

to be able to really appreciate her before it was too late. I had never really thought much of writing before now, but now I turned to it along with reading anytime I was feeling miserable. I reread your book many times during that period and really began to understand what it was about. The characters in your book had to face all I have had to and much more, living in that time of sadness that your book describes where they didn't have the resources or blessings that we now do, and I realized my problems are very small compared to what they or probably ninety percent of the modern world has to face. Though out of all the characters in your book that each held a little part of me in them, I felt I was closest to Emily, an innocent girl growing up quickly just like me.

Then we moved. I missed everything that I had ever known especially my friends, home, and school. The single thing that I missed the most, though, was the trees illuminated against my window protecting me from all evil and harm. I would sit on empty nights in my new house huddled in the corner remembering life before we moved. It was then that I realized that life is just a story on the big screen, and my actions really can make a difference. Writing is my escape from all this, because in writing anything is possible. As Emily Dickinson herself said, "I am proud of my writing. I was getting a sense of saying a thing just so and no more. It was a thrill—a secret thrill—as no one knew but me." That alone is the power that writing can grant you! Unlimited opportunities to bring your story to life!

*Sincerely,*  
*Katellynn Kelly*

*I would like to work in the legal business someday because I think it would be wonderful to have a world where everybody cared and supported our planet and I would like to enforce this idea in the future. I love to read and write and enjoy Mrs. Robert's writing class very much. I never would have read this book without her encouraging me to try a book out of my comfort zone. She helped make this honor possible for me.*

L E V E L 1



**HONORABLE MENTION, LEVEL 1**

**Kaitlyn Xiong, Grade 6**  
**Deerfield Elementary School**  
**Irvine**

*The Tale of Despereaux*, Kate DiCamillo

**Dear Mrs. Kate DiCamillo,**

Many times in my life, I felt like I could be more courageous, But I never really succeeded until I read your book, *The Tale of Despereaux*. Everything seemed so different. I felt like I could actually do something instead of always holding back.

My mom had always told me to stand up and show myself. She says I hide in my little corner everyday. I never really liked making phone calls, or talking to adults. When my dad told me to go ski a black diamond run, I immediately said no. That was before I read your book.

After it became a Newbery Medal Book, my mom decided to buy your book for me. The book seemed boring at first, but then I was captivated by the story. The words shined at me like a bright light. He didn't turn back even though he knew he was facing dangers. He knew he was walking into a trap, but his courage told him to keep going. I realized something about myself, too.

As I read deeper into the book, I started seeing how the book reflected my life. I knew I wasn't very brave or courageous like Despereaux but I knew I could change. I felt I could be as brave as he was. Gradually I became more talkative and I could feel improvement. When Despereaux stood at the top of the dungeon's hard, cold steps, he was afraid, but not enough to stop him from following his heart. Even after he had lost his only way out of the dungeon, he still went on ahead. It encouraged me to stand out and face my fear. My mom stopped telling me to speak out when I met her friends. I took challenges and took part in activities I had never joined before. Instead of shaking my head when my mom asked if I wanted to talk to my grandparents, I willingly accepted the phone. It was a new feeling but it felt exciting and wonderful.

After I finished your book, I found out that there were many more interesting things to life. Before, if my mom asked me to participate in an art contest, I would say no without a thought, but after I finished your book, I wanted to participate and try to express myself. I participated in every contest I could, and I thought it was fun. I wanted to be just like Despereaux. Being brave made me see something about the world. It made me realize that the world was a fun adventure.

Your book gave me the courage to take chances and challenges. It let me find out things I never noticed before. For this, I thank you.

*Sincerely,*  
*Kaitlyn Xiong*

*I have many interests including skiing, drawing, playing tennis and playing the violin. I take art, tennis and violin lessons weekly. My hope for the future is that I can go to MIT. I want to become a scientist to do medical research, to understand and discover cures for difficult diseases.*