

# Massachusetts Letters About Literature Honors, | 2011 Level I

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Dear Mary Downing Hahn,

No one in my family has ever served in war. My parents are not citizens of the United States, so they could not be forced into a fight. I have not read any history books about war, and the fiction books with that theme have not told me much about it. Most of all, I am not affected by it and I never think that there's actually a war going on right now.

So before I read your book, *Stepping on the Cracks*, I did not know much about war. I knew people went away to fight, but I did not think of how it affected others and who it affected.

I am now ashamed of what I thought of war before when people mentioned it. I thought, "War is so dumb. What is the point? Why would anyone want to fight in it?" I still think war is like a pencil without a point. It is not useful, no *point* in it. It wounds people not even fighting. But the soldiers have a purpose for being in it.

Those soldiers go out and fight for our country even though they might die. They have decided they will try to bring our country to victory. There is a word for that. Brave. So now when I hear something on the radio about war, or see a soldier who received an honor on the TV, I know that they deserve it, and hope everyone fighting remains safe, although I know that someone will be killed.

Now I know I am lucky, because anyone of us could have been them, fighting not only for our lives, but our country. Anyone of them could have been like me; in a place where I am safe and loved. But instead, they chose to defend their country. I now know I should not take the life I live for granted, and consider how fortunate I am to be one of the many lucky people (who mostly don't realize it) that can actually go on without thinking about a family member fighting in war continuously.

I now realize that the people with big guns and boots aren't the only ones fighting this war. Their families; the people they left, are only left to grieve and pray. They fight their grief towards their lost ones, or the anger towards enemies. They fight the missing place in their heart, the one that formed when their family member left. And yet, they build a wall inside them, standing strong against bad and sad thoughts and feelings. They are able to carry on, for if you put your mind to it, you can go on, no matter what's in your way.

But as people are being recruited and killed, we are creating more of these people, these sad, grieving people whose joy and happiness has been taken away. Sure, if they dig deep enough, they will find the golden ball of happiness, but do they want to look so far? More importantly, do we want to keep creating these people?

I now know I can overcome my obstacles because people fighting in war, and their families, can overcome obstacles greater than mine. I complain if it's too hot or cold. Soldiers endure a greater pain, one called homesickness and fear.

*Stepping on the Cracks* has told me that life is not so great for everyone, and that even with that bit of bad, life goes on, even if you need just a bit of help. Thank you for telling me that, because in a way twisted along with friendship and finding good qualities in people, you have told me a lot of effects of war I did not realize before.

Thank you for telling me the meaning of war.

Sincerely,

Lulu

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