

LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE

MASSACHUSETTS LEVEL II HONORS 2009

Dear Esther Hoskins Forbes,

I really enjoyed reading your historic fiction novel, *Johnny Tremain*, which is set in my hometown of Boston, Massachusetts. You make history come alive. When I first hiked the celebrated Freedom Trail, it first seemed like just a collection of old churches and monuments clinging to the booming twenty-first century rising up around it. More or less, the Freedom Trail appeared to be only a red line permanently painted on the concrete or a trail of bricks marking an impersonal path for kids on school fieldtrips to follow.

But your novel *Johnny Tremain* made the American Revolution come to life for me. When I stood on the waterfront, I pictured myself at Griffin's Wharf in December, 1773, defiant and ready to board the gangplank of *The Beaver* in anticipation of hoisting overboard chests of East India Tea to culminate in the birth of a new nation!

When Johnny's hand becomes disfigured due to a broken crucible, I felt like I too was an apprentice silversmith and pictured myself apprenticed to the likes of one of the most famous of the Sons of Liberty – the master craftsman Paul Revere. Suddenly, I could see his famous ride through the streets of Middlesex County. A shiver ran up my spine as I actually thought I too caught a glimpse of Robert Newman's two famous lanterns in the steeple tower of Old North Church, signaling the redcoats' impending approach by sea and not by land, as Longfellow's infamous poem extols.

I.M. Pei's glass edifice standing proud as the John Hancock Tower took on new meaning as the man behind the building took shape in your novel. I can picture him as "the richest man in New England" and am now more reverent having made a personal connection to him in your story. Although it was Johnny who met him, I feel like I have met him also.

The revolution has come alive for me, and now as I walk by the historic landmarks quietly standing tall on my ventures into the city, I push my chest out more proudly. Although I was born in China, through your novel I have now become an adoptive daughter of the American Revolution. I am proud to be a citizen of the venerable nation who fought the good fight for freedom and those who put an end to taxation without representation.

The shiny gold dome of the State House gleaming brightly as a beacon of freedom for all has taken on fresh new meaning because I too have participated in the American Revolution through the eyes of the colonists in your novel and your protagonist, Johnny, who is my age. I can still hear the fife and drums, the musket firing, and the cannon balls streaming as I walk the hallowed trail now. I smile to myself, proud to walk among the ghosts of Boston Common, patriots past, and count myself among the rank and file of all current and future patriots who embrace freedom with the spirit of 1776.

Yours truly,

Emmy

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Grade 7