

LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE

MASSACHUSETTS LEVEL II HONORABLE MENTION 2009

Dear Jerry Spinelli,

After reading your book *Stargirl*, I felt a bond between Stargirl and myself. I saw myself in Stargirl, and the story gave me so much to relate to. Some books are realistic and cause kids to think about the world around them; some books are fantasy and cause kids to dream, but *Stargirl* made me wonder. It made me wonder about the world around me and the difference between dreams and reality.

Last year I was just like Stargirl. I was the new girl at a new school in a different town. I wasn't like the other girls. I didn't know anyone in my grade, and I sat alone at lunch. As Stargirl wore different clothes than everyone else, had a canvas bag instead of a backpack, and played the ukulele, I wore brightly colored, mismatched, or just plain funky socks even though we had a school uniform. I had a messenger bag instead of a name-brand backpack, and I made bracelets during lunch instead of using the computer. Then one day at lunch, I went to the library and found your book *Stargirl*. After I read it, I felt a sensation like I've never felt after reading a book. It wasn't ecstasy; it wasn't melancholy; and it wasn't confusion. It was a blend: a blast of cold reality, bliss, melancholy, wonder, perplexity, and contentment all mixed together. I could close my eyes and replace *Stargirl* with myself as I played the story through my head. Even though I later transferred, her unfinished year at Mica High was akin to my own in seventh grade: at first strange then accepted and respected, and then disliked by some. I was an outcast, a role model, a weirdo, an inferior, and an insignificant little seventh grader all rolled into the little person that I am. And just like Stargirl did, I tried to fit in. I bought a backpack. I hung out with them when they were using the computers during lunch. I started talking like them. Then I noticed the change: I was selling myself, bit by bit, just to satisfy them. I then went back to myself, thinking who cares about what they think of me? I am what I am, and I shouldn't have to change just because they will like me better. I may have been more popular, but real friends should stick with me no matter what. But still some people hated me, which was unfair because they didn't even get to know me. My ending was almost the same as Stargirl's. I left with no notice, and some missed me while others said "good riddance." I still keep in touch with my friends that I made that year, just as Stargirl does in *Love, Stargirl*.

Your book gave me the confidence to be myself, regardless of what others think. After reading it, I thought of my unfinished year and how it was just like Stargirl's. I then wished that she was real so that I could connect with her and share experiences. Then I realized that I was the Stargirl that year. She still lives in me, and that part of me will never die.

Sincerely,

Fatima

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