

All these years are only half the journey of my life. I know what I can do to help—help myself of what path to seek ahead.

*Sincerely,*  
**Brianna Rodriguez**

*Well first of all, I am proud of my accomplishments. In my spare time I like to run and practice volleyball. I always like to do my best and exceed beyond the limit. Every day I like to look for a new challenge and set goals for the rest of my day. In the future I plan to attend Chico State or Cal State Long Beach and major in journalism. After that I want to become a news reporter or a journalist.*

L E V E L 2



**Chuli Zeng, Grade 8**  
**Individual Entry**  
**Irvine**

*Number the Stars*, Lois Lowry

**Dear Lois Lowry,**

I have so often spent countless hours sitting criss-cross on the carpet with my mesmerized eyes glued firmly to the TV screen. Watching the bright red capes whizzing before me, I had frequently wished that I could be one of them, one of the superheroes that everyone adores and admires. Perceiving the impossibility of this, I sighed as disappointment washed over me when I told myself over and over again that there is no way I could ever be a hero. But after reading your book, *Number the Stars*, I realized how wrong I was. Before, I never could have imagined that a ten-year-old girl could ever act as brave and courageous as a true hero. You have, without a doubt, opened up my eyes to a brand new way to view the world.

Like Annemarie, I have never considered myself to be brave either. I had always been kind of shy and quiet back in elementary school. I think that's what made me such an easy target for bullies. I had a really good friend though, and whenever my classmates teased me she was by my side the whole time. I'm really thankful to her for always standing up for me and defending me. She was my hero just as Annemarie was Ellen's.

When Annemarie was lying in her bed in the middle of the night, she admitted to herself the same thing I have told myself many times. I have been repeatedly glad to have been born an ordinary person who will never have a need for courage. I think the reason I declared this proclamation to myself was because I had no clear idea what being a hero truly means. I knew that it required bravery; however, I wasn't quite sure what the word bravery actually meant. I had thought that being brave just

meant having no fear. Your book, though, defines it differently. Uncle Henrik told Annemarie that being brave means not thinking about the dangers, just thinking about what you must do. I decided that I like his definition of bravery much better than the dictionary's definition. Instantly, I understood that anyone can be brave if they choose to be.

The main point and lesson that have transferred from the book's magnificent pages to my brain is that being a hero requires bravery, and bravery means to stand up for what you believe in. This realization seemed to have hit me so hard, it has rearranged my entire array of thoughts and it has filled my mind with endless possibilities. Now I see how significant and vitally important standing up for what you believe in is. There were many brave, unforgettable heroes who had lent a hand to the Jews during the Holocaust, but not enough. There were not enough heroes to stop the gruesome genocide, and its horrifying consequences are still laid out for all to see.

I can tell how fortunate I am to have been able to read your inspiring book and to have its message embedded forever in my brain. I have learned so much from it, and I strive every day to make your message come to life through my actions. Thank you for being the creator of this book, the mastermind who has weaved simple words into an empowering tale that will touch the hearts and change the lives of generations to come.

*Sincerely,*  
*Chuli Zeng*

*I come from a family of three children of which I am the oldest. I just discovered my passion for writing about a year ago, in seventh grade. To me, writing is a fun and creative way to express myself through the power of words. Wherever my future may lead me, I want to help better the world and inspire others to do so as well. I believe that every day is a precious gift from God and that we should cherish every single moment of this miracle called life.*