without help. However, I never would have been able to carry this weight for long, and I would not have lasted long if it were not for Walk Two Moons.

When I read Walk Two Moons, I found myself relating to Sal. I saw her as independent, pulling away from her family and friends in order to keep herself safe, as much as I was trying to protect myself by isolating myself. After one loss, Sal refused to form bonds with people out of fear of losing them too. I refused to form bonds with people out of fear of losing part of myself. She and her father stopped hugging. I was pulling away from my parents at a time when I needed them more than ever. When Sal and her father moved from Bybanks, Sal was forced to further let go of things she thought would always be there. As I grew up, I had to let go of some pastimes, dreams, and relationships. Meeting and becoming friends with Phoebe caused Sal to further distrust and stay away from people. As Phoebe planted in her mind visions of axe murderers and lunatics, Sal started to trust less and even to love less. It wasn't until Phoebe learned to love again that Sal was able to let go and begin to trust people and to love them.

Reading Walk Two Moons forced me to evaluate my relationships with other people. When I found myself relating to Sal, I found that I did not like much of what I saw in her relationships, and I wondered if mine had taken a similar path. I started to hug more, to trust more, and to love more. I stopped taking those I love for granted, for I realized more fully that they will not always be there. I learned that anything can happen at any time and that we should cherish every moment we are blessed with, especially those we share with others.

As I was just barely starting adolescence, it looked to be a difficult few years. Even as a child, my relationships were fairly reserved. I thought that forming strong bonds would make it harder when I lost someone, but reading Walk Two Moons taught me that the regrets felt when one holds back in a relationship are so much worse than the pain felt when one loses someone one is close to. Both are painful, but we make a choice between the two, consciously or unconsciously, long before the people we love approach their time to leave this world.

The brand-new copy of Walk Two Moons I got for my birthday once is now battered. The spine is bent and the pages are dog-eared and even marred with a few tearstains. In conclusion, I want to thank you for weaving a beautiful story that made me laugh, made me cry, and made me love.

Sincerely yours,
Jessica Mannen