

WINNER, LEVEL 2**S.B., Grade 7****Mark Twain Elementary School****Angels Camp***Speak*, Laurie Halse Anderson**Dear Laurie Halse Anderson,**

I woke up one morning and looked at myself in the mirror and thought, “What did I do to deserve this life?” I just kept thinking, “Was it something I did, or something I said?” I never wanted this to happen to my sister. In your book *Speak* Melinda gets raped. It may not have been rape with my sister, but it still hurts. I wanted to know what I did to make this happen.

We grew up rough. My dad’s dad is the one who did this and we will never forgive him. Luckily he is in jail. On the day that I was born, my sister told our parents what happened. My sister was only four years old, and she only told to make it stop happening and to protect me because she did not want me to grow up with the pain that she did. When my sister was going to tell my parents, she was afraid they would get a divorce but she was willing to let them work it out and jeopardize their relationship to protect me. For that I still owe her and always will. Although she did protect me at the time, when I was five the same thing happened to me, but from someone else, someone I trusted and was friends with.

Your book changed my thoughts. I have read your book *Speak* seven times and I am only 12. After my sister read your book, she decided to go to counseling for a year to get rid of those thoughts once and for all. Your book helped us both to see that what happened wasn’t either of our faults. I love my sister to this day; we are very close. She has read your book less than I have but it still means a lot to both of us. Thank you for writing this book. It helped my sister and me so much. Now when I look in the mirror, I wonder what did I do to deserve this good life.

Your reader,**S.B.**

I am a girl who is willing to argue for what she believes in. I am outgoing, I am kind, and I take advantage of the opportunities that I have (and am glad to have them). I also love to write, as you can see. The truth is that I have no idea what I would like to do for my future, but then again who does at 12 years of age? All I know is that I would like to be able to support my family that I some day would like to have. Thank you for choosing me out of the thousands that entered.