

LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE

MASSACHUSETTS LEVEL I TOP HONORS 2009

Dear Trenton Stewart Lee,

You can never trust a commercial. I know that now, thanks to your book, *The Mysterious Benedict Society*. It's true that your novel was only a factor in my thought, but like an ice cream is not complete without the cone, the thought would have hung desolately by a frayed thread of yarn had I not read your book.

My thought started out as a simple wondering, "What motivates the way I think?" Then I got hold of your book and Mr. Curtain's Whisperer satisfied that question with its power to transmit hidden messages to unsuspecting minds watching television and listening to the radio. If there were Whisperers in the world, they would definitely motivate spectators of TV and listeners of radio to believe certain thoughts. As a result of much pondering along with the concept of the Whisperer, I realized there are countless Whisperers in the world. They are commercials!

An avid soccer player, I went to buy a soccer ball. At the store, I chose a soccer ball produced by a company that I had seen on a TV commercial. The company's product is endorsed by famous athletes whom I admire. Later, I happened to glance at a magazine article about children forced into making soccer balls. The word "Whisperer" shoved itself to the front of my mind. Suspicious, I didn't have to search far to find that the company used the endorsements to its advantage, marketing soccer balls manufactured by children who receive less than the minimum wage! Now, whenever I play soccer, I feel a sad pang as I remember what kind of hungry, scared hands might have sewn the ball getting kicked so freely around the field. At the same time, I am angry at this company that knowingly commercializes child labor products.

Now I realize the world is bustling with numerous Whisperers. Before unconditionally believing them and before buying commercialized items, I am careful to check for factors such as environmental friendliness, health, and child labor other than the ones displayed in the commercial. I am trying to spread the message you taught me about Whisperers like Reynie in *The Mysterious Benedict Society*. Though the future remains with a veil over her face, I am sure that if more people are alerted and take action, the overpowering effect of the Whisperers will gradually fade away.

Sincerely,

Dianne

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