

LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE

MASSACHUSETTS LEVEL II HONORABLE MENTION 2009

Dear Mr. Edgar Allan Poe,

I think I should start off by saying that last year was not one of my best years. It was a time when I thought the world was against me and almost every area of my life seemed...grey. Overdramatic? I don't think so. Weird phase? Probably. It might have all stemmed from an instance when I got an answer I didn't like. I convinced myself that I didn't care what anyone else thought of me. They obviously didn't care what I thought of them, so why should it go the other way? I hate to say that your poem "The Raven" made my outlook bleaker – fed the flame, so to speak. I look back on that now and wonder what I was thinking about all last year. I still couldn't tell you if you asked me.

Mr. Poe, the first time I read "The Raven" last year, I thought I had found someone to relate to in you. I didn't realize till later that I was wrong. But at the time, dark thoughts and painful times that sometimes flowed out on paper seemed to be a perfect connection. "The Raven" is about lost life and sanity. For some reason, that was an idea I liked. I read more of your poetry – "The Lake" and "Annabel Lee" in particular. I read your books – *Murders in the Rue Morgue* and *The Telltale Heart*. But none of them seemed as right, as brilliant, as "The Raven." I suppose it became sort of an anthem to me after a while. Your poem changed my outlook on life. It brought in ideas that the world was an evil place that destroys the things we love. That in the end, the world ends up breaking you, too.

Then I started thinking. You, Mr. Poe, had an awful life, I'm sorry to say. You loved more than once, and every time it was taken away from you. Tuberculosis closed every door for you. You found solace inside your dark mind and poured yourself into your poetry. Your black, twisted writing became your only truth. So what I thought was, what right do I have to think that way? Yes, I have lost people. I've had people tell me no. I've had words and laughter thrown in my face. But nothing, Mr. Poe, compares to your horror story of a life. Now, when I read "The Raven," instead of thinking that I've found someone to relate to, I feel pity. "The Raven" isn't my anthem anymore. It isn't my one truth. It is more of a lesson for me. I remember last year. The world was against me. All I wanted was to sink further into the black hole that I, quite overdramatically, assumed had replaced my inner organs. Your work helped me dive in. So I thank you for giving me exactly what I wanted during that time, but that's not me anymore. The world can change in an instant, and I'm living proof of that. Thank you for reading. "Quoth the raven, nevermore."

Sincerely,

Isabella

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