

## LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE

2006 MASSACHUSETTS LEVEL THREE – HONORABLE MENTION

Dear Eric Carle,

My whole life, I have had very few things to call my own. I have moved six times, one of which was immigrating into the United States from Russia. I had to leave everything behind, material and emotional. When I arrived, I had no feeling of security; I felt as if I was running the risk of losing everything: my books, my clothes, my self-image. Even my parents divorced and separated since we came here.

My whole life, I have been learning to hang on to the essentials. Sometimes, those essentials are emotions. Sometimes, they are relationships. And sometimes – memories. I fondly remember curling up with my mum on the couch in my “home” and reading *A Very Hungry Caterpillar*. I can remember the smell of the apple, the pears, the plums, and the cherry pie, as I imagined eating everything that the caterpillar was gobbling down. I remember my mum’s voice, her intonation, her laugh, and the holes in the pages that traced the caterpillar’s path. I can always hang on to memories like that.

Now more than ever, I can relate to that caterpillar. Throughout my life, I have been eating as much as possible, savoring every encounter, every relationship, so afraid of losing them. I have been growing on the nourishment of experiences. I have eaten my way through challenges and celebrations. I have encountered tastes good and bad. And I have been constantly growing.

I can now say that I am the caterpillar. I have flourished, I have matured, and I have gotten bigger. I have munched my way through years of childhood and adolescence. Yet, I still have plenty of tasks ahead of me. Some may be delicious, and some may come with a bitter aftertaste. Bad grades, skimpy paychecks and other misfortunes may come my way, but I will keep in mind that there is always a piece of pie after that spoiled apple.

The way I see it, we are all just caterpillars working our way through life. We eat and eat and eat, and we can’t wait to transform ourselves, through our hard work, into something better, something beautiful. We are all just chewing our way to becoming butterflies.

Yours Truly,

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