

# LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE

MASSACHUSETTS LEVEL III HONORABLE MENTION 2009

Dear Mark Bowden,

I have always been grateful for the people that step up when we need them in the armed forces. I also have felt sad for those who have died in combat and for their families. To me these people are the true heroes; they protect us and our country from harm. Sometimes these brave men and women lose their lives, or they become permanently injured. They sometimes make the ultimate sacrifice to keep us safe. But when I read your book *Black Hawk Down* it really changed how I looked at our veterans.

When I was reading your book, I was able to see in my head what was happening to them, and the suffering that they were going through. I also noticed the brotherhood between the soldiers and how close they were to each other. And it really opened my eyes as to what really happens in war. Everything cannot be planned; casualties will sometimes happen; and it is just horrible. I am sure that the soldiers did not plan on spending the night in Mogadishu, and if they did, I think they would have brought the appropriate gear. Casualties happen, but the way they die is just unimaginable for me. People are meant to die...but not like how people die in wars.

Since reading your book, I have looked at all veterans and servicemen and servicewomen differently. Since the day I finished *Black Hawk Down*, whenever I saw a member of the armed forces, I asked myself...What did they see wherever they were stationed? And after asking myself this question, I would walk up to them and say as I was shaking their hand, "Thank you for all you have done for us." They look at me and say thank you back for caring about what happens to them. Because of your book, servicemen and women have forever earned my respect.

Now seeing how your book changed my views about soldiers, I decided to do something about it. I decided to help them out by making sure that they know that we care about them and we will not forget them. Most years I send Christmas cards or happy holidays cards to them. I also sometimes send them Thanksgiving cards too because I really cannot imagine what it would be like to be on one side of the world while your family is on the other side celebrating these holidays without you.

Your book has really helped me look at our servicemen and women differently. I will always ask myself the question that I stated earlier and I will always say thank you. I have realized that they are the true heroes and they deserve the highest honors that we have to offer. And the suffering that they go through while they serve and they still continue to strive to keep us safe is how I define them as heroes. For what they have done for me and many other people I think goes above the call of duty, and they should have a special place in our hearts forever.

Sincerely,

*William*

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