



HONORABLE MENTION, LEVEL 3

Alejandro Hernandez, Grade 11

Alisal High School

Salinas

The Circuit, Francisco Jiménez

Dear Francisco Jiménez,

Life in the shoes of a migrant family is not easy. Your book *The Circuit* changed the view I had on my personal life. Before, I thought my life was difficult, where I could not achieve anything, but after reading about your life, I realized that it takes true effort to succeed.

The life of a migrant worker is not that simple, especially when there is a family to raise. I can relate clearly to your life because I come from a migrant family who immigrated to the United States from a very young age. They came to California when they were both 15 years old. Before, I thought myself as being another migrant son who would not succeed in life and that I would go along with the same stereotypical thoughts of all other families. People think that most migrant families would end up working in the fields but then I realized that I can also make something of my life. Your despair at having to leave school for every move seemed to give you the impetus to continue your education and eventually write your life story. I find life difficult for me as it is right now, a 15-year-old high school student. With all the homework, sports, and family problems, I find it almost impossible to achieve it all. Then I look back at your life, at all the struggles you had to surpass and know that if you could overcome all those obstacles, I can, too. My life struggles were nothing compared to yours. You were able to overcome migration, separation of your family, not knowing English, and still you managed to go to a university and write *The Circuit*.

I struggle with my family because most of them do not speak English. I am the only one in the house that understands English and is able to help my brothers in their homework. Just like you, I want my brothers to grow up to a better future and not depend on others for help. I also help my parents in translating documents or phone calls. They do not speak English but I teach them whenever I have time. I also work after school to help my family pay for the house. My mom is unable to obtain a well-paid job because she does not know English and did not study when she was young, so me and my dad try to provide as much as possible for the family. With school, sports, and work, it is hard to help the whole family at once. Yet I manage to maintain good grades in school and keep up with other activities because I realized that if you surpassed your difficult obstacles so can I.

Your book motivates me to continue even if life seems tough. I learned that migrant families are about strong work ethic and perseverance in life. There are many struggles to this hard life but survival is paramount to all of them. We both share something in common; we value our family. Our family lived in the sparseness of conditions, with a minimum amount of food to eat and barely enough clothing, yet we are still close and caring. Your book led me to understand why I should value my parents even more. They suffered coming to the United States, uneducated, poor, and scared yet they somehow managed to survive just like you, and this is something I learned to praise. I thank you for your life story for it has changed the way I view life. To triumph in life, one must do every effort regardless of the obstacles.

Sincerely,
Alejandro Hernandez

Life in the shoes of a Hispanic family is not easy, however, this thought never stops me from completing my lifelong dreams. I dream of graduating from a high prestige university and perhaps majoring in the field of communications or business. After, I dream of making a family of my own and continue with all my Hispanic culture so that my children can achieve greater things and have the same traits my own family has taught me throughout my life.

L E V E L 3



HONORABLE MENTION, LEVEL 3

Jay Lee, Grade 11
Saratoga High School
Saratoga

The Joy Luck Club, Amy Tan

Dear Ms. Amy Tan,

Last year in my sophomore English class I read your novel *The Joy Luck Club*. While some of my other male friends loathed the novel (I'm sorry to say), I found myself devouring the words on every page, intrigued by the stories of the girls with their mothers and of the mothers with their mothers. I realized that what distinguished me from my friends were, in fact, my ethnicity and my "FOB" parents. Born in Korea but having lived in the U.S. since I was seven months old, I find myself repeatedly hitting communications barriers with my parents, my mother in particular. Despite her nearly flawless Korean (as opposed to my limited-to-a-few-words knowledge of the language), even my older sister has often conflicted with my mom. For years, I questioned why my sister fought so often with my mom and why I, who observed this conflict and vowed to avoid it, began to foster the same contentious relationship with my mom. But now, after having read your novel, I understand the origins of this conflict and my mother's intentions.