

LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE

MASSACHUSETTS LEVEL II HONORABLE MENTION 2009

Dear Scott Westerfeld,

As I was reading your book *Uglies*, I was greatly affected by the actions of the main character, Tally. Her thoughts and actions made me realize how much of a privilege it is to have our individuality, to be able to voice our opinions, and to have knowledge about past societies and cultures.

As the book progressed, I started to think about how much different Tally's society was than ours is today. In the book Tally decided to run away and not undergo a serious operation to make her "pretty." If everyone in our community was "pretty" and almost the same as one another, life would be extremely boring. There wouldn't be any diversity among people. In the modern world, there are many groups of people who speak different languages and dress in unusual and eccentric clothing. Imagine how much the world would change if suddenly our freedom to express ourselves as individuals was taken away from us. Being able to dress a certain way and do whatever I want with my appearance defines me as my own person, unlike everyone else.

Freedom to voice my opinions is also a very important thing that I have learned to be thankful for. In Tally's community, she learned something about the town that no one was supposed to know and was immediately hunted down for it. When people became "pretty," a part of their ability to think for themselves was also taken away from them. This made me realize how powerful our thoughts are. If we could no longer make our own choices and have an opinion about something, we would just be robots walking around doing what the people in charge told us to do. We have the capability to change the way our world is run by voicing our opinions and telling people our thoughts on a certain matter. Acknowledging that my opinions are able to make a difference has helped me to become a more empowered person because I am able to tell people what I think without being embarrassed or worried about what they might think of me.

Knowledge and the ability to use it effectively is also a great privilege. Tally's community had all of the books about the past either burned or they were smuggled out of the community. No one was able to get access to the books to read about the people in the past, in case they got any ideas about freedom. I think knowledge about the past is very valuable because we can learn from the mistakes we have made before. *Uglies* has helped me to appreciate my education and realize how much I can put my education to good use.

Recognizing myself as an individual and being able to understand that my opinion is just as important as anyone else's has made me a better person. I am more comfortable with myself, and I realize that being different can be a good thing. All of the great opportunities and knowledge that I have, I am now more grateful for because of your book.

Thank you,

Mikayla

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