

LEVEL 1

Winner: Peter Souza

Title: *Mother to Son*

Author: Langston Hughes

December 8, 2009

Dear Langston Hughes,

This letter is in response to your poem *Mother to Son*. Like in your poem, my life “ain’t been no crystal stair,” but I’m not falling down. Let me tell you my story.

When I was just about two or three years old there were people called “rebels” in Africa where I grew up. They would come and kill whoever and whenever. It was sometimes kids (ten and up) that would try to kill people. The reason for the killing was because the adults who were their bosses would drug them so they would not be in their right minds. I know somebody who got her arm cut off by a rebel kid because of that.

I remember... mostly the noises – rebel shootings, grenades going off, people yelling, people dying, blood everywhere, dead bodies in my backyard, people with missing body parts. The air was bitter, dry, hot. I could feel the hurt, sorrow, the pain, frustration, vengeance, pride and envy.

One day after coming home from a long walk, my mom and I were exhausted, so my mom put me to sleep and my decided to go to sleep as well. After sleeping for what seemed like hours, when really it was maybe only one hour, I heard bang boom. Loud noises I heard on my door. Frighteningly I looked at my mom and from looking at her I knew something was wrong! Swiftly but gently my mom grabbed me and put me in one of the clothing chests. For at that moment I knew what was happening because this wasn’t the only time this has happened to me – it was just like a fire drill at school. Impatiently the rebel-kid knocked the hut door down and pushed my mother to the ground, trying to kill her. My mom ran away faster than a criminal running from the cops when they hear the sirens on the police car. All of a sudden the rebel was starting to trash our house for no reason at all. Then he looked at the chest and opened it, throwing all the clothes out cloth-by-cloth, clothes-by-clothes. When he reached the last one I guess he just gave up cause he just sprinted out and smuggled some jewelry. I don’t why, because you can’t sell jewelry where I am from. Out of nowhere my mom sprinted to me and as soon as she checked to see if I was in the chest, she started hugging me, kissing me, and all that nasty stuff. She started bawling so hard we could have used that water since there was really no clean water. So since I saw my mom crying I started to cry as well.

After I was four years old my mom made a big decision on her life and my life. So she and I walked to the orphanage without saying any words. It almost seemed to me that if we did talk, our mouths would dry up and we couldn’t ever speak again. After we got to the orphanage my mom talked to me and said I love you and always will. Now I am here in Oregon and life continues to be a challenge.

I relate to your poem Mr. Hughes because I have had a hard life. But I won’t turn back and I’ll keep climbin’.

Sincerely,
Peter Souza

LEVEL 1

Runner-up: Billie Baxter

Title: *Stargirl*

Author: Jerry Spinelli

Dear Jerry Spinelli,

Amazed, astonished, inspired. This is how I felt when I first read your book *Stargirl*. When I first picked this book up from the mountain of books that was my classroom, I thought it would be another story about friendship and being popular. I was wrong, *Stargirl* is something beyond a book. It is an adventure.

Everyday I would struggle to break free of the chains that held me to this book. I never did though. My mind was a cooking pot and you would throw your ingredients into me to make a beautiful story. In many ways I wish I was a star person. I wish I was as kind and thoughtful as *Stargirl*. *Stargirl* is who I look up to. I know it must sound crazy, but it's true. She changed how I look at the world. I now think of a cactus as a flower. When another team wins against mine, I don't boo, I cheer! I was no longer that shy, quiet girl. I was Billie.

It nearly made my heart break in two when *Stargirl* changed to Susan. And how they still would not accept her. It reminded me of when people told me how I had to look and what I had to say. I let all my friends boss me around. And I was very unhappy. They chose my favorite color, they told me what my favorite animal was. I needed help, and this book did just that. I then realized that blue is my favorite color, not green. And that wolves are my favorite animals, not bunnies. Piece by piece the puzzle that was me was put together. Soon the puzzle was done, and so was I.

She is a falling star, the faintest smell of a cactus flower, she is a cry of the mocking bird. She is a dream, she is a hope. She is *Stargirl*.

She is kind, she is friendly, she is an artist. She is a hockey player, she is a poet. She is me.

Your inspired reader,

Billie Baxter

LEVEL 1

Honorable Mention: An Phan

Title: *The Quiltmaker's Gift*

Author: Jeff Brumbeau

Dear Jeff Brumbeau,

Your story, *The Quiltmaker's Gift*, made me feel so touched, mostly in the middle of the story. Your book showed me that I have to help people who needed help and do community service to help others.

Do you do community service and other things to help poor people? I want to be just like the Quiltmaker by helping people and giving away things that I don't use or need. Mr. Brumbeau, your book is the book that really made me feel that I should help people in need.

When my teacher read this book out loud I said to myself that when I grow up I have to help people. I want every poor person who doesn't have a home to have a home. One of my ideas is for people who have money to donate some and use that money to build houses for poor people. We all stand on one earth and I think helping others when they needed help is what we should do.

I think that my parents are like the Quiltmaker. Why? My parents left their country and go to the United States just for us (I mean my brother, sister, and I) My parents want us to have a better life than in Vietnam. My parents are my hero – my everything.- you made me realize that. They gave up lots of things just for us. Mr. Brumbeau, your story made me think of my parents.

Thank you! You helped me realize what we should do to help poor people, and you made me realize that my parents are the Quiltmaker!

Sincerely,

An Phan

LEVEL 1

Honorable Mention: Jackie Zawada

Title: *Tuck Everlasting*

Author: Natalie Babbitt

Dear Natalie Babbitt,

Your book, *Tuck Everlasting*, was a thought-provoking story. It influenced me in several ways and made me question my fears. It also made me realize that eternal life is something everyone wishes they had, but after reading your book I realized that living forever might not be such a good thing.

Since reading *Tuck Everlasting*, I feel like a completely different person. My perspective on death has changed. I realize that I have been afraid of death, which is not a good way to live. My fear of dying has become so strong at times that I couldn't stop worrying about it. This anxiety has made me miss out on some major events in my life that I think I could have enjoyed, such as climbing Half Dome in Yosemite or riding on a rollercoaster in Disneyworld. After reading *Tuck Everlasting*, I realize that death is a natural event that should not be feared.

I remember in the book when Winnie and Angus are out on the lake, and Angus said, "Eternal life is something you want until you get it." I would agree with that completely. Although, I am not going to live forever, I can imagine what it would be like. You would have to be alive while your parents died, then your siblings, then your children. By then everyone from your generation would be gone and you would still be alive for millions of years. After imagining myself in that position, I realize that that is not something I want.

This book has changed how I look at life and death. It also changed my opinion on eternal life. I hope this helps me to overcome some of my fears and allows me to experience fun things to come. Thank you so much for writing this book.

Sincerely,

Jackie Zawada

LEVEL 1

Honorable Mention: Emilee McBryde

Title: *My Sister's Keeper*

Author: Jodi Picoult

Dear Jodi Picoult,

This book is like telling parts of my life story. When I was seven years old my older brother died in a skiing accident and I guess that the past few years I've been living in my own bubble. Your book has taken me out of my bubble by showing me I need to worry about people who have it much worse than me.

No my brother did not die of cancer but he did die like Anna in an accident on the same day two months after my grandfather died of cancer. My brother was like Anna and his friend Tess is like Kate. They were best friends, one dying of cancer and the other doing the best they could to help.

"My Sister's Keeper" I believe is one of or the most powerful books that I have read and it has really affected me. By reading this I realized that in the bubble I was living in, I felt pity for myself but now I realize that yes something terrible happened to me but some people have it much worse. I know now that I need to pay more attention to the world and what's going on. This book has given me more strength to keep moving on in life than anything or anyone has before. So thank you for opening my eyes and having a better outlook on life.

Sincerely,

Emilee McBryde

LEVEL 1

Honorable Mention: Kayla LaBansky

Title: *Walk Two Moons*

Author: Sharon Creech

Dear Sharon Creech,

To the world you are just one person, but to one person you are the whole world. In your book *Walk Two Moons* Sal and I have big similarities. When I was young my mom left me. For almost all of my life I imagined what she looked like, who she was, and why she gave up on me. After I read your book I met my mom for the first time in eleven years. I realized she didn't leave or give up on me. She just wasn't quite ready to handle a kid.

Before I read your book I felt alone in the world with only one person to lean on. I had and still have a friend just like Phoebe, we tell each other everything. My friend and I were once dealing with the same problems as Sal and Phoebe were. Your book has changed my view of the world so much. I always felt small and never realized that I was actually loved. Your book made me think. A part in your book you said "Don't judge a man until you walk two moons in his moccasins." That was another thing that made my views of the world and the people in it more valid. I would always judge people on how they dressed and how they would talk. Every time I think of judging someone I think back at your quote and get to know them better. After all we're all only one small person to the whole world, but to the one person who loves you, you are the whole world.

Sincerely,

Kayla LaBansky

LEVEL 2

Winner: Max Denning

Title: *Heat*

Author: Mike Lupica

Dear Mike Lupica,

After I read your book *Heat* I was dreaming about the Little League World Series, so when I made my local Little League All-Star team I took my copy of *Heat* from my shelves.

My first day of All-Star practice was nerve-wracking, but I ended up hitting really well. At the end of practice while doing a drill to improve our fielding, a fast paced baseball hit my right ring finger. When I looked down my finger was stuck in a position that looked like a steep hill. The finger was dislocated.

I couldn't play baseball for a week just like Michael Arroyo. I had to watch my teammates practice; this devastated me. I wouldn't let this keep me down. The whole week when I wasn't practicing I was reading your book. I tried to imitate Michael's attitude during practices keeping my head up and staying positive. The whole week when we scrimmaged I coached third base. This was as close as I could get to the game; Michael did the same in your book.

Your book had me wondering about questions for the whole week. One of them was that if Michael was really being treated unfairly. When I really thought about it I don't know if I would've done anything different if I were in those other coaches position. They had the right to be suspicious and they just didn't want other teams to have preeminent players that could possibly be older. In my tournament I also saw many kids that didn't look age twelve but I knew they had to have a birth certificate among other things and that they were actually twelve. Your book taught me never to judge a person by the way he looks.

I've always wanted you to write a sequel to *Heat* because I have various questions about what might happen to Michael Arroyo. The first one, the one anyone would want to know, did Michael's team make it to Williamsport? To go even farther in the future could Michael continue his success in pitching? Michael is a character that anyone could have countless questions about, although my favorite character was Manny I am sometimes over confident but I also have a way with words. Manny knew many stats and useless facts, which I do too. On the way to our games my teammates would try to stump me on sports trivia. They never could. Manny was a character that I found myself looking back on a lot.

My team ended up getting second in our district tournament. That summer was amazing. My coaches and teammates were great but I did see my fair share of 'Westchester South' like coaches. I don't understand coaches having such an immense desire to win in Little League baseball. But I think every Little League runs into that.

Your book taught me that everyone is going to get knocked down, but you can't let that shape your life. You taught me that courage is not getting up; it's doing everything you can twice as hard after you get knocked down. This lesson I brought to the baseball diamond. I thought of that every time I went up to the plate, that's why I sincerely thank you, Mr. Lupica.

Sincerely,
Max Denning

LEVEL 2

Runner-up: Clara Gorman

Title: *Little Women*

Author: Louisa May Alcott

Dear Louisa May Alcott,

Some things in life just happen. You don't know why or how, they just do. You can't control it and the result usually affects your life more than you know. In my life I have had things happen to me that I will never fully understand. As a child growing up, my parents always told me that family is one of the most important things in life. I didn't realize the importance of what my parents said, until I read your book, Little Women.

Your book taught me many things about life, love, tragedies, and hardships, but in particular, it taught me about family. When I was a baby, I was put up for adoption, and had it not been for a loving couple that adopted me, I wouldn't have had the joy of being raised by a loving family. Even though we have our differences, I love them; they are my family and have made my whole life possible.

When I was reading Little Women, I felt that I could really connect to the characters and their problems. I have a little sister so I know what it's like to have a strong relationship with your sibling, just as the March sisters do. My sister is everything to me. Without her I wouldn't be who I am. I imagine life without her and the prospect of that makes me love her even more. The bond that we share is very much like the bond between Jo and Beth. All my life I've had the responsibility of making sure she's okay, and comforting her when she's upset. I can only imagine what it would be like to lose her, as Jo loses Beth.

Your book also really inspired me to change, not just as a person but my life, my dreams. To hope, to love, to cherish every moment on earth. Through your story of the March sisters, their bond, their love, their strength as a family, I have been able to come to terms with my emotions and feelings. Jo, in particular, made me think about my life and my family. Many times when I read your book, I stopped to think, is this what my life is like? Have I made the best out of what I have? Have I been grateful enough? While these questions storm through my head, I realize that being rich won't make me happier, being poor won't lessen my understanding of the world. I want to feel loved, cherished, and unique.

Your book helped me to unleash my feelings and find out who I truly am. It taught me to make the best out of what I have, and it made me realize that one day, all of this will crumble, and I will be left standing in nothing but a pile of rubble. I only get to live life once, so I'm going to make the best out of it while I can.

Sincerely,

Clara Gorman

LEVEL 2

Honorable Mention: Isabel Enns
Title: *A Christmas Memory*
Author: Truman Capote

Dear Truman Capote,

Although *A Christmas Memory* doesn't mirror my own life very closely, it feels like a kindred spirit. When I was ten, going on eleven, my parents got divorced and my world, as I knew it, came to a grinding, jarring halt. My father had been remodeling for the past year or so and my mother had moved out saying she couldn't live in a "half finished house anymore." I presumed that when the renovating was finished she would move back in.

I was mistaken.

Nineteen days before my eleventh birthday, I remember it clearly, my dad came over for dinner at my mom's mobile home. I was spunky and happy after a commendable day at school. My parents, however, were strangely subdued. After dinner my mom quietly asked me to come and sit on the couch. I plopped down next to her, smiling. She sighed, turned to me, and began those dreaded first words that a child never wants to hear, "Isabel, we have something to tell you..."

I believe now that it was punishment for my parents to watch my face slip into that tight mask of pain, despair, betrayal and shock that I pulled over my head and tied around my heart. Pain mounted in my throat getting tighter and tighter until I couldn't breathe, couldn't see, couldn't feel. My mother, **my** mother had come out as a lesbian and was leaving my dad...for good. Halfway through her little speech, my mom gathered me to her and whispered, "Oh honey." Panic stricken thought skittered across my mind. *This can't be happening. This can't be happening. Not to me. Not to my family. Oh, please. No. No!*

"It'll get better. I promise sweetheart."

How? *How will it get better? You're leaving us. You're leaving us forever.*

Then I broke down and wailed. I sobbed for all I was worth. As far as I knew, my mother had just announced the end of the world.

It was a very hard year. Holidays tense. Pity and sympathy from my friends and their families. Always people asking if I was alright. Of course I said yes, if I said what I really felt they would worry about me and blame my parents for hurting me. That was the last thing that I wanted. So that painful, tightlipped mask stayed there. Smiling, falsely, out at the world.

That Christmas was hard as well. I got very good presents: new sketch books, acrylic paints, Playmobile toys, a twenty dollar gift card to Northwest Nature Shop, a Native American rattle and a mother of pearl brooch that I loved to stroke. Yet, they didn't count. The one present I wanted most still eluded me. I knew it always would.

After cleaning up stray ribbon and paper my family filed out the door calling goodnights. I waved and smiled half-heartedly watching their tail lights disappearing around the corner. I trooped back inside and found places for my presents in my tiny, butter-yellow room. Surveying the affect I sighed and sank down on my bed, head in my hands. I did a double take and leaped up as something hard crinkled under my sheets. I threw back my covers to expose a small rectangular package in handmade paper and yarn. A tiny tag with a watercolor chickadee hung from the string. I read the wild, loopy script "With love. To Isabel. Lyn." Lyn was my dad's friend who lived outside of Brookings on a cattle ranch. When we came to visit she always made apple pie and had bumper lambs for me to feed. I loved her dearly.

I slid off the paper, which had potato print trees and candy canes all over it, to expose the cover of A Christmas Memory. I had never heard of it before so I sat down and read it cover to cover. I soaked in the beautiful language, the gentle, rolling conversational tone. The innocence of it flowed directly to my heart and loosened the strings of that cramped, fake mask that had been cinched around my spirit. It gave it room to grow and swell until I was weeping with the sheer realization that my life would keep striding forward unless I stopped it myself. This book uncovered a truth I had never really processed before. Life goes on. Thank you for writing such an admirable book that I needed so desperately.

Gratefully yours,

Isabel Enns

LEVEL 2

Honorable Mention: Emily Mann

Title: *The Giver*

Author: Lois Lowry

Dear Lois Lowry,

I believe that being yourself is one of the most important things you can be. I never really realized how important it is to be yourself, not until I read your book, *The Giver*. Your book took me by the hands and showed me a brand new world, a world I never could have imagined on my own. While reading, I discovered how important it is to be yourself, even when you feel like you should be someone else.

A few of my friends read your book before I did. They enjoyed it and suggested that I read it, too. So, I tried to read it multiple times and each time I either lost interest or got too confused to finish the book. This year, when my teacher said we needed a book for class, I decided to give your book another chance. I like your book so much that I finished it in the next two days! I couldn't understand why I hadn't finished reading it the first time.

I never would have thought that a group of people didn't have the choice to make their own decisions – I couldn't even imagine it. I automatically assumed that everyone had different choices and paths that they could take. Your book opened up a new idea to me, and it made me realize that some people don't know what they're going to do next, and some people always know.

Your book made me realize that every person thinks differently, and everyone has their own opinions. Now that I have read your book, I make choices in my life much more seriously and wisely. I take every opportunity I am offered, because I know that I might not have that opportunity at another point in my life. I now value and respect the decisions of the people around me and myself. And, I am very glad I read *The Giver*. So thank you, Lois Lowry, for writing such a beautiful book, and for helping me understand what being unique truly means.

Emily Mann

LEVEL 2

Honorable Mention: Chloee Peets

Title: *Cut*

Author: Patricia McCormick

Dear Patricia McCormick,

My life took a hard toll on me in the summer of 08'. I thought no one understood me. I thought I was alone. I was depressed at the age of 12, when my life really wasn't that bad. I guess it was my fault, but at the time I had trouble realizing it. During this period in my life I took up something I'm not proud of. I started to cut myself to fill up the emptiness I felt. I also began to read and write poems. That allowed me to do what I never could before. I was able to express myself, and no one had to be there to understand. Only me.

When I came across the book *Cut* by Patricia McCormick, I found something I could relate to. My life was just like that. I had to go to therapy, but I didn't want to. I didn't think it would help. When I went I just answered yes or no questions, that's it. But after I finished the book, I realized you can't get past anything without talking it out, and opening up. After going to therapy, and after I started to talk, I felt better, like I had an outlet. I was set free, and a huge burden was lifted off my shoulders. I signed a contract with my school counselor that I would not harm myself in anyway. I have not broken my contract. I have kept my promise.

This book has made me realize that you can't stop a destructive tendency or confront a problem without communicating feelings. Now I have a positive attitude. I'm trying to be happy, and I succeed most of the time. I know that I'm going to have dark thoughts, but I can make my future brighter. I'm going to have to be aware for signs of depression in myself and throughout my life.

I wanted to thank you Patricia McCormick for helping me realize that I have someone out there who understands. You told the world that people aren't a stereo type if they cut themselves. I know I am in control of my life. I owe my thanks to you. You may not know it, but you saved me. You gave me light when I had darkness. You gave me and my family myself back.

Thankfully,

Chloee Peets

LEVEL 3

Winner: Jennifer Zhou

Title: *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China*

Author: Jung Chang

Dear Jung Chang,

Thank you for writing your book Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China. Your book helped foster a deep appreciation in me for my culture and ethnic background. Additionally, through the understanding of my culture, I could relate more to my mother and the bond between us grew stronger. Your book prompted a mother and daughter discussion that alleviated many conflicts and misunderstandings we once had between us.

Ever since I was young, there always seemed to be aspects of my mother that I could not fully grasp. My mother was raised in China, during the tumultuous time of the Cultural Revolution, while I had lived in America all my life. The cultural division between us was a gap too deep for either of us to cross. However, as I read each page of your book, the gap between my mother and me narrowed until finally all that was left was a slight crack.

What added to the gap between us were the conflicts that arose from her scolding me. Her basic rebukes concerned my whining, time wasting, and lack of appreciation for what I had. She would constantly tell me how lucky I was to be born into this life: “You have food, clothes, a roof over your head, and most importantly the opportunity to succeed! You have everything you could possibly ask for!” At first I admit, I argued back saying that there was plenty that I could ask for, but I was always shushed by her fury and sincerity. My mother has always stressed education above all; full of encouragement, she urges me everyday to read more, learn more, and be more. Her aphorism, education leads to success, has always been ringing in my ears.

My mother read the Chinese translated version of your book. To unveil my eyes to the culture that I had such little understanding of and to show me why she urged me to study so hard, my mother entreated me to borrow your book from the library and read it. Hesitantly, one day, I cracked open your book. To my surprise, I read all day and finished your book during one sitting. I had no idea a book could make me cry as hard as yours did. After reading your book, I could finally understand my mother’s feelings and see things from her point of view. Reading Wild Swans prompted me to ask my mother questions about her childhood, and from that figured out the reasons for her constant berating. Your story impelled me to unveil my mother’s story, and so the past helped me understand the present. My mother had no chance for education; she dropped out of school to help support her family when the Cultural Revolution in China started. In order not to starve, she worked long hours every day doing hard labor, the only jobs available. Later on, she barely finished high school and consequently never got the chance for higher education. Even to this day, I can still hear the regret and shame in her voice. My mother wants for me what she what she did not have herself: opportunity.

Your story created a bridge between my mother and me, connecting her past in China to my present in America. When I finished your book, I swore that I would fulfill my dreams and make my mother proud. I could see now why she pushed me to work so hard. It’s remarkable for me to be living the life I am now when, just a few decades ago, women had no position of power and weren’t even treated as human beings. I now had a newfound appreciation for my life. The women in your book were courageous in their fights against all adversities; their strength and determination during the difficult times in twentieth century China opened my eyes and inspired me to make the most of my life. I owe it not only to the generations of women before me, including my mother, but also to myself, to seize the opportunities that lay before me.

Everyone knows books are magical, but your book held magic so powerful that it swept away all the misunderstandings between my mother and me and gave my heart the fresh sense of pride, gratitude, and resolve that it needed.

Thank you for telling your story and helping me discover mine.

Jennifer Zhou

LEVEL 3

Runner-up:

The State Library did not receive permission to publish the student's name and letter.

LEVEL 3

Honorable Mention: Todd Holce

Title: *Tuesdays With Morrie*

Author: Mitch Albom

Dear Mitch Albom,

This summer I was required to read a book off of a set list for my English class. Out of all of them I chose yours. I didn't chose to read it because of how it mirrors my life, or how it highlights some of my flaws. I didn't read it for the many lessons of life that it has inside. At the time I had no idea about how much I had in common with this story. The deciding factor of me reading your book *Tuesdays with Morrie* was that it was one of the shortest books on the list. I now wish it could have been longer. Your book has allowed me to greater understand and appreciated many aspects of my life.

Through out the years of elementary school I had grown distant to one of my early friends Jackson Hill. We didn't attend the same school, live in the same neighborhood or belong in the same grade, yet each other's parents were always socializing. For some reason I stopped going to his house. Then in March 2003 he was diagnosed with cancer. It was this disease that caused us to meet again and rekindle our friendship, much like you and Morrie. From that day on we grew closer and closer. We could talk for hours about the wildest things that our minds could come up with. While the conversations never ran too deep, they became the basis of an unbreakable bond. A bond that still remains even though he has passed away.

Unlike Morrie, Jackson wasn't terminally diagnosed until the very end. He fought for his life, because at his young age there was still much more to experience. However his views on death mirror Morrie's when he told you how "You mustn't be afraid of my dying" (37). Jackson never showed me that he was scared of dying. In fact, I like to think that I was more terrified of losing him. To this day it amazes me how he showed so much bravery at his age. It amazes me how he knew that whatever the results were he would come out on top.

Jackson always found the bright spots out of his dark situation. He kept moving forward, even when his leg was amputated. He allowed himself to not swell on things, but experience them and move on. When I imagine his face now, Morrie's own words shine through, "I mourn what I've lost... But then I concentrate on all the good things still in my life" (57). Even though the chemotherapy slowly weakened his body and he only had one leg, he pushed himself to do all that he possibly could. We still went to the movies, including the latest Star Wars installment. Lego construction at his house still continued, as did the occasional swimming. Jackson tried to enjoy every moment of his life.

When he died on September 12, I remember feeling sorry. Yet as soon as the feeling enters me it leaves. He never wanted pity; he was content with a friendship. A friendship that remains strong to this day. Even though at times I feel distant from him, I remind myself that Jackson is still here. I appreciate the things around me that he has affected. The story of you and Morrie has helped me when I grew distant from one of my best friends. Thanks to you, we have met again and our friendship has been rekindled.

Sincerely,
Todd Holce
LEVEL 3

Honorable Mention: Kassie Anthony
Title: *Walk Two Moons*
Author: Sharon Creech

Dear Ms. Creech,

Although I have read several pieces of your literature, for some reason your book, *Walk Two Moons*, has left a lasting impression on me.

To begin, I am a sophomore attending Vale High School in Oregon and I first read your book when I was in fourth grade, seven years ago. My teacher assigned everyone in my class a book to read; mine was *Walk Two Moons*. At first, I must say, I struggled a little with the material. It was a little above me, but as I continued on, the book captured me. It quickly became one of my all time favorites, because it's a great story with an unpredictable plot. It is the only book I have ever read three times in my life! It's just that good.

Next, this book means more to me than I will ever be able to express with words. When I first read the novel, I was at a very delicate time in my life. It was the year when my classmates started thinking school was uncool. I think it's safe to say that your book helped me to believe school is cool. As a result of your book, I am a very good student who loves to read. I think it's because I loved the feeling your book gave me. It made me feel like I was on a roller coaster ride overcome with feelings of wonder, anger, and sadness. I couldn't believe that a book could take hold of you like that. I was awestruck! I remember thinking books are cool! I wanted more. While I was reading your book, I remembered taking it to a slumber party, because I wanted to brag how big it was. I just felt so "cool" reading it.

Last, there are many reasons why *Walk Two Moons* is still my favorite book, even after seven years and many other great books. *Walk Two Moons* takes me back to certain times in my life instantly as soon as I read it. Gramps and Gram bring back memories of my grandparents and the many road trips I took with them. It takes me back to times before my grandpa got diagnosed with Alzheimer's and dementia. It reminds me of when he was still grandpa, not the frail body he is today. It makes me remember my grandma before the years of taking care of my grandpa had aged her. It makes me remember the times before when I didn't have to worry about everything so much. When I read your book, my mind immediately begins to think like my eleven year old self. It's like I magically forget all the bad things that I have learned and dealt with since then. I feel like I become a kid again and gain some of my innocence back every time I pick up your book.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you, Sharon Creech, for writing the best book I have ever read in my life!

Sincerely,
Kassie Anthony

Your biggest FAN!