

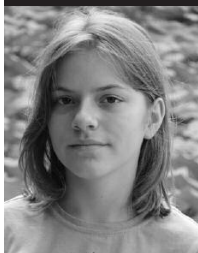
Martin is my favorite character of all. He is such a good friend. He's such a great warrior, yet he doesn't brag about the things he does. He does what he thinks is right. I like how he gives his enemy chances to run away from Mossflower, but if they don't, he will do everything in his power to destroy them. For instance, when Martin attacks Kotir near the end of the book. I like that he tries to make peace. I admire him for that.

Because important characters die in your books, it helped me cherish friends more than I normally would, because I realized that, eventually, they will die. At first, when a character dies, I think, "Dang it! Why did you kill that character? Why can't you have everything right?" But then I think it's because life isn't always perfect. And I don't know about other people, but I did learn a lesson from that; that life is not always the way you want it to be.

I've really enjoyed expressing myself to you, even though it's hard to put my thoughts into words. Thank you for writing your books. I'm sure you have many fans, but I think I'm one of your biggest!

Since kindergarten, I have been home-schooled through the Eleanor Roosevelt Community Learning Center, where I take classes. There are many things I enjoy doing. For example, I like being at home, and I also like to fish, and play freeze tag, read, act, and sing in choir, and one of my favorites is I like to play imaginary games with my sticks. So you might have already noticed that I am the kind of guy who likes to be home a lot!

L E V E L O N E



Isabella Hutchinson, Age 11, Grade 6
Echo Horizon School
Culver City, CA

Dear Betty Smith,

Your book, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, is one that integrates the destitution of poverty, death, unassertiveness, abusive parents and the every day desperation and thirst to be accepted and to have friends. The book inspired me to believe in myself as well as to accept others no matter who they are or what role they play in my life. While the book describes the hardships of a young girl, Francie, growing up in downtown Brooklyn, unaccepted because she is poor and her father is a drunkard unable to support the family, I felt those same kind of feelings, moving into a new school with no friends and feeling unaccepted.

I read your book in third grade, with my mother helping me to understand parts I didn't, as well as "the big words." For a whole two months, I lived and breathed the

words that shaped the courageous story of Francie. After living in two worlds, I finally had to come back to reality, but after a few weeks I started the book again.

Two years passed and I grew and created ties to many people, even managing to have a pen pal in China, but all through that time, your book remained shining in my heart and mind. One day I came across it again on my bookshelf. I picked it up and started reading it. This time, however, I realized that the two worlds that I had once lived in were actually one. We, every day, amalgamate all kinds of prejudice into our lives without even realizing: pulling eyelids back into slits and calling ourselves “Asian,” pretending to be “African American” by rapping and using “street slang” instead of seeing people as diverse individuals. This lesson has affected my actions, making me think more deeply before acting, and although I don’t do the examples I have mentioned, I always try to go back and correct the things I have said if I feel they have been insensitive.

I remember the first chapter distinctly, it was my favorite among many. It was my introduction to “great literature.” I grew amazed at how many pages could be used to describe even one day. The details were so vivid that pictures grew in my mind like a tree growing thick roots and reaching down to the dark moist soil.

My life was changed by reading your book and while I read about Francie’s emotions, I felt like our hearts were one. Your book awakened in me the realization that books are more than just cute stories. They illuminate pathways that lead to opportunities and truths in worlds bigger than the one we live in right now and expand what we see, what we feel and what we think.

All my life I've been one for literature and writing. This year, the scope of my imagination widened and found a bigger voice with the help of my Echo Horizon School Sixth Grade teacher, Mrs. Marci Vogel. Some other things I love are drawing, dancing, singing, playing the piano, spending time with my family, and writing poetry. I don't know what I want to do in the future, but when I'm grown, I would love to still be able to express myself like I do today as a kid.

L E V E L O N E



Isabella Krug, Age 11, Grade 5
Foothill Knolls School
Upland, CA

Dear Mrs. Shaw,

I love all the Kirsten books that you have written. I especially like the first book because reading about her adventurous journey to America made me wonder how my ancestors came here. My great grandmother is from Sicily, so I called her and asked