

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

her when and how her family got here and I was surprised to find out it was almost like Kristen! She left Italy in 1924 aboard a ship called the Conte Grande. She was only 5 years old, but she still remembers the voyage. She said a lot of people got sick, especially sea sick. After a long trip they finally arrived in America and they had to pass through Ellis Island where they checked them for diseases. She still remembers how nervous, scared and excited she felt when she saw the Statue of Liberty and how big New York City was! She also had to learn a whole new language like Kirsten.

Reading about Kirsten and her family made me realize how hard life was for so many immigrants. It makes you think about all the sacrifices and risks they took to have a better life for their children. Before I read this book I really didn't know how dangerous it was to travel back then. Nowadays we just travel for fun mostly, but back then they traveled to have new opportunities in a new land. They took terrifying journeys and suffered many hardships, like family members dying during the trip. They also had to leave everything behind, even most of their family members. My great grandma said she remembers saying goodbye to her grandparents and she never saw them again.

This is why reading books like "Meet Kirsten" is so important because it made me appreciate my life more. When I talked to my grandma I told her thank you for being such a brave and strong little girl and making it through a tough journey because if she had not made it I would not be here today (or my dad or my sister!). And thank you Mrs. Shaw for writing such exciting books.

*My name is Isabella Krug and I'm 11 years old. One of my favorite things to do is read. I really enjoy reading historical fiction books. I also love taking my dog Princess on long walks or hiking with my family. We usually go to Mt. Baldy on the weekends and have a picnic and then hike along one of the trails. Another favorite place to visit is the Los Angeles County Arboretum. It's really beautiful and there are lots of things to do, like feed the ducks and squirrels. After school my sister and I also enjoy riding our bikes while my dog follows along. I am in the 5th grade and I haven't really thought about what I want to be when I'm older, but I guess I would enjoy being a veterinarian because I love animals.*

L E V E L O N E



**Anushka Patil, Age 11, Grade 6**  
**Individual Entry**  
**Cupertino, CA**

**Dear Lois Lowry,**

I heard about your book, *The Giver*, from a friend. I didn't want to read it at first, not that I don't like to read, but I had lots of things to do, and time to read wasn't