

and a River Styx-esque ferryman; the realms of danger and mystery and beauty; and best of all the unexpected, grasped-at beginning, the door that I had dreamed of so often, that throws the reader into the wonderland. The poem doesn't give you the adventure trussed up and ready to read, it actually allows the reader to have the adventure himself, to experience a hundred different ways with every new reading. I reclined cozily in the library chair and remembered the adventures I'd dreamed of, and the adventures I'd lived out myself.

I've learned the secret that I had almost grasped in my days of daydreams. I've learned that the endless lands of adventures can be found in a single sheet of blank paper. I can have the adventures I'd dreamed and share them as well, by writing them into stories and poems and songs as they come to me. I was a better writer at eleven than I ever could be today, but while I can I'll do my best to trap what childhood remains in me, and enjoy it to the fullest.

But that's all just to pass the time while I wait to find the door in the wall I never saw before, that will lead me on to adventures unknown.

Yours in utter hero worship,
Michael Egan

Michael James Egan has been caught reading under his desk so often that he has managed to learn how to read while keeping his eyes on the teacher. Despite this, he has received acceptance letters from several major universities, no doubt due to his Eagle Scout award, work as an author and as a playwright for his school and community, and stunning good looks. Although he works summers as a Camp Counselor at Camp Sacramento in the Tahoe area, his career path will no doubt gravitate toward that of a "starving artist." He would like to extend his support to all California counselors and librarians who have given him huge amounts of support through his writing development, and who might fall victim to education budget cuts in the near future.

L E V E L 3



HONORABLE MENTION, LEVEL 3

Summer Chavez, Grade 10

Nipomo High School

Nipomo

A Bad Beginning, Lemony Snicket

Dear Mr. Snicket,

After reading the first book in the series, *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, I was shocked, or should I say, stunned. My mom had just died, and the misfortune of the Baudelaires' lives changed my state of thinking. It made me feel like a new person. Self-loathing was no longer there, sympathy taking its place in the forefront of my

mind. The little speed bump in my life had no comparison to the extremely evil things done to them by the notorious Count Olaf. But instead of Violet giving up her inventions or Klaus stopping his studying, or Sunny quitting her chewing, they put up a fight against life, against Count Olaf. And what was I doing? Sitting there feeling sorry for myself instead of fighting against the waves in the sea of life. I thought I would never be pulled out of my terrible depression. At that time, there seemed to be nothing worse in my life than her death.

The thought I had when I was assigned to read your book was a non-enthusiastic “woo.” But as soon as my eyes glimpsed the words “Do not read this book unless you are a depressed, morbid human being,” I just had to keep reading. Each sad, depressing detail made me realize that my life was not the worst that it could have been.

This book, merely your thoughts, ideas, and feelings written on a simple piece of paper, made me realize that just sitting there feeling sorry for myself was not helping me get through that point in my life. The Baudelaires were sad after their parents died in a fire but they didn’t give up. Their perseverance is what really changed my perspective. I started using my smarts like Klaus, my creativity like Violet, and I even got my appetite back like Sunny. My friends always ask how I got over my mom’s death and, to tell you honestly, I haven’t; but your book has helped in showing me that my life is not worthless without her with me.

My mom meant everything to me. She was the glue that held our family together. After she was gone there was no happiness in my life. Just like the Baudelaires and their feelings after both of their parents died. Except that they had no one there for them when everything they loved was taken from them. That is why I felt like my life was a little better. At least I had someone there for me.

This letter is not a success story on how your writing made my life perfect. It is a Thank You for writing the book that made it better. After I read *The Bad Beginning* I was hooked on the series. I don’t know if your stories have changed the world but they have at least changed the life of one person. They helped to quell the constant downpour in my life. Until I hear from you, if I ever do, I bid you *adieu*.

Signed,
Summer Chavez

My name is Summer and I come from a little podunk town called Nipomo in the middle of nowhere California. I've had a rough life, but my biggest challenge is not smiling. I like to read and write poetry in my spare time.