

Julie Greiner – California: Level I First Place Winner

Dear Shel Silverstein,

I first read The Giving Tree when I was much younger. I didn't get it. I wondered why the tree kept giving the boy its own possessions just because he asked. I have recently read the book again and now I get it. I understand that love for other people can make you do things that you may be reluctant to do just because it makes someone else happy.

While reading the book, I realized that I am both the tree and the boy. For most of my life, I was only the boy. My parents were, and still are, the tree. They would drive me to a million Blockbusters to rent my favorite movie. They always put up with my frequent questions and watch me play in the park for hours and hours even if it bored them to tears. Reading your book really made me appreciate them.

When my cousin Alexander was born three years ago, I became a tree. I will do just about anything to make him happy. When I play trains with him, the same thing always happens: we push the trains around in a circle, they crash, they get fixed, and they start up again, only to crash again in about five seconds. It goes on and on for hours. Then he FINALLY gets tired and we watch a train video that I have seen millions and millions of times. I watch it again anyway because, like the tree, I love him unconditionally.

Love is one of the few things in the world that time doesn't affect. In your book, the boy's needs change, but the tree is always there to meet them. I see this in my own life. My parents used to play with me, but now they help me with my homework and later they may lend me money or help me care for my kids. Your book made me realize that life has two parts: the giving and the taking. With the guidance of The Giving Tree, I have already lived both of them.

I entered this contest as a class assignment, but I really enjoy reading books so it was not difficult to write about one that influenced me. In addition to reading, I enjoy drawing, acting, and writing stories. In the future, I hope to pursue a career in either computer graphics or writing.