

me that no matter how different you are, you are your own normal and there is always someone that shares something that you have, even if it is the person you least expect. Thank you, once again, for opening my eyes up to what “normal” really is.

Hi! I'm Shannon Coey. I love to be with my friends and family, draw, paint, and play with my new dog, Lilly. My 7th grade English teacher entered me in this contest a year ago, and I was so surprised to find out that I had placed at the state level. I hope to attend New York University in the future, because I hear they have a great theater and arts program.

L E V E L T W O



Aubrey Sara Kaye, Age 13, Grade 8
Las Colinas Middle School
Camarillo, CA

Dear Ms. Funke,

I first ‘met’ you in literature when I read *The Thief Lord* in fifth grade. I still recall how, during my book talk, my fellow students’ eyes widened with excitement over Prosper and Bo’s adventures. Now, as an eighth grader on the verge of high school, I have been captivated by your *Inkheart*, which has widened both my eyes and my perspective on life.

I am a voracious reader, desiring to taste all the wonderful books this world has to offer. Therefore, when I saw *Inkheart* on display in my school library, I promptly checked it out based on my previous enjoyment of *The Thief Lord*. Little did I know that I would travel on a fascinating journey within myself, as well as with the characters of your book!

Primarily, I identified with your characters Meggie and Dustfinger. Meggie’s passion for books is very similar to my own. Printed volumes have often been my companions, my windows on to a myriad of worlds, and the keepers of my fondest memories. *Inkheart* acquainted me with a friend who has also loved reading since she was tiny. Her parent, like my own, introduced her to the unique magic of a printed story.

Dustfinger mirrored my feelings of “not belonging”; of not always blending in with the people around me. I can relate to his desire for a different world, where life is less rapid, free from the relentless noise and glaring lights of our modern cities. In addition, I have discovered that we are all constantly searching for our own “story,” for a place where we can truly be content. This journey may take us through strange lands and introduce us to a broad cast of characters, and sometimes, we may not find what we are longing for. Of course, this doesn’t mean that we will ever stop searching. Before *Inkheart*, I thought that I was alone in this quest.

Your villain, Capricorn, also taught me something about my reality that I never noticed before. In life, as well as in stories, evil and cruelty can stem from a need for power; a need to be a different person. Villains, both great and small, have risen from nothing throughout our history, but despising their true selves, have conspired to create a new face by spinning a “web of fear.” Now, I view my imperfections as a part of me and not as something I need to escape from.

In conclusion, *Inkheart* portrayed my world more intricately than any mirror, and I am proud of my new philosophy. I was particularly inspired by your closing line: “writing stories is a type of magic, too.” *Inkheart* will stay in my mind as I discover new twists and turns in my own exciting tale each day. After all, “who wants to know the end of a story in advance?”—Dustfinger, *Inkheart*

I hope we ‘meet’ again.

Aubrey Sara Kaye adores books and libraries; she loves reading good stories in a variety of genres, from fantasy to thriller. Insightful authors continually broaden her perspective and inspire her own writing. Aubrey is a member of the California Junior Scholarship Federation, and a Summer Reading Program volunteer for Ventura County Public Libraries. She currently serves as President of the Kiwanis Club and Eighth-Grade Class Representative for the Associated Student Body of Las Colinas Middle School in Camarillo, California.

LEVEL TWO



Leann Lo, Age 14, Grade 8
Hallmark Charter School
Sanger, CA

Dear Mrs. Holm,

I love the book you wrote entitled *I Am David*. I almost didn't finish reading your book because I have an over-active imagination and I didn't want to scare myself when reading about a concentration camp. But I finally finished it, and I have to say that it is one of the best books I've read! This book really made me look at my life and appreciate everything that I take for granted. Your entire book is about hope. David is the smartest twelve-year-old I've ever read about. And while I was reading your book I couldn't put it down because I felt like I knew David. You know, like he was my friend. I was dying to turn the next page to find out what happened to David and to see if he made it to his mother.

You know, I love to smile. It feels good to smile! But when I read the part about David not knowing how to smile, it tore my heart in two! I can't imagine not knowing how to smile. I mean you hear people in church and on TV telling you to think about all of the things you have that many people around the world don't have.