

Massachusetts Letters About Literature Honors, | 2011 Level I

Dear Shel Silverstein,

When I read your book *The Giving Tree* I thought it was absurd that the tree could be happy after stripping itself of everything it had. The tree gave away all its apples, the tree gave away all the branches it had, and its trunk. But the tree was still glad because it could still keep giving.

Your story helped me understand a lot about life. I used to wonder why when I went to a restaurant with my whole family my parents and grandparents used to quarrel over the check, and they still do! Just last weekend we all went to a restaurant and my grandmother was crawling over my mother, clawing at the check while begging me and my siblings to help. Meanwhile my mother clenched in her teeth the check, defending it with one arm as she plunged her other arm in her purse looking for her wallet. I used to wonder why anyone would desperately desire to PAY for dinner. But now I understand just how divine it feels to give. The wonderful sensation is like flying, feeling the wind in your face, the incredible freedom of gliding through the air.

After I read your book I realized that I had never given anything. Well, I had "given" birthday presents to friends but truly they were gifts from my mom, she had put her time and her money into the present not me. From then on I always give at least a card from my time, my work, and my heart and it all pays off, just by seeing the look on their face.

I think the best thing you can do in your life for yourself and others is give. It makes you feel good about yourself. I think that might be a reason that people sometimes think that most wealthy people are joyful. They have more to offer.

Your book changed how I see life and how I live it. Thank you for writing your book. Never underestimate the power of giving.

Sincerely,

Isy

**Isy Mekler, Grade 6
Solomon Schechter Day School of Greater Boston, Newton**