



**Michelle Huete, Grade 11**  
**Golden Valley High School**  
**Bakersfield**

*The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*, Ann Brashares

**Dear Ann Brashares,**

I am writing this letter with a great amount of appreciation for writing your book *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* in 2001, which has made me realize who my good friends in life are and made me keep my head up through a difficult time in my life.

I came to live in Bakersfield when I was four years old and I had no friends to enjoy my childhood with. We had moved from Los Angeles and had very few possessions that we brought to our new home. All my dolls, coloring books, and games were left. It seemed as if everything turned miserable all of a sudden. However, when I entered kindergarten I met my friend Milagros. We became the best of friends and shared many memories together. I would go to her birthday parties and go on trips with her family. When she saw that I had no toys she seemed to feel a feeling of sympathy at her early age, and she gave me some of her valuable toys. She gave me hope and a true friendship. As Tibby and Bailey found a union together in your book, I found unification with Milagros.

When the summer of 2006 came, Milagros was diagnosed with cancer. This hit me like if a bullet were to go through my heart. I knew cancer killed and the only cure was time and trust that everything was going to be better. I couldn't accept the fact that she was sick. As Tibby couldn't understand why it had to be Bailey the one with leukemia. Time passed and it was getting to the end of summer and all I tried to do was to keep a smile on Milagros' face as she had done the same for me when I was going through hard times. I went to a local library here in Bakersfield and found your book. It was as if heaven had sent me your book as a present from above. Your book helped me relate to one of the characters, Tibby. All of the other characters had a little bit of me but Tibby was the one I can identify with the most, especially when the story started getting deeper and talked about Bailey.

When fall was about to begin I had received a call from my cell phone from Milagros' mother. She was crying and couldn't pull out the words she was about to confess to me. I had a feeling that things weren't good. Then, as she talked, the only words I remember hearing is "she's not with us no more." I couldn't believe it! I went to her funeral but I wasn't there for very long because it was hurting me too much. When I came home the first thing I grabbed was your book. It seemed to be a comfort for me as a teddy bear would be for a child. I remember reading that Tibby and Bailey's relationship did not have a happy ending. I wouldn't get out of my

room. Everything that Milagros gave me seemed pointless now that she wasn't with me. A month passed by and I finally realized death is part of life. Two of my other friends would give me advice and helped me get back up.

After reading your book in the fall of 2006 more than three times, it seemed to lend me a hand by showing me that Bailey's death was a part of a chapter in Tibby's life. That things weren't over for her as they weren't over for me. Tibby had other friends that cared about her as I had my two friends that visited me every day that fall that cared about me.

Finding your book in that public library wasn't just a coincidence. I have so much gratitude toward you and your book for giving me strength and showing me who my true friends are. Thank you very much for helping me realize that I also lived my own "sisterhood."

*Sincerely,*  
**Michelle Huete**

*My name is Michelle Huete, a girl with many dreams and hopes for the future. I expect very much of myself and hope to become the very best of what I am in the future with the life lesson my mom and grandma have taught me. I want to get into USC and pursue a career as an accountant, and later write a book naming it "Second Life." Life is full of opportunities and I hope to accomplish as much as I can.*

L E V E L 3



**Joanne Kang, Grade 12**  
**Downey High School**  
**Downey**

*Things Fall Apart, Chinua Achebe*

**Dear Mr. Achebe,**

I connected almost instantly to Okonkwo, the protagonist of your book *Things Fall Apart*. The struggles that Okonkwo had to face, I found, were directly parallel to my own (for the most part).

Okonkwo grew up fighting for a place in the world, his parents offering nothing but motivation to ascend their shortcomings. My parents, being immigrants, also put me in a similar situation. For example, when I needed help with a homework assignment they were the first people that came to mind. Every time I asked them, however, I always got the same response; they would take the paper, stare at the small words at the top, and then glance back in my direction, their eyes hollow and blank. They could not even read the directions. They cannot read English. I struggled to keep that fact from being engraved into my memory. I could not let myself finalize