

# MASSACHUSETTS LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE 2023

## TOP HONORS LEVEL II

Dear Mr. James Patterson:

I don't think you realize what you've created, Mr. Patterson.

To me, *Jacky Ha-Ha* isn't just a giddy book that you wrote. It's the opening of a new door, one that I've never ever seen before: stuttering representation.

It's strange to think that 99% percent of the world doesn't even think about the fluency of their words, and it's just a natural phenomenon that no one ever questions or ponders. I've had a stutter since I was four, and I think about how I speak every single day. Everyone around me is a soaring eagle with broad wings flying through words and sentences effortlessly, while I'm one of those scraggly robins that hits my window in the morning. I can't talk fluently, and I don't know if I'll ever be able to.

When I first read your book, I had never met a single person who also had a stutter. I was fighting a battle alone, with no army. I didn't think that I'd ever meet another person like me, and I would continue marching on the battlefield solo.

That is, until I met Jacky. Jacky knows what it's like to be a kid with a stutter. She knows what it's like to be laughed at for not being able to spit out what you 're saying. She knows what it's like to receive the "Haha, did you forget your name?" She knows what it's like to order food that you don't really crave because you know that you'll stutter on what you actually want. Jacky Hart understands me and my stutter completely.

Before reading *Jacky Ha-Ha*, I never really understood the importance of having any type of representation in TV shows, movies, video games, and other types of media. I didn't fathom why it was such a big deal to have a character with a disability in a show or a person of color playing a certain role (not that I was against it). But now, I understand how meaningful it can be to see people on your television or in a game who are just like you. They share all of the hardships that one goes through daily, they understand how nasty comments can feel, and most importantly, they can become a hero to the viewer. And that's exactly what Jacky is to me: a hero.

So, thank you, Mr. Patterson. Thank you for creating a hero.

Sincerely,

Bryn