

Dear Mary Ann Hoberman,

I thoroughly enjoyed reading your novel *Strawberry Hill*. I felt that Allie and I are similar in many ways. Like Allie I found myself in the same situations with family, friends, and religion. Reading about Allie and her troubles made me feel less lonely because I realized that there are other children who struggle with the same things and overcome them.

Just like Allie, I am Jewish and have to go to Hebrew school. My friends who are not Jewish ask me why do I wear long skirts when I go to the temple and why do I stay home on Friday nights. I can picture how different Allie felt when Cynthia first met her and exchanged strange glances with Martha. When Cynthia called Allie a “dirty Jew” I felt sick to my stomach thinking about Allie.

I also find it difficult to be friends with kids who are different from others. I can tell that Allie feels bad for Mimi who is a crybaby and whose father went to jail. So Allie tries to be her friend even though she prefers Martha. Sometimes I try to befriend kids who are shy because I feel bad for them. Luckily they prove to be true friends, much better than the kids who are popular.

Finally, reading about Allie helps me fit in with other children. Like Allie I had to change schools. I remember how it felt being a new student, having to make new friends. By getting to know Allie I feel that I have made a new friend who is always behind my shoulder, giving me advice when I need some.

Sincerely,

*Valerie Dabinsky*