

# MASSACHUSETTS LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE 2023

## TOP HONORS LEVEL I

Dear Michael Dorris,

My name is Suryavir, and I am in 5th grade in the Belmont Day School. During late 2022, we read your book, *Morning Girl*, and had to write lots of reading responses and make plenty of projects. When I first started getting into reading, I had a lot of trouble understanding books consistently, pretty much all the time I needed an adult to help me know what was going on. While other kids were learning new things, it felt like I was stuck in a black hole. But with *Morning Girl*, I realized that the more and more you read, the more entertaining it gets.

Reading a book is not just reading words, it's a journey of all the things the characters come across. Your book is less than 100 pages, but it feels like double that. Every single paragraph shows some type of passion in it. I read it very carefully and it took me a LONG time. You see, this book uses a LOT of figurative language and inferences. That makes it tricky to know what the author is trying to say, which is why I have trouble understanding what's going on in books sometimes.

One of the characters that is very similar to me is Star Boy. First of all, he's a boy and is about 11 years old, which is how old I am. Second of all, he loves to have peace and have his alone time with no sound, and I love to do that as well. Third of all, he never gives up on anything and neither do I. When I was much younger, I had to do speech therapy to learn to communicate better. I also did occupational therapy which is basically learning how to write and draw, and physical therapy to get stronger and improve my balance. I was lucky to have amazing teachers help me.

It took a lot of work, but now I can have great conversations, shoot 28 free throws in a row and my handwriting is decent (though I'm still not so great at art). Today, in basketball practice, I made three 3-point shots in a row. I was ON FIRE! (See what I did there? That's a hyperbole.) Star Boy's name is really important to him and so is mine. He is named Star Boy because he likes to stay up the whole night and loves looking at the stars and it gives him a bunch of energy. My name is Suryavir. Surya means Sun and Vir means Warrior and when I look at the Sun shining on me, that gives me lots of energy.

In the book, the family includes Morning Girl, Star Boy, Mom, Dad, and they almost had a baby girl. This is very similar to my family because we have me, my older sister, Kesariya, who is basically the same age as Morning Girl, Mom, Dad and my baby sister, Ayushi. Morning Girl and Kesariya have a lot in common. They both like to be alone and get up early in the morning, my sister gets up as early as 5 am on school days. In the beginning of the book, Star Boy and Morning Girl didn't get along with each other and would always fight and argue which put everyone in a bad mood. But then things changed. She started standing up for him and he was so impressed that gave her a new nickname, "She Who Stands Beside." In the book, Morning Girl said, "We reached across

the space between us, we made a fishing line with our eyes, and each pulled the other to the center.” My sister also ‘sometimes’ helps me when I’m nervous or upset. In fact, on Christmas Day when I was at my grandparents’ house, there was no tree which made me a little sad because I love having trees with presents underneath to unwrap. So Kesariya made her own tree out of paper and materials just to make me feel better.

After finishing *Morning Girl*, I felt a feeling that I don’t think I ever felt before: joy, accomplishment, like I had gone on a journey. This book had all the ups and downs, all the lefts and rights and reading it gave me a bit of confidence that if I can keep trying, it will come WAY more easily than ever before. I learned from *Star Boy* that it’s important to be kind to yourself and proud of yourself when you are alone. I try to think about that when I get frustrated when I can’t understand something I’m reading. I ask myself questions and even though I still need help sometimes, I try to keep my own council.

Thank you for creating this wonderful book.

Sincerely,

*Suryavir*