

# Massachusetts Letters About Literature Honors, Level III | 2011

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Dear Ms. Thompson,

Your children's book *Eloise* helped me to come out of my shell. When I was younger I was super shy. That doesn't mean I'm not shy any more but becoming friends with someone as fearless as Eloise helped me to become much less shy. I had never encountered a character like Eloise in real life or in a storybook. Here was a girl who was the same age as me, lived in a grand hotel in a huge city like New York and she wasn't afraid of anything. Eloise helped me see that even though her life was very different from mine, she and I had quite a lot in common. We both had very vivid imaginations.

I was alone a lot when I was younger because I was an only child until I was nine. I would create these dramatic situations with my dolls about how this one's mother had died in the tornado that had devastated our town or that one's father had perished in a hurricane that had torn the roof off our house and slammed our car into the apple tree. I would pretend that I had twenty-one brothers and sisters living in my house. I would tell my teachers at school these long involved stories about where my older brothers and sisters worked. I would describe in great detail how we all sat at the dinner table and quote from our fascinating dinner table conversations. Apparently I was quite convincing because one day my pre-school teacher asked my mother how many brothers and sisters I had. She was certain I had been exaggerating to some degree but was amazed to learn that I was an only child. So, feeling this kinship with Eloise made me wonder, if I could play make believe as well as Eloise maybe I could learn to be brave like Eloise, too.

I was always very self-conscious and would spend a substantial amount of time worrying if I had made one of my friends angry by not sitting with them on the bus or if I would get scolded by my teacher because I forgot to put away my library book. After all, how much serious trouble can a girl get into when she's only six years old? Well, Eloise was the answer to a timid girl's prayers. She never worried what other people thought. She had her beloved Nanny and her pals Weenie and Skipperdee. As long as she had their love and support everyone else at the Plaza had better look out! I loved the idea of being bold enough to crash some stranger's wedding or walk into someone's room just because the door happens to be open when you pass by. Mind you, I didn't necessarily want to do exactly what Eloise did. After all, she was rich and lived at the Plaza. I lived in a regular little town in Massachusetts. Nevertheless, she gave me courage to stand up for myself. So the next time some boy teased me about wearing a dress to play soccer at recess, I just put my hands on my hips, pictured Eloise in my head, and told him to go pound sand! I said I didn't care if he liked my dress or not and that I was just as good a soccer player as he was even if I was wearing a dress, so there! The results were amazing. He didn't even try to fight back. I'm sure he was startled to see shy little Monica do something so unexpected. The funny thing was that no one was more astonished than me. I was surprised that I had finally worked up the courage to defend myself and even more surprised at how well it had worked, all thanks to Eloise, my storybook friend!

When I was in the fifth grade my mother took me to New York City for the very first time. It was just before Christmas and the decorations were absolutely gorgeous. Everywhere we went there were beautiful lights, enormous Christmas trees, and giant wreaths with brilliant red bows. It was just as glamorous as I had imagined it would be. However, the most glamorous place of all was the Plaza. Walking into the lobby, through the revolving doors with the giant P, was like a dream come true. I half expected to see Eloise come barreling off the elevator at any minute. And, even though I did not get to meet her in person that day, I knew that Eloise's spirit would always be alive and well and living at the Plaza. Thank you, Ms. Thompson, for creating my friend Eloise.

Sincerely,

*Monica*

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