



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

NATIONAL BOOK FESTIVAL



A BOOK THAT SHAPED ME

SEPTEMBER 5, 2015

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“A Book That Shaped Me”

The Library of Congress National Book Festival Summer Writing Contest

2015 Summer Writing Contest

The “A Book That Shaped Me” Summer Writing Contest encourages rising 5th & 6th graders to reflect on a book that has made a personal impact on their lives. The contest is administered through local public library systems in the Mid-Atlantic region, and top winners are honored at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.

In this, the fourth year of the contest, nearly 300 libraries in Washington, DC, Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia signed up to administer the contest. Members of the American Association of School Librarians, a division of the American Library Association, comprised the first-round panel of judges to determine the state finalists. State and grand prize winners were selected by a panel assembled by the Library of Congress that included educators, children’s authors, and Library of Congress staff.

We are thrilled to announce the State Finalists, State Winners, and Grand Prize Winners of the 2015 “A Book That Shaped Me” National Book Festival Summer Writing Contest! Thanks to everyone who wrote an essay and entered the contest this year.

Grand Prize & State Winners

1st Place Grand Prize & Virginia State Winner

Alexia De Costa

Rules by Cynthia Lord

Arlington Public Library – Central Library

Delaware State Winner

Megan Korwek

The Brightest Star! by Kathleen Maresh Hemery

New Castle County Libraries – Kirkwood Library

2nd Place Grand Prize & Pennsylvania State Winner

Allison Templeton

“Harry Potter Series” by J.K. Rowling

Bucks County Free Library – Yardley-Makefield

Washington, DC Winner

Mason Gray

A Guide to Giving Back by Claire O’Neal

DC Public Library

3rd Place Grand Prize & Maryland State Winner

Naria H. Lemma

Homesick by Jean Fritz

Enoch Pratt Free Library

West Virginia State Winner

Declan Mungovan

The Strange Case of Origami Yoda by Tom Angleberger

Martinsburg-Berkleley County Public Libraries – Main Library

State Finalists (winners indicated by asterisks)

Name	Library	Book Title	Author
Washington, DC			
Mason Gray*	DC Public Library	<i>A Guide to Giving Back</i>	Claire O'Neal
Isha Iyengar	DC Public Library – Chevy Chase Library	<i>Sadako & The Thousand Paper Cranes</i>	Eleanor Coerr
Naomi Johnson	DC Public Library	<i>Taking Flight</i>	Michaela DePrince
Maya Lall	DC Public Library	<i>A Life Like Mine</i>	UNICEF
Savannah Wright	DC Public Library	<i>Never Ever Give Up: The Inspiring Story of Jessie and her Joy Jars</i>	Erik Rees
Maryland			
Olivia Fuller	Carroll County Public Library	<i>The Great Wall of Lucy Wu</i>	Wendy Wang-Long Shang
Emma Jernigan	Carroll County Public Library	<i>The One & Only Ivan</i>	Katherine Applegate
Naria H. Lemma*	Enoch Pratt Free Library	<i>Homesick</i>	Jean Fritz
Rahmah Majeed	Prince George's County Memorial Library System – New Carrollton	<i>Sew Zoey: Ready to Wear</i>	Chloe Taylor
Julie Walsh	Carroll County Public Library	<i>Red Kayak</i>	Priscilla Cummings
Virginia			
Anya Ambarish	Prince William Public Library – Central Community Library	<i>Holes</i>	Louis Sachar
Alexia De Costa*	Arlington Public Library	<i>Rules</i>	Cynthia Lord
Elaine Li	Arlington Public Library	<i>Almost Astronauts</i>	Tanya Lee Stone
Joshua Lim	Dumfries Neighborhood Library	<i>The Giver</i>	Lois Lowry
Patrick McMahon	Mary Riley Styles Public Library	<i>The Book Thief</i>	Markus Zusak
Delaware			
Dean Greenfield	New Castle County Libraries – Elsmere Library	<i>Amos Fortune: Free Man</i>	Elizabeth Yates
Megan Korwek*	New Castle County Libraries – Kirkwood Library	<i>The Brightest Star!</i>	Kathleen Maresh Hemery
Donnie Morton	New Castle County Libraries – Brandywine Hundred Library	<i>One Crazy Summer</i>	Rita Williams-Garcia
Bridget Catherine Sweeney	Wilmington Institute Library	<i>Wonder</i>	R.J. Palacio
Lauren R. Woods	New Castle County Libraries – Hockessin Library	<i>The Mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg</i>	Rodman Philbrick
Pennsylvania			
Alia C. Bell	Berks County Public Library System, Exeter Community Library	<i>Shiloh</i>	Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
Robert Gardner	Free Library of Philadelphia – Central Library	<i>The Tale of Despereaux</i>	Kate DiCamillo
Maura Eloise Johnson	Chester County Library – Oxford Public Library	<i>The Story of Ruby Bridges</i>	Robert Coles
Allison Templeton*	Bucks County Free Library – Yardley-Makefield	<i>Harry Potter Series</i>	J.K. Rowling
Kristina Trojak	York County Library System – Paul Smith Library of Southern York County	<i>Eleven Birthdays</i>	Wendy Mass
West Virginia			
Emily Bennett	Southern Area Public Library	<i>Glee-Foreign Exchange</i>	Sophia Lowell
Gwynedd Ellis	Martinsburg-Berkeley County Public Libraries – Main Library	<i>The Wolves in the Walls</i>	Neil Gaimen
Anna Monson	Martinsburg-Berkeley County Public Libraries – Main Library	<i>Someone Named Eva</i>	Joan M. Wolf
Declan Mungovan*	Martinsburg-Berkeley County Public Libraries – Main Library	<i>The Strange Case of Origami Yoda</i>	Tom Angleberger
Emma Samples	Southern Area Public Library	<i>In Front Of God and Everybody: Confessions of April Grace</i>	KD McCrite

Holes

Anya Ambarish

Virginia Finalist

Holes by Louis Sachar was a beautifully written story that taught me many things, it seemed that with each hole that was dug into the dry sand of Camp Green Lake, a new secret came up. The journey that Stanley and Zero went through was full of adventure and life lessons that everyone needs to read about.

One of the things I learned through this book is when your life goes down into a hole, you have to fight to reach the surface again. Nothing was going right in Stanley's world, and he knew he would have to muster all his strength to make things better. This was a great thing to learn because I have never experienced something like this in my life, but whenever my "hole" occurs, I will be ready with my "shovel" to dig myself out.

I also learned that you can never give up. If Stanley and Zero gave up, they would have never made it out of Big Thumb. And by giving up, death would have been certain. Not giving up doesn't just determine survival though. This can be applied to all parts of my life from fighting to the last point in a tennis match to not getting discouraged when my work doesn't get published. And I have found that by never giving up, those hopeless tennis matches have started turning into wins, and more and more of my stories and poems have found their way into magazines, books, and websites.

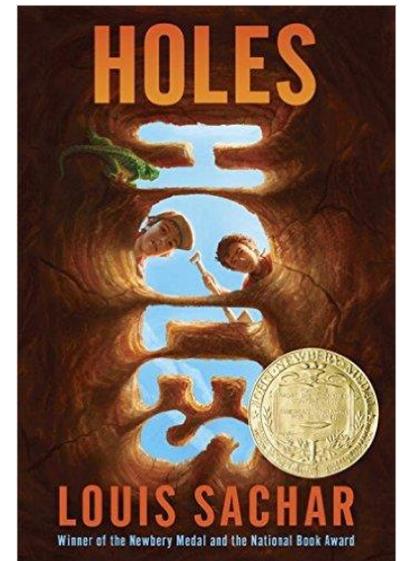
The most valuable thing I learned from this book was the importance of friendship. Stanley never turned his back on Zero when they were going up and down the mountain. The two relied on each other to survive, which really opened my eyes to the true meaning of friendship. Now, when I hang out with my friends, I have a different mindset and value them more than ever before. They have gone from just being people I like to be around with, to people I cherish and appreciate enormously. I have started to trust them more and it seems like they return the favor. This is a great thing for me and my friends because whenever we really need each other, we'll be much better suited to help one another.

The book that shaped me was *Holes*, by Louis Sachar. It has changed the way I live my life, and treat others and myself. It beautifully used a hole to represent the struggles of life, and I will never forget it.

"Nothing in life is easy. But that's no reason to give up. You'll be surprised what you can accomplish if you set your mind to it." — Louis Sachar

A poem about *Holes*:

A dent in the dry yellow sand
Five feet deep and five feet wide
But the emptiness
Contains a lifetime of knowledge.



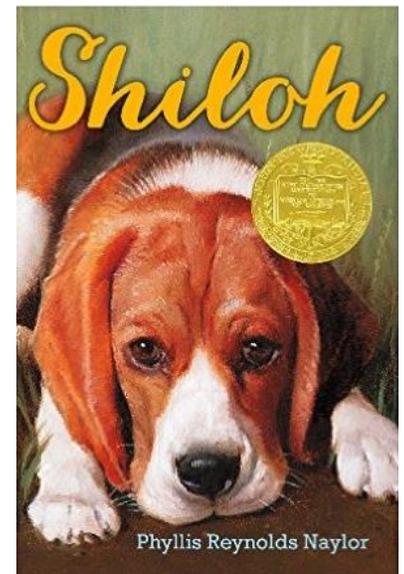
Shiloh

Alia C. Bell

Pennsylvania Finalist

I love animals, and I love to read, so I really enjoyed the book *Shiloh*, by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor. The story showed me that not all animals or people are treated nicely. I learned that doing the right thing isn't always easy.

The narrator of the story, Marty Preston, is 11 years old, like me. One day he finds a dog; a beagle. Marty can tell that the dog has been mistreated because it is scared. The dog seems to like Marty and follows him home. Marty even gives the dog a name, and that name is Shiloh.



Marty's dad tells him that the dog actually belongs to their neighbor, Judd Travers.

Marty doesn't like Judd, so he doesn't want to send Shiloh back to him. In fact, no one in the area likes Judd because he mistreats his dogs, swindles people, hunts out-of-season, drinks, and is destructive. This is the beginning of a struggle for Marty, because he wants to do what's right and be honest, but he also wants to save Shiloh.

Marty's dilemma is what really made me think. At the end of the story, Marty says “Nothing is as simple as you guess—not right or wrong, not Judd Travers, not even me or this dog I got here.” What this meant to me is that answers aren't always clear. Marty had to make a hard decision; he hid Shiloh from Judd in order to save him. This made a lot of problems for Marty's family, and even for Shiloh, who got into a fight with another dog while he was being hidden.

As a result of the choices he made, Marty ended up having to return Shiloh to Judd. But, eventually, Judd agrees to give Shiloh to Marty if Marty works for him for twenty hours. Marty didn't really want to do the work for Judd, but he was willing to make a sacrifice if it meant getting Shiloh. This demonstrated to me that sometimes you have to do things you don't like in order to reach an important goal.

One other important thing I learned from the book was not to judge a book by its cover. During the many hours that Marty had to work for Judd, he began to understand a little bit about Judd's background. Judd had had a bad life and was unloved by everyone, including his family. Though his sad existence didn't excuse the way Judd treated Shiloh, it did show that sometimes there are reasons why people are the way they are. And, by spending time with Judd, Marty learned that even a grumpy person like Judd can have some kindness in his heart.

Shiloh is a story full of important messages. It's fun to read, but also demonstrates the power of love and friendship. The book showed me that any goal is reachable if you are determined enough to find a solution. And, I learned that everyone, human or animal, has a story. *Shiloh* gave me a lot to think about, and I would definitely call it a book that shaped me.

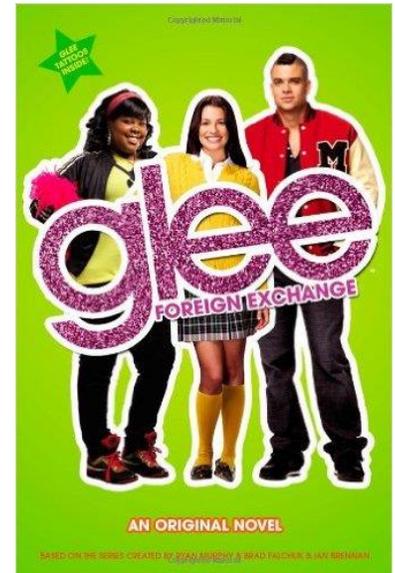
Glee-Foreign Exchange

Emily Bennett

West Virginia State Finalist

Have you ever watched a show called *Glee*? Well I have and I have also read this book called *Glee Foreign Exchange*. This book has impacted the way I see myself and I'll tell you why!

In the book new foreign exchange students come in from France that are really good singers. Well anyway this book is basically related to the show. In chapter 6 of this book it states that "I feel like a mime Artie Wrinkled his nose. He wasn't normally concerned with what he looked like, but he wanted to make a good impression on the French students." He doesn't care how he looks, but sometimes he wants to make someone like him. I feel like I am like Artie now I really don't care most of the time unless I make an impression. When reading the book in Chapter 21 I remember Sue saying "Remember, I chose this song because the only world where all cultures get along is one in which everyone is made of plastic and wears glitter. Now move it, you talentless teenage drones!" This reminds me of a couple teachers that criticized me. This book tells me really to not care what other people think when you're you!



Rules

Alexia De Costa*

1st Place Grand Prize & Virginia State Winner

Have you wondered why there are so many rules that we are expected to follow? I have always wondered about this and that is what got me interested in reading the book *Rules* by Cynthia Lord. That and the fact that the main character, Catherine, likes to paint just like I do and she has a little brother named David who has autism. My little brother is also named David but he is not autistic.

Although my original question wasn't answered, what I ended up learning from this book is of immeasurable value. *Rules* has taught me to value every person even though it might sometimes be difficult to do so due to differences in opinion, appearance or status in life.

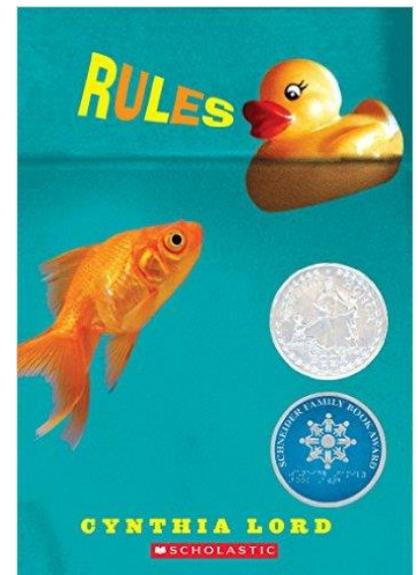
Rules has made me value my individuality and not fear being myself. I am just as good and valuable as any other person on this planet. I learned not to fear criticism and rejection as it is just part of life. Catherine was fearful of people's opinions. She tells her friend, Jason, who is disabled, that in the beginning, she was scared of what people might think of her if she told them that Jason was in a wheelchair and used a communication book to get his messages through. But later she realizes that there is nothing to be embarrassed about in having a disabled friend.

Unlike Catherine, my little brother David, is "normal", but barely! I don't wake up thinking "I wish someone would invent a pill so David would wake up one morning without autism", but I must admit that a pill to make my brother David talk less does sound tempting. My brother can be left to look after himself without supervision and I don't have to make any special "rules" for him but he certainly needs some rules to keep him out of trouble. Like Catherine, I also do have to worry about my brother "embarrassing" me in front of my friends but only because sometimes he can act weird and goofy.

No one's life is perfect and we all experience ups and downs, some of us more than others. However, in contrast to Catherine's life, which she describes as "unfair" "cruel" "ruined" and "murky", I feel that my life has many blessings for which I am very grateful, and one of those blessings is having my little brother. When I feel down, I now think of others who have more serious problems than I do and I can count on my brother, David, to find ways to cheer me up.

More importantly, *Rules* has shaped the way I think about myself and others. I have learned that I should not label myself or others in any discriminating way. As in the case of Catherine's brother David, I realized that sometimes people forget that everyone is a person of value. When Catherine was thinking about "wiping away David's autism", she remembers her third grade teacher's words that "All people have a place." *Rules* has made me realize that we need to accept people for their differences. When things don't go the way we want them to, as when some of Catherine's friends belittle David, we need to understand that it is because we haven't measured up to their standards and that this is not our problem. Our value as human beings should not depend on the standards set up by others for us. One of Catherine's rules states that "Just because other people think something, that doesn't make it true."

Rules has brought home the point that everyone is different and worthwhile, irrespective of their appearance, accomplishments or status in society. I believe, as a result, the story has made me a better person — a kinder, more honest and accepting person. Don't you think that the most beautiful gift we could give others is to help them believe that they don't have to be perfect?



The Wolves in the Walls

Gwynedd Ellis

West Virginia State Finalist

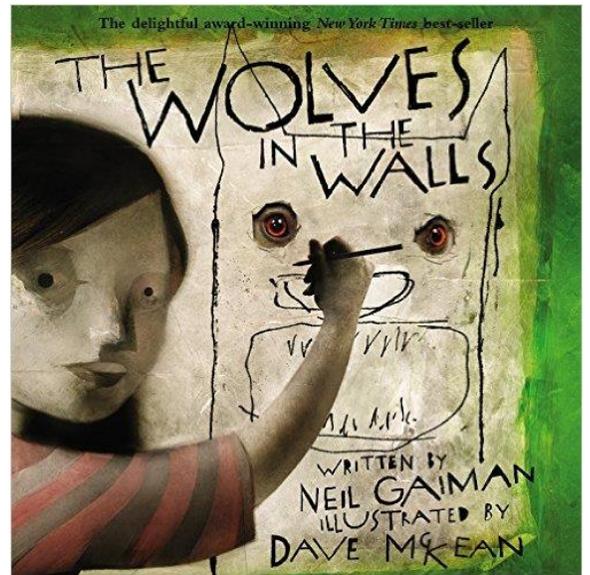
I always like reading *The Wolves in the Walls* because of the illustrations. The illustrations look like they are put together with ripped pieces of paper. The illustrations help me read the book better. When I first heard the story I was about four or five years old - now I am 10. My Grandma, mom, and I read it. My grandma brought me to the library to get a book.

Grandma began to read, *The Wolves in the Walls* by Neil Gaiman. The main character in the story is Lucy, a young girl. She thinks sounds coming from the walls are strange because, even though it's an old house, the sounds are different. Lucy heard scratching, creeping, crinkling sounds coming from the walls. Her mother thought it was mice; her father thought it was rats; her brother told her she was bats because she thought there were wolves in the walls. "If the wolves come out of the walls it's all over," he said. "What's all over?" asked Lucy. "It," he replied.

Then one night sure enough the wolves came out of the walls!

Lucy and her family ran out of the house faster than you can say, "It's all over!" The wolves were wearing the family's best clothing and eating her mother's homemade jam. They were playing her dad's second best tuba. The wolves were also beating all of her brother's video game high scores.

I am like Lucy. I get attached to things. She gets attached to her house and pig puppet. Some kids would be afraid of the book, but I wasn't; I loved the book when I first read it. That's how *The Wolves in the Walls* shaped me. How do books shape you?



The Great Wall of Lucy Wu

Olivia Fuller

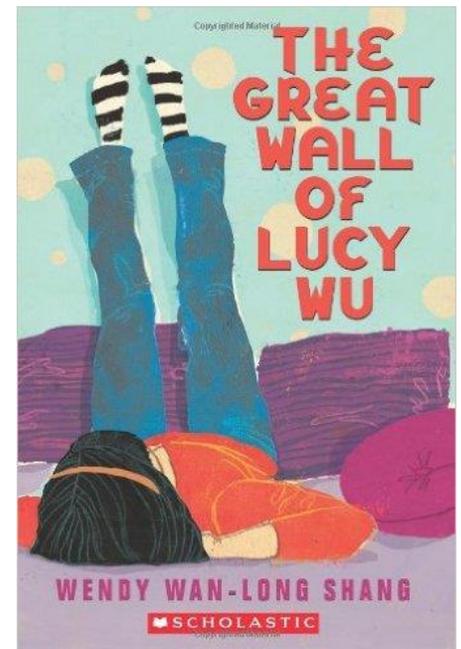
Maryland Finalist

“If anyone ever told you that they only have one life to live then they must not know how to read a book.” This quote by an unknown author really stands out to me. In other words, a book can put you in a character's shoes. I chose the book *The Great Wall of Lucy Wu* by Wendy Wan-Long Shang as the book that impacted me for many reasons. First why don't I tell you a little about it?

In *The Great Wall of Lucy Wu*, 11 year old Lucy can't wait for 6th grade. Her older sister, who she has to share a room with is off to college. She is the oldest kid in the school and she can finally tryout for basketball team captain. All of Lucy's plans are ruined when her Great Aunt Yi Po flies in from China for a visit. Lucy has to share her room with her, go to Chinese school instead of playing basketball, and has to deal with a bully. Lucy's year just fell to pieces. Now Lucy must learn how to accept things the way that they are and she learns nothing is more important than family. The theme of this book is think about others before you think about yourself. In Lucy's vision of a perfect year everything went her way. Then Aunt Yi Po came and everything changed. Lucy learned to think about Aunt Yi Po instead of herself and she did have the best year ever.

This book impacted me because it taught me the importance of culture and helped me understand that sometimes you have to sacrifice things for others, even if you really don't want to. It also showed me not to get my expectations up too high because things might not turn out the way you expect. I was only interested in American culture but now I am more interested in Asian customs than I was before. I also learned to do things for others first. Last weekend in my neighborhood we had a multi-family yard sale. I spent my own money on things for my siblings because *The Great Wall of Lucy Wu* inspired me to do things for others.

I think that you should read *The Great Wall of Lucy Wu* and enjoy it. If everyone read this book I think that we all would get the same message that I did and the world would become a little bit better.

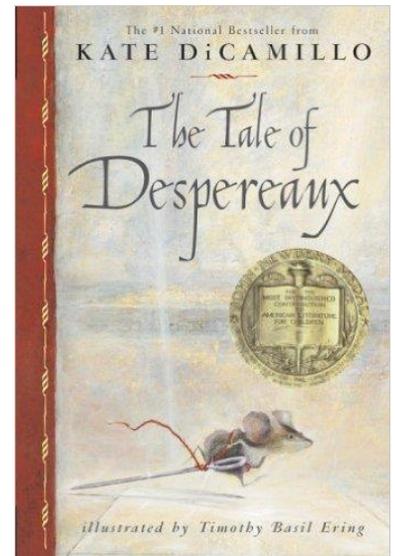


The Tale of Despereaux

Robert Gardner

Pennsylvania Finalist

The 2014-2015 National Ambassador for Young People's Literature, Kate DiCamillo, wrote *The Tale of Despereaux* in 2003. It won the Newbery Medal for the Most Distinguished Contribution to American Literature for Children. *The Tale of Despereaux* is about a brave young mouse, named Despereaux, and his adventures. He is not like normal mice. He loves reading, adventure and a young princess. This unlikely protagonist shows bravery and courage, two essential characteristics of a good hero. When I looked at the cover of this book for the first time, I never knew what kind of an impact it would have on me. But now I know that it is truly a book that shaped me.



The book begins with a small introduction. It goes like this: “The world is dark and light is precious. Come closer, dear reader. You must trust me. I am telling you a story.” From the beginning, the extraordinary writing style mixed with the equally compelling storyline kept me flipping pages. I was eager to find out what was going to happen. The story was so bright, spontaneous and funny. When I read this book, it felt like the author was my friend. The author often wrote, “Dear reader,” at the beginning of sentences, which made me feel like the author was personally telling me this engaging story. The masterfully crafted words painted a vivid image in my mind. Between the writing style and the storyline, I discovered the power of books and how they can connect us all.

There is one particular scene in this story that I know I will remember all my life. The scene takes place in a dark dungeon, filled with nasty rats and prisoners. When Despereaux enters the dungeon, the jail keeper named Gregory begs Despereaux to tell him a story. “Stories are light,” he says. It is followed by, “Light is precious in a world so dark.” Over time, I began to understand how true those three words really were. “Stories are light.” Stories most certainly bring light and joy to everyone. From *The Tale of Despereaux*, I learned forgiveness, perseverance and courage. I learned to cherish what we love, for we never know when it could disappear. Stories connect us all. All we have to do is listen.

The Tale of Despereaux also inspired me to become a writer. But that inspiration also came from its tremendous author, one of my favorite authors, Kate DiCamillo. If I could tell stories so vibrantly that it could bring light to readers everywhere, as Kate DiCamillo does, I definitely wanted to work some of that spectacular magic. When I read *The Tale of Despereaux*, I enjoyed it so much that it not only inspired me to become a writer but it also encouraged me to read more often. Two hundred and seventy one pages allowed me to enter a whole different world. I was excited to find out what future worlds I might be entering.

This wonderful book impacted me greatly and changed the way I see my surroundings. When I read *The Tale of Despereaux*, I found out how important stories are to bring light and joy. *The Tale of Despereaux* changed my life for the better. Whenever I sit down to write a story, essay or anything, I will remember *The Tale of Despereaux*. I will ask myself the question, “Does this bring light?” I shall always remember the inspiration I received from that story and its author, Kate DiCamillo. I will never forget *The Tale of Despereaux*.

“I would like it very much if you thought of me as a mouse telling you a story, this story, with the whole of heart, whispering it in your ear in order to save myself from the darkness, and to save you from the darkness, too. ‘Stories are light,’ said Gregory the jailer. Reader, I hope you have found some light here.”

Yes. I have found much light here.

A Guide to Giving Back

Mason Gray*

Washington, DC Winner

I read a great non-fiction book this school year that has helped shape me. The book is titled, *A Guide to Giving Back: Ways to Help in Your Community*. The author is Claire O'Neal. She provides a few examples on how to become a community helper, how to organize and plan your ideas and how to put those ideas into action.

First, I want to share some interesting facts about volunteerism. Did you know that America's youth are leading the way by volunteering? The author said that Federal studies show that twice as many American teens volunteer today as in the past decades. Today, sixty-eight percent of K-12 schools encourage students to volunteer. Also, volunteering brings great rewards and benefits.

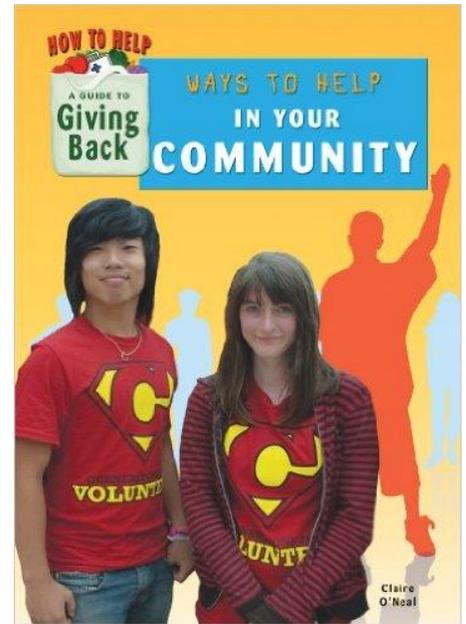
Since, I am only 10 years old, I adopted a few volunteer tips suggested by the author. I chose smaller scale projects versus bigger projects. I also had to consider familiar places such as home, my neighborhood, local library's and school. More importantly, I had to discuss my ideas with my parents so I could have their permission.

Secondly, there are so many ways to help in your community, however, I narrowed my choices to helping my peers in school, protecting the environment, and helping the elderly. I helped my classmates learn and master their multiplication facts. At school, I visited and read stories to pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students. I've read stories to children during story time at the library. At the end of the school year, I participated in a skit to promote the importance of reading during the summer.

Thirdly, conservation begins at home. I had to get rid of some bad habits and develop some "go green" habits by protecting our environment. I conserve energy and water by using energy efficient light bulbs, unplugging appliances and using less water by not running water. I am also responsible for the trash recycling bin.

Finally, I enjoy helping the elderly. I have a 98 year old great-grandmother and a few seniors in my neighborhood that I help on the weekend. Along with my mother's supervision, I assist them with chores and errands. For example, taking out trash, washing dishes, warming food and pouring them water, picking up groceries and encouraging them to exercise. On holidays and birthdays, I would make special treats for them. For instance, on Easter, I dyed eggs and delivered them. On birthdays, I make mini size cakes and would deliver it to them as a big surprise.

In conclusion, today's youths are capable of making a difference by volunteering. Certainly, volunteering has its rewards and I have been impacted in many ways. It has boosted my confidence and self-esteem by taking on bigger responsibilities amongst my peers. I have become one of the most popular students at school. That makes me feel pretty awesome! I have new friendships with seniors by talking, laughing and sharing stories. I have become more earth friendly and conscious about the environment. Also, I am able to reflect on people such as my parents, sister, grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends, teachers and librarians who have helped shape me into a better person.



Amos Fortune: Free Man

Dean Greenfield

Delaware Finalist

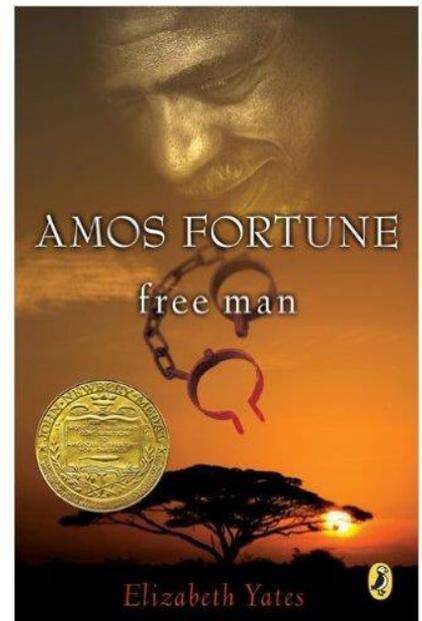
Every day, things we read shape our lives. Recently, I read a book called *Amos Fortune: Free Man* by Elizabeth Yates. This book is the story of the son of an African king who was captured by slave traders and brought to America. Throughout his life, Amos never stopped believing that he would be free again. This book and the story of Amos' life are something I will never forget. I have three excellent reasons why I think this book is significant to me, and why I believe it will shape my life.

The first reason why this book is significant to me is that it gave me a huge sense of hope. Amos was born a prince of the At-mun-shi tribe in Africa who was forcibly brought to Massachusetts as a slave. Throughout the more than forty years that he was a slave, he never lost hope that he would be free again. Not only did Amos believe that he would be a free man again, he also believed that he would free the people he cared about. Even though it took most of his life, Amos began to see his dreams come true.

Another reason why this book is significant is because it taught me that you have to work hard to achieve greatness. In the book, Amos said, "It does a man no good to be free until he learns how to live." Amos worked his whole life, first as a slave and then as a free man as a tanner. He educated himself and never lost a positive attitude. When Amos was 80 years old, he bought land and built a house. Even when he was old, he still taught the young people in his town how important it is to work hard.

Lastly, the book taught me to always think of others, and how my actions can affect them. Amos frequently put others before himself. Even after he became free, he still fought for the freedom of the people he cared about. It was important to him that they also had a good life. At the end of his life, Amos created a will. In his will, Amos left part of his money to the church in Jaffrey, New Hampshire, so that they could buy a silver communion service. He also left money to the school in town so that others could have an education. These selfless acts are an inspiration to me.

In closing, *Amos Fortune: Free Man* was an inspiring book. Amos' hope, hard work, and selflessness made him a leader in his community. Even now, people are inspired by Amos' life. Not only did I learn about an important figure in history, this book also taught me about the kind of person I would like to be.

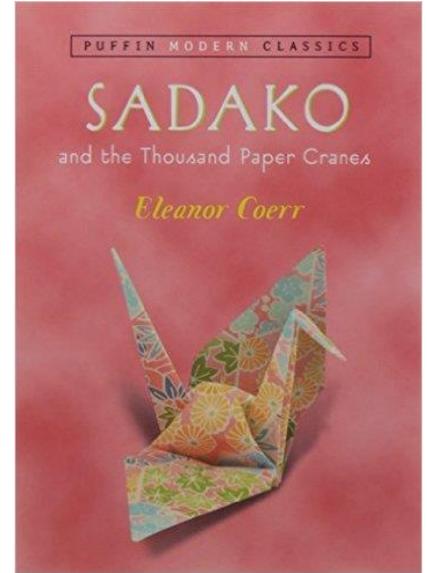


Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes

Isha Iyengar

Washington, DC Finalist

It was a really hard choice to decide what book I should do. But, I knew that *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* would be the perfect choice for this. *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* is a true story about a Japanese girl named Sadako. The story started when Sadako was running during recess she fell on the ground. After that happened she went to the hospital and there she found out that she had gotten Leukemia from the radiation of the atomic bombing. Sadako had to stay in the hospital till she got better. Sadako's friend told her that if you make 1,000 paper cranes and make a wish it will come true. So Sadako and her friends and family made paper cranes. But it was too late, Sadako died and they had only made 644 cranes. This was a brief summary about the book.



One way this book shaped me was that, I never will give up. In the story Sadako and her friends and family did not give up making the paper cranes. Another way this book shaped me was that it made me want to learn more about what occurred during World War II and I taught myself about it. Additionally, I learned that life is not all about good things and you don't always live happily ever after. In this book good things did not happen and she did not live happily ever after. Finally I was influenced about life and my surroundings and actions have consequences. You should think before you act and your actions today might affect the next generation. The U.S bombing Japan in the early part of the 20th century, changed and affected many people's lives. You should definitely think before you do act.

All these were the reasons how *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* shaped me.

The One & Only Ivan

Emma Jernigan

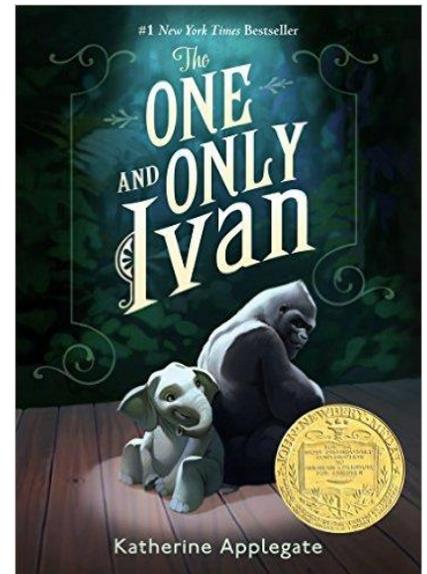
Maryland Finalist

“Books may well be the only true magic.” This quote by Alice Hoffman says it all. I think that this means that books are like magic because a simple book can change a lot, like the way we look at things or our actions. Reading is powerful because it can change a person in the way someone does something or see's something. One day they could do/say something, the next day, do/say something different. The book that I thought inspired or “shaped” me the most this year was *The One And Only Ivan* written by Katherine Applegate.

This book is about how Ivan the gorilla was so popular in the “Big Top Mall” when he was younger, but now that he is older, no one likes him. One day, Ivan got a pack of crayons from a girl named Julia. Julia saw his artwork, and she loved it. Eventually his art was displayed and people started buying it. All the sudden Ivan was famous not just for his art but for being himself. The theme of the story is do not judge someone by their age but by their actions.

This book affected me because everyone thought that Ivan was too old and boring until he decided to create art. That connects to life because I used to think that in school you had to be a certain age to learn different types of things. Then I realized that when I was in First grade it was unusual because I not only learned normal First grade skills but, I also learned multiplication. That situation and the book *The One And Only Ivan* got me thinking about how you can NEVER be too old or too young to accomplish something. In the book everyone thought Ivan was too old to be entertaining but once he started making art people thought different about Ivan. They thought that just because Ivan is older he could still do marvelous things.

I know this book has definitely changed me and I recommend it. This book could also change others and maybe the world someday. If others were changed as much as me, we might see lots of successes around the globe because young and old would do some amazing and remarkable things. If a young person read this book they would think that they could do something that someone their age would not do. I'm positive this book changed me, but will it change you? In conclusion, all I know is that this has definitely been, “a book that shaped me.”



Taking Flight

Naomi Johnson

Washington, DC Finalist

A book that shaped me is Michaela DePrince's memoir, *Taking Flight*. It was written with the help of her adopted mother, Elaine DePrince. Here is how and why my life was changed by this 246 page book.

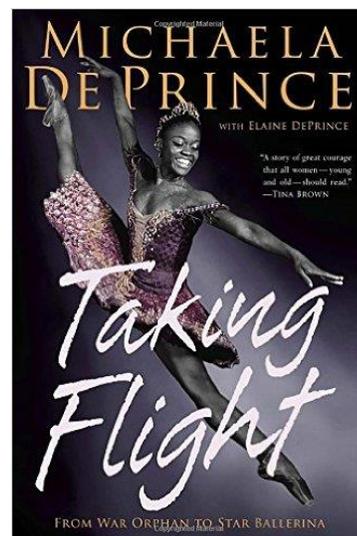
I have learned what some people go through, what they survive. There were times when I wanted to cry. There were times when I just needed to shut my eyes and remember that I'm not there. I had to remember that unless I was born back then and was in that place, I was totally safe from that situation.

In the book, Michaela, then Mabinty Bangura, lived with her mother and father in a war-torn village in Sierra Leone, a country on the African continent. She was born with a skin condition known as vitiligo, which left her with spots without pigmentation. Rebels killed her father while he was at work at a diamond mine. She and her mother were left with her abusive uncle who hated women, even though he had three wives and thirteen daughters. She and her mother rarely ate, and were punished for whatever reason he could find. Her mother died of Lassa fever, and Mabinty was put in an orphanage.

She was eventually adopted by Charles and Elaine DePrince along with her best friend from the orphanage, Mabinty Suma. They were brought to the United States. She grew up to be a well-known ballet dancer, touring with several different ballet companies including the Dance Theater of Harlem and the Joburg Ballet. She is now a dancer with the Dutch National Ballet. I am also a dancer and her story is an inspiration to me.

Not only did this book teach me that so many people in so many places go through so many difficult things, but I also learned that you can come from absolutely nothing and grow up to be something great, big, and dream fulfilling.

I loved *Taking Flight* it scared me, it made me cry, and it inspired me. One day I might adopt children, just as Charles and Elaine did, and reach for all of my dreams no matter how far-fetched they may appear to some.



The Story of Ruby Bridges

Maura Eloise Johnson

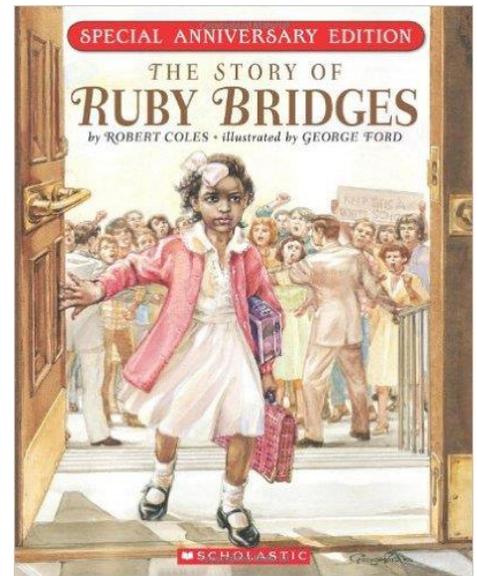
Pennsylvania Finalist

The book I chose to read was *The Story of Ruby Bridges*. I chose this book because her story has impacted and inspired so many others, just like me. When I think of people who I look up to and who will help me be the person I want to be when I grow up, one of the people I think of is Ruby Bridges. There are a lot of reasons that she inspires me. Many of the reasons help me each day and they will help me when I am grown up.

Learning how Ruby Bridges acted in her life, with all of the things she faced, helped me think about my actions and how I need to treat other people. I am ten years old and I have not seen the hard times that Ruby saw in her first six years of her life. She was faced with the challenge of going to a school where no one wanted her to be. She had to walk through a crowd of people who, even though they did not know her or her family, hated her and hated that she had the right to be there with them. Instead of acting in a hateful manner, she stopped on her way into the school, in the middle of the angry mob, and prayed. She prayed, "Please God, try to forgive those people. Because even if they say those bad things, they don't know what they're doing. So you could forgive them, just like you did those folks a long time ago when they said terrible things about You."

Just like Ruby Bridges, I need to be forgiving to everyone, no matter how much they may hurt me. Sometimes those people are hurting themselves, which leads them to hurt others. Ruby inspired other people to be better. She inspired them to make change to help others instead of keeping the hate going. She was so young, but so brave.

When I am still young like I am now and when I grow up, I hope to inspire other people to make changes that are positive. I hope that I can inspire my family, my friends, and other people in the world to always do their best to look for the good in others. I want to make positive changes, just like Ruby Bridges.

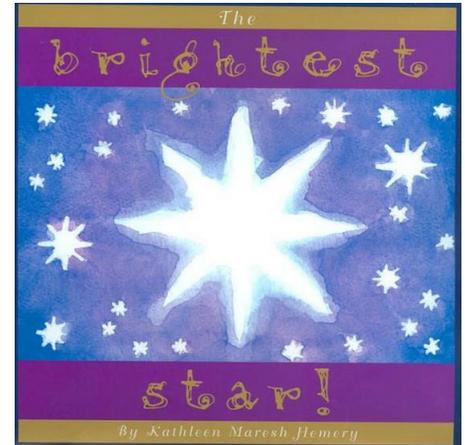


The Brightest Star!

Megan Korwek

Delaware State Winner

When I was eight years old, my grandmother died of lung cancer. I was heartbroken. My grandmother was very close with my family and I, and she was the glue that held the family together. People from Hospice, a program providing care for sick people usually the terminally ill, tried to explain to me that my grandmother was going to a better place, but I didn't quite understand that. One woman from hospice gave me a book called *The Brightest Star!* by Kathleen Maresh Hemery.



The book was about a little girl whose mother died, so she didn't know what to draw for a class project about her family. When she told her dad about the issue, he helped her find the brightest star in the night sky. He said it represented her mother, so she drew that for her project.

I read the book and it helped me to understand that my grandmother is never going to leave me. She will always be with me in my heart, and if I want to see her, all I have to do is look up at the night sky, and find the brightest star. The brightest star represents my grandmother watching over me.

The Brightest Star! made me feel like I could do anything. It made me feel like I could conquer the world. *The Brightest Star!* changed the way I think about stars. I know a star is really a ball of chemicals, but I know that somewhere in heaven, my grandmother really is watching over me I also know that she is very proud of me for accomplishing the great feat of moving on from her passing.

Sometimes, when I think about my grandmother, I go out and try to find the brightest star. When I do, I can remember how much she loved me, and I know that someday when I am older, I'll reunite with her again in heaven. *The Brightest Star!* helped me to understand that. *The Brightest Star!* made me feel that my grandmother will always be the brightest star.

A Life Like Mine

Maya Lall

Washington, DC Finalist

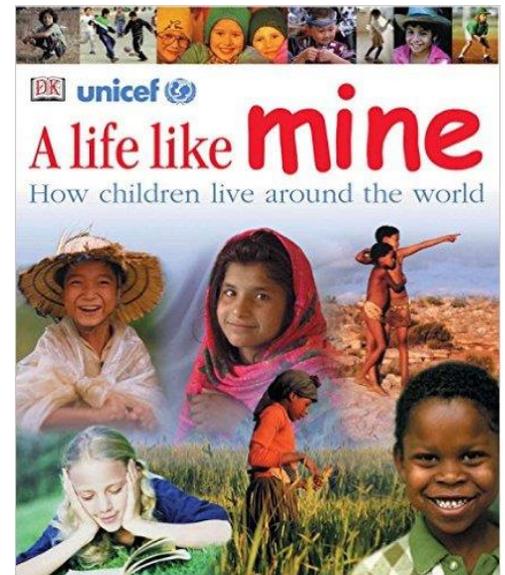
A Life Like Mine, is a book that had a personal impact on my life. This book had a personal impact on my life because it taught me to really be thankful for what I have and showed me how children live around the world.

For example, on page 124 in *A Life Like Mine*, the book says that a boy named Sibasish is a team leader in a project that teaches people living in *slums* in Kolkata, India, about polio and encourages families to vaccinate their children against it. There is lots of poverty in India, and most people wouldn't have been able to vaccinate their children against polio. I went to India, and when I was there, I saw *lots of* poverty. This made me feel sad, like I wanted to help with this problem. Going to India, seeing lots of poverty myself, and knowing that people are living in slums in India makes me feel very thankful that I am vaccinated against polio and all other diseases, and that I do not live in a slum.

Another example, is on page 13 in *A Life Like Mine*, when the book talks about water, how we need it, and how bad water kills over one million children a year. Now, I am very thankful that I have clean water to drink, water to bathe in, and that I have water, in general.

One last example, is on pages 48 and 49 in *A Life Like Mine*, when the book talks about education, how millions of children around the world can't ever go to school, and how more than half of these children are girls. Sometimes I complain about school and how I don't want to go to school, but millions of children around the world don't even go to school. Now, I am very thankful that I go to school and that I have an education so that I can succeed later in life.

This book taught me lots of things and this is the one book that had a personal impact on my life.



Homesick

Naria H. Lemma*

3rd Place Grand Prize & Maryland State Winner

I learned that many years ago my grandparents were arrested by soldiers for no reason, but more on that later.

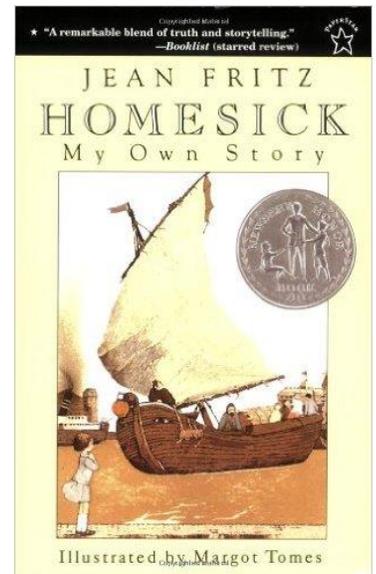
Recently, I read a non-fiction, school reading book called *Homesick* by Jean Fritz. This book had a big impact on my life because it inspired me to learn more about my family's Ethiopian history.

Homesick centers around a courageous ten-year-old girl named Jean Fritz who lived in Hankow, China during the Chinese communist revolution in 1913.

During that period of upheaval, there was a lot of rioting, protesting and demonstrations. This was a very scary period of time for the Chinese people. There was a lot of fighting and people were dying in the streets. Although I already knew a little about the Ethiopian revolution, the book inspired me to learn more, so I decided to interview my grandmother. She taught me that there are a lot of similarities between China's and Ethiopia's communist revolutions. In both Ethiopia and China, there were emperors and empresses for thousands of years before the communists took over. Hankow, an industrial city in China, had become a central point for strikes and protests in *Homesick*. Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, and where my family is from, had also become the central point for the revolution. Like in China, many terrifying things happened in Ethiopia. My grandmother explained to me that the communist army took over the government and imprisoned the emperor and soon murdered him. My grandparents were arrested and placed in jail cells for a day because the soldiers suspected that they were part of the resistance and were sending secret messages about the revolution. They were released when the soldiers couldn't find any proof against them

In *Homesick*, Jean and her family had to leave China in a hurry. Her father came home one day out of breath, and told them that they had three hours to pack before leaving China. The Nationalist Army was getting close and "the soldiers had gone wild." Jean, who was close in age to myself, could "feel her knees beginning to shake." During the interview with my grandmother, she told me how she and her family escaped the country secretly. After their release from jail, my grandparents decided that they were going to leave the country because it was too dangerous to stay behind, just like Jean and her family. The soldiers had made it illegal to leave, so my family had to sneak out of the country. They packed a few clothes and took some jewelry and photo albums. They left everything else behind. They told no one that they were leaving except for my great grandmother and her sister. Even after they got on the plane, my grandmother did not feel safe until they were far away.

Learning about these times of turmoil and how my family had the courage to get through it makes me feel proud of them. The book *Homesick* is based on the life of the author Jean Fritz and how her family had to show tremendous courage throughout the entire book. For both my family and Jean's family, they could have been killed but they were brave and careful enough to get out alive. I am proud that both our families were so brave and escaped from the scary and bad situations.

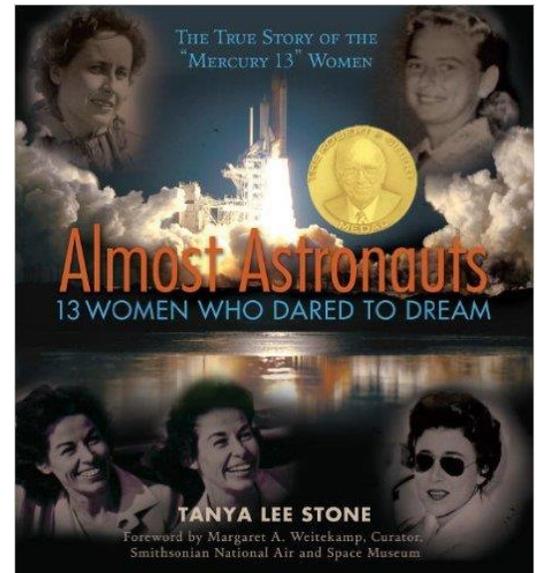


Almost Astronauts

Elaine Li

Virginia Finalist

A book that has had an impact on me is called *Almost Astronauts*, by Tanya Lee Stone. It is about 13 women who tried to become astronauts in the early 1960s, a time when there were only male astronauts. The book documented their protests, arguments, and all the steps they took to prove women could be astronauts. What made the women stand out is that not only did they have the skills required of astronauts, but they also had leadership qualities not everyone has, like perseverance, integrity, and courage. Reading about their experiences has changed the way I see the world and how will think about the choices I make in the future.



One of the most important women in the group was Jerrie Cobb. She was one of America's best female pilots, and was the first women to take all the same tests the "Mercury 7 Men" did in order to become astronauts. She passed all the tests, and even set records that were better than the best of the men. She proved women could be as good astronauts as men. After that, twelve more women took the tests, proving that they could be astronauts too.

Yet when they wrote to NASA, the administration refused to let women become astronauts. But the 13 women didn't give up. They protested, gave speeches, but it just didn't work. As I read about their experiences, I was motivated to work hard, and not give up easily.

It's easy to follow a goal when other people encourage you, but if you choose a goal and no one encourages you, and people even try to discourage you from following it, most people would give up. Other people felt like women should not be allowed to be astronauts because most women at that time were supposed to be housewives and men were supposed to do the important jobs, so many people were against their goal of becoming female astronauts. These women were normal people like me, and they were trying do something no one had tried before. It took courage to stand up to everyone, and these women had courage.

People have rules that almost everyone agrees about. For example, now we believe that men and women should have equal rights, and barely anyone disagrees. It is very hard to change how people think about things, even if how they think is wrong. When these women were trying to become astronauts, people did not think that men and women should have the same jobs. These women thought this was wrong, and stood up for what they believed in, and eventually women were able to have equal rights as men. Even though these women were not successful in achieving their goals, they still stood up for what was right, and inspired other people to protest more and eventually have equal rights.

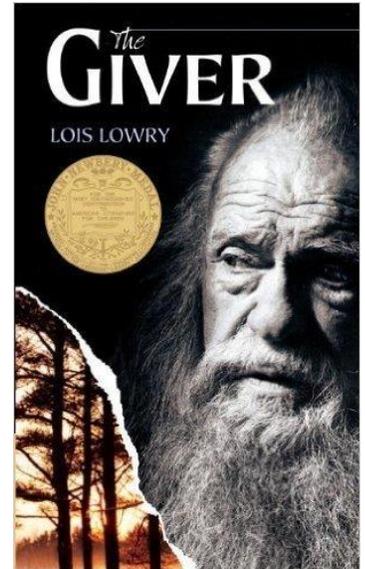
I didn't know about this story before I read it and the women were not people who I had heard of before. But they made a difference in bringing our world forward to achieve equal rights for men and women. Even though they were not successful, the book taught me perseverance because they never gave up. By sharing their experiences as I read the book, it inspired me to not give up easily when I face trouble. This book also taught me that it is important to stand up for what I believe in and what I think is right, even if not everyone agrees.

The Giver

Joshua Lim

Virginia Finalist

A book that has impacted me this summer is *The Giver* by Lois Lowry. The story is about the life of an 11-year old boy named Jonas. He lives in a dysfunctional utopia called “Sameness” where the Elders control everything, even the choice people make. Also, when a citizen turns 12, he or she gets assigned a job in the community by the Elders. Imagine that, not being allowed to choose your own job? I believe that anyone can become someone important if he or she tries hard enough. But having no choice at all? As a second-generation immigrant, this makes me appreciate the United States more. I feel fortunate to live in a free country, where people can live freely and make their own choice, right or wrong. Thanks to my hard-working parents for deciding to migrate here to have a better life and give me and my sister more opportunities.



In the story, everyone in the community have to take pills that contain a drug that limits their emotions. Now, imagine what the world would be like without emotions. Everyone would be like robots. This part of the story opens my eyes to the importance of emotions that we sometimes tend to ignore in life. I realize that people should not only use their brains in making decisions but also their heart and soul. Humanity itself is based on emotions. My faith has taught me to believe that God created man based on love. If only love would prevail in this world then there would be peace and harmony everywhere. I am certain that this is possible if each of us will do our part, and I have to start doing mine by showing love and respect to everyone regardless of race, gender, age, and belief.

When the Giver shows Jonas the latest “release” (a term they used for death), in which Jonas's father takes the life of a baby through an injection without even knowing what he is really doing, Jonas starts to feel confused then angry. He wants the citizens of the community to know what the Elders are really doing. I understand Jonas's reactions because I think everyone should value life. I think of life as a gift, and I believe that each one of us has a purpose and should be given a chance to serve that purpose.

Near the end of the story, the Giver tells Jonas that if he crosses the outer boundary of “Sameness,” all his memories will be released and everyone will know what the world was like before “Sameness.” Therefore, when Jonas finds out that Gabriel, the baby who stays with their family and he has grown attached to, will be released, he decides to leave the community and cross the outer boundary in order to save him and bring back the memories to the citizens. The ending is quite ambiguous, and people can have different interpretations depending on their point of view in life. If you're optimistic, you probably will say that Jonas reaches the outer boundary. If you're pessimistic, you will think that he is just hallucinating and is about to die. For me though, I think both Jonas and Gabriel are able to cross the boundary. This signifies hope and perseverance. No matter how bad the situation is, something good always comes next. Just like what my parents always say, “There is always light at the end of the tunnel.”

Overall, *The Giver* is a great book for readers of all ages as it discusses many thought-provoking subjects. It makes me realize that I am blessed to have emotions, a freedom to choose, a right to live, and be in a country where diversity is thriving. With these, we can live a life with full of memories worth remembering for the next generations. Just as the Giver says, “If you were to be lost in the river, Jonas, your memories would not be lost with you. Memories are forever.”

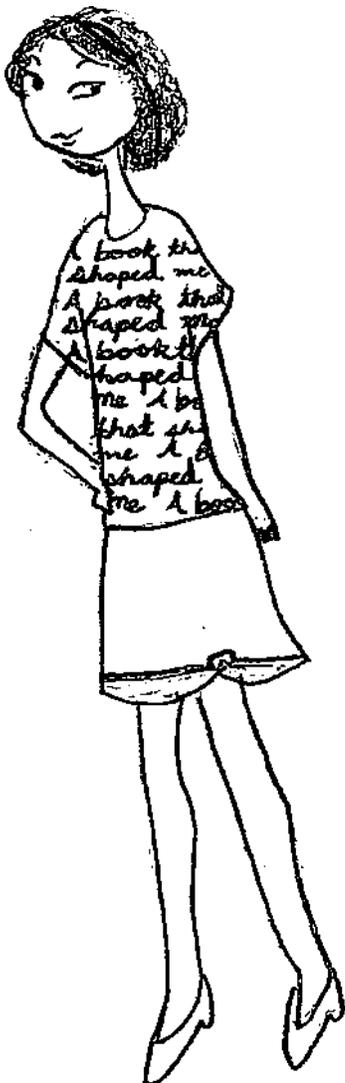
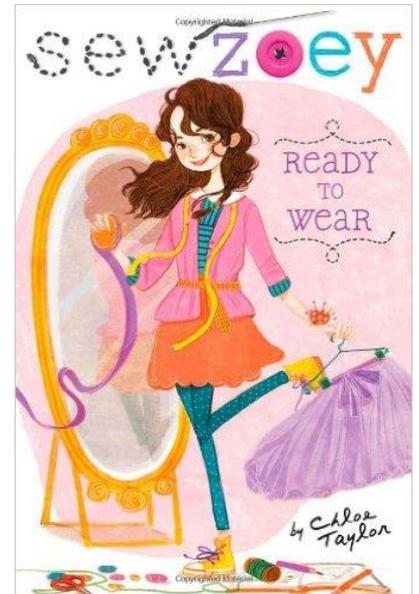
Sew Zoey: Ready to Wear

Rahmah Majeed

Maryland Finalist

A book that shaped me is *Sew Zoey: Ready to Wear* by Chloe Taylor. In this book, twelve year old Zoey Webber starts off her sewing career by making her own clothes with her mother's old sewing machine. Sewing made her feel connected to her mother who died when Zoey was younger. When her friends, Kate and Priti, help her make her own fashion blog, Sew Zoey, she gets noticed by lots of people, even famous designers!

One inspiring part of *Ready to Wear* was when Zoey designed and made clothes for herself after she heard that her school would be getting rid of uniforms. She was afraid that no one would like her creations. She was wrong — lots of kids complimented her outfits and said they were amazing.



Zoey's experiences motivated me to draw sketches of clothes I would wear and take a sewing class. When my own sewing grandmother saw my sketches, she thought that they were very unique and stylish. She said that when she had the time she would make them.

Throughout the whole series, *Sew Zoey* has inspired me to learn more about the fashion industry and different types of creative arts. I hope to be a fashion designer and an industrial designer when I grow up and create girls clothing and design modern furniture.

A Book That Shaped Me Shirt with an Open Book Skirt

The Book Thief

Patrick McMahon

Virginia Finalist

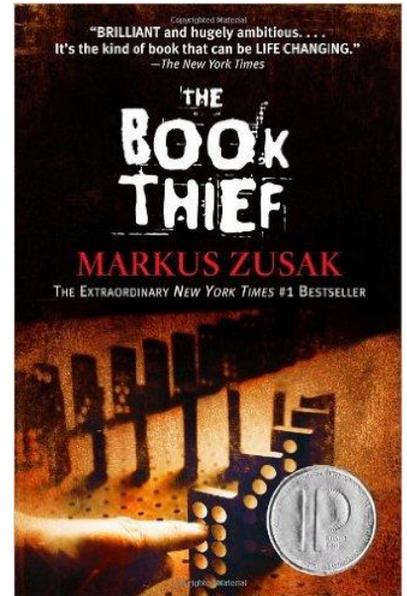
The novel, *The Book Thief*, written by Markus Zusak, impacted my life in many ways. It portrayed the sadness, grief and suffering people experienced during the Holocaust; ultimately, showing that love will conquer over fear and hate.

The Book Thief showed me the emotions of someone who had lost everything; someone who knew that one single human mistake could ruin the lives of thousands of people. It showed me what it felt like to know that someone could come into your house, find a “different,” person, and destroy even the small comforts you have left. After losing her mother and brother, Liesel found some normality living with the Hubermanns in Molching, Germany. When Max, a Jewish man, started to take refuge in their basement, Liesel dreaded losing the little enjoyments she had discovered in her new life.

Reading *The Book Thief* showed me what it felt like to understand that the only thing between you and death is another human being and their decisions, their feelings, and their mistakes. In the end, all the people in Molching—but Liesel—die because someone forgot to sound the alarms for an airstrike.

This book showed me how cruel and uncaring people can be, and heartless enough to deliberately take the lives of thousands and thousands of people. *The Book Thief* makes me realize how lucky I am to know kind and caring people in my life, who instead of killing, heal; who instead of hating, love; who instead of making things worse, go out of their way to use their time to try to help others.

Most importantly, when Liesel meets the narrator, Death, *The Book Thief* taught me one more lesson: people will forget the hate, but always remember the love.

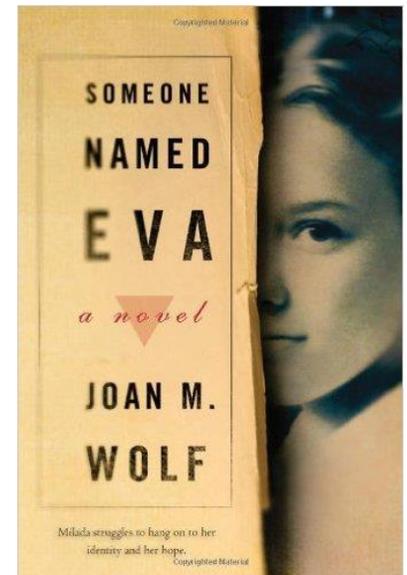


Someone Named Eva

Anna Monson

West Virginia State Finalist

My Book is *Someone Named Eva* by Joan M. Wolf. How this book had a personal impact on my life was how this world hated so many people. And what I mean by that is that in the story Eva, is a eleven year old girl when the Nazis take her family away. Then, her family is gone. The Nazis made her Aryon and put her in a German family. How that part of the story changed me was because in that time it showed how much The Nazis wanted the world to be perfect. That changed me personal and it helped me to know that I shouldn't judge anybody for what they look like and nobody can be perfect. To relate that part to the story is that they – The Nazis – changed her name to Eva and called her that instead of Milada. The next part in the story changed my heart. The words were “Remember who you are, Milada. Remember where you are from.” How it did change my heart was that no matter what people say to you or do to you, you will never change from your original self. What those words mean is that you need to remember how you were then and don't forget it the way Eva or Milada remembered who she was, was by the pin that her Babichka gave her. This story is a good book and I think should change everybody. And that is how *Someone Named Eva* changed me.

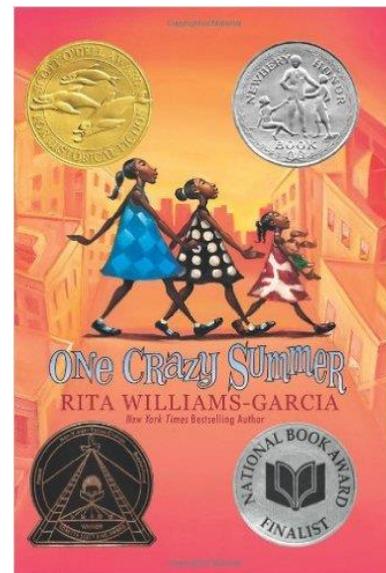


One Crazy Summer

Donnie Morton

Delaware Finalist

The book I chose is *One Crazy Summer*. It is about three sisters who go from New York City to Oakland to visit their estranged mother in the summer of 1968. They quickly find out that their mom wants nothing to do with them and sends them to receive a Black Panthers education. I chose *One Crazy Summer* because it gave me insight on African-American culture. Coming into this book I knew very little about the Black Panther Party and this book helped my understanding of what the Black Panther's did, like providing free food and education to poor kids. Like Delphine, I had only heard of the Black Panthers on TV and had not really seen fully who the Black Panthers were. The news only showed the Black Panther's as a black guys in beret's with guns.



This book changed the way I saw the world and how much it has changed since the 60's. There are far less race driven hate crimes in America and that shows how much the world has changed. It also changed how I saw my family, more specifically my grandparents who were alive during the time of this books. I know that my grandfather was a poor kid and this book shows what it was like to be a poor kid at the time. Like how Hirohito made a makeshift go-kart for entertainment. This book additionally made me change the way I see myself also because if the Black Panthers had not fought for their rights there still might be more of a presence of racism in America.

During this book I had different feelings. At one point I felt relation between many of the characters since they were African-American. I learned about the struggle of African-Americans during the 1960's and what they had to go through. I also felt anger because on page 45 it says, "The Panthers on TV said they were in communities to protect poor black people from the powerful; to provide things like food, clothing, and medical help; and to fight racism. Even so, most people were afraid of Black Panthers because they carried rifles and shouted 'Black Power.'" It made me feel angry because people only payed attention to the perceived violence of the Panthers and not the charitable things that they did.

In conclusion, the book made me feel different ways, one of them being relation because of the many African-American characters who I can connect to. I also felt angry at some parts because most people only recognized on the violence of the Black Panthers rather than the kind hearted things that they did. This book also changed the way I saw many things such as the world. In the 60's there were many more hate crimes against African-Americans which shows the progression of America. It also changed the way I saw my family because it showed what it was like to be poor during that period much like my grandparents. It also changed the way I saw myself because if it weren't for the people who stood for their rights there would still be more of an existence of racism in America. I am glad I read this book because this book has changed the way I see the world, my family and myself.

The Strange Case of Origami Yoda

Declan Mungovan*

West Virginia State Winner

A book that shaped me this year was *The Strange Case of Origami Yoda*, by Tom Angleberger. I met the author at my library in Martinsburg and he was super-funny. He showed us how to make an emergency origami Yoda. It made me so excited to read it that we bought all of his books and I read them in three days!

How did this book shape me? Tell you, I will. *Origami Yoda* is a story about a weird kid named Dwight at McQuarrie Middle School. One day he brings in a Yoda (a little green guy from the movie, *Star Wars*) finger puppet made out of paper. He starts to give people advice through the puppet. The advice seems like it wouldn't work, but it always does.

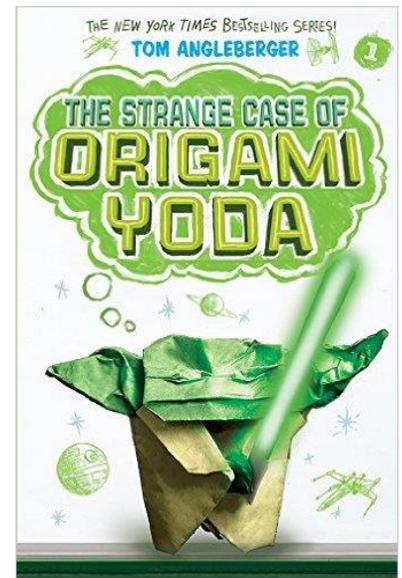
Tommy is a kid with messy hair. Yoda tells him to shave his head so he won't have to work so hard to comb his hair, and Tommy is happy with the results. But Tommy has one more very important question: should he ask out the girl that he likes? He starts a case file to make sure that Yoda's advice is always true so he doesn't make a fool of himself.

After interviewing lots of people, Tommy finds out that Yoda's advice is crazy, but it does work. In the end, Tommy listens to Dwight/Yoda's advice and asks Sara out - and she says yes! Tommy discovers that Dwight might seem weird, but he tries to help people that give him a chance. Dwight also finds ways to make people that make fun of him humiliate themselves.

This showed me that if you help people, they will help you back. If you're mean to people, they won't help you. You should be friends with everybody, even the weird kids!

This book also shaped me by showing me how to make shapes from books! Not literally - I just learned how to make origami *Star Wars* characters out of paper. I used my Origami Yoda to tell my mom to buy Cheetos. Good, they were!

I read the whole series and learned how to make all the origami figures. I even invented a couple of my own! At school, I make friends with everybody. Nice to everyone, I am. And everyone's nice to me!



In Front Of God and Everybody: Confessions of April Grace

Emma Samples

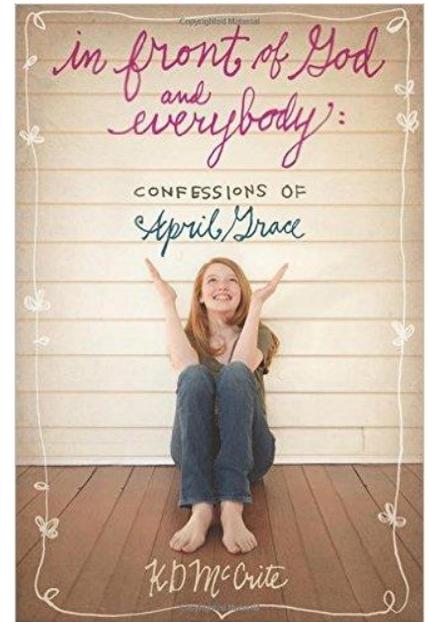
West Virginia State Finalist

April Grace is a smart, sassy, and critical kind of girl. She grew up in the Ozarks on a small farm and knew nothing but hard work, family, and God. But when their new neighbors, the St. James show up from California, April Grace instantly dislikes them.

The St. James lost all their money and had to move into an abandoned house down the road from April and her family. April's parents let the children, Ian and Isabel, stay with them until their house was finished with renovations under two conditions: they sell their Cadillac and help with the farm all summer. Ian helped April's father on the farm, but Isabel refused. As April Grace tries to keep her sister, Myra Sue, from spending too much time with Isabel (because she doesn't eat fat, she uses God's name in vain, and April Grace didn't like the way she treated her parents who tried so hard to please her), Myra Sue was developing an eating disorder.

One morning April noticed the bones sticking out of Myra Sue's back and told her parents. They immediately took her to the doctor, leaving April and the St. James at their house until they returned. After the doctor's visit, April's mom, Lily, has finally had enough of Isabel's behavior, loses her temper, and tells Isabel to stay away from her daughter. Finally, Isabel learns that she is rude, disrespectful, and does not treat others how she wants to be treated.

This book has shaped me in many different ways like not judging people by their looks or their differences. Try to understand why people act the way they do before judging them or deciding if you like them or not. Be kind to even the meanest of people. Most of all, friendships can be forged with even the biggest of differences.



Wonder

Bridget Catherine Sweeney

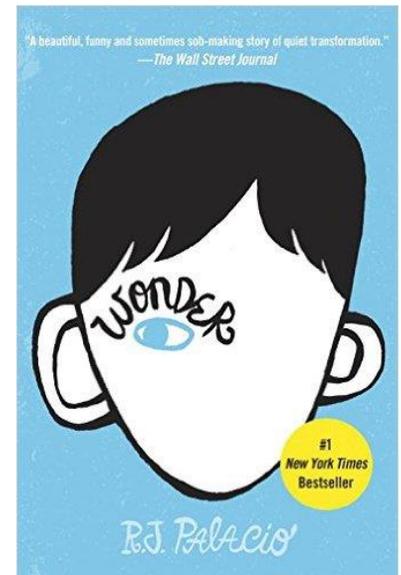
Delaware Finalist

“Don't judge a book by its cover.” I used to think this saying was just about books, but after reading the book *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio, I realized it's about people too. You can't judge a person by their outward appearance anymore than you can judge a book by its cover.

The main character in *Wonder* is a fifth grader named August Pullman. He was born with a rare facial deformity. Even after many surgeries as a young child, August was left with a very unique face. A lot of people thought him ugly or even frightening. All his life, he had to deal with peoples' scared or critical looks. When August started school at Beecher Prep, a lot of kids made fun of him, refused to even touch or go near him, and one kid even left mean notes in his locker. Some of the parents got into it too. One mother edited August out of her child's class picture and sent the edited picture to some of the other moms. This made me feel angry and sad. It felt so unfair since August did nothing to deserve this.

Most people judged August from the outside. If they had bothered to look on the inside and actually get to know him, they would have found a wonderful new friend right away. He had all the qualities of a good friend. For example, he was very smart and did very well in school. He took a science elective at his new school that was supposed to be really hard to get into. He was funny. He made the people who did decide to be his friend laugh all the time. He also showed kindness. He helped his friend, Jack, with schoolwork. He even forgave the kids who were mean to him when they realized they wanted to be his friend.

Wonder helped to shape me by changing the way I look at people. It taught me that there is so much more to a person than just the way they look. I learned that the idea of judging a person based on the way they look is terribly wrong and can be very hurtful and unfair. I believe that true beauty actually comes from the heart. I realized how many more friends you'll make when you get to know people instead of dwelling on their looks. Instead of judging people based on their appearance, we should respect them and treat them equally.



Harry Potter Series

Allison Templeton*

2nd Place Grand Prize & Pennsylvania State Winner



Harry Potter was the “boy who lived.” Harry Potter opened my life to the world someone’s imagination can create. Harry Potter provided a doorway to being less lonely. Harry Potter “magically” transformed negative thoughts and stress into positive thoughts and relaxation. Harry Potter was the series that shaped me.

A small thought, the faintest trace of a character, can be transformed into a whole world of love, joy, sadness, laughter, loyalty, and loneliness. The Harry Potter series inspired me to open my eyes and write. I have started a notebook in which I can record story ideas. The part of the story I focus on the most are the characters. The way the Harry Potter characters were formed, each unique and larger than life, with such small details turning them into friends and enemies, heroes and villains, created a story that I am not likely to ever forget. Optimistic, quirky Luna Lovegood was especially endearing to me. The way she remains happy and true to herself even after losing her mother inspired me to anticipate the future, rather than wallow in the past. The handprint that each character left on my heart, showed me how one idea can change someone’s life.

In addition to inspiring me to use my imagination in a more creative way, the Harry Potter series also helped me feel less lonely. I started reading *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* in 4th grade. I had just been redistricted to a new school, and I was having a hard time making friends. Thanks to Harry Potter, I had something to talk to people about (because so many people read the books). It also provided a way for me to stay connected with an old friend. Without the same teachers, classes, or even friends in common any more, we turned to Harry Potter as a topic of conversation. We spent hours debating whether Professor Snape was good or evil. We laughed about Fred and George Weasley’s funny sayings. Being able to discuss our favorite characters, our emotions while reading and predictions about what would happen next helped hold our friendship together.

Another way the Harry Potter books shaped me is that reading the books was great stress relief. They provided an escape for me. I forgot all about grades, tests and friend problems. When I started reading, it was just Harry, Ron, and Hermione & I. I could relate what happened in the books to my own problems. For example, I had a teacher this year who, I thought, picked on me. I was often upset about how she singled me out for criticism, but it made me laugh to see the similarities between my relationship with her and Harry’s problems with Professors Snape and Umbridge. Also, in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. Harry’s 2 best friends, Ron & Hermione, were fighting and Harry was caught in the middle. It reminded me that even though it can be awkward to be caught between 2 friends, it’s normal and will work out.

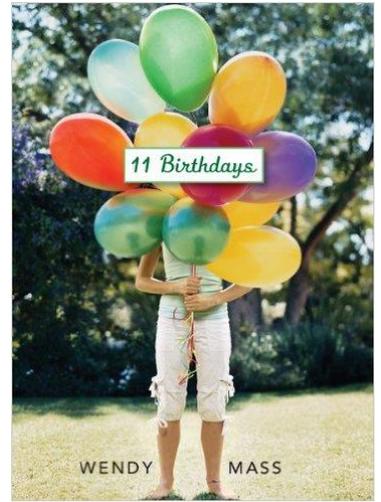
The real magic of the Harry Potter series is that it sparked a creative streak in me, created a hideout when I felt stressed and created an opportunity to make new friends. Harry Potter is “the series that shaped me.”

Eleven Birthdays

Kristina Trojak

Pennsylvania Finalist

For as long as I can remember friends and family have been handing me books to read. Some were great, some were good and others were ... well, not so good. But I read them all. Why? I read because I love being transported to different places like Narnia, or to a Quidditch World Cup or, even more simply, another school. I also love learning new information like your brain is 2% of your body weight. But my favorite times are when I find a book that inspires me in such a way that changes my whole outlook on life. *Eleven Birthdays* by Wendy Mass was just that type of book. I was like a block of clay before I read the book, and the book was two hands and they shaped me. I know, a bit dramatic sounding, but that is how I felt when I looked back at the end and realized how much I had changed. The book inspires me to be more courageous; it encouraged me to be more imaginative and adventurous; and, it helped me believe more than ever in magic.



Sometimes when I'm faced with something new, I get nervous. The main character of this book, Amanda, felt this way when she was scared to play the drums in front of other people. But when she imagined she was at home, she summoned up the courage to play her heart out on the drums. Also, the other main character, Leo, harnessed up the courage to read his poetry in front of a crowd. Those two moments inspired me to ask a group of my classmates to write letters to our Principal at school. I love animals and heard that our local animal shelters were in critical need of supplies. Together, we asked the Principal to permit us to do a fundraiser at the school. He said, "Yes!"

The book *Eleven Birthdays* also encourages me to be more imaginative and adventurous in so many ways. Amanda and Leo get into a fight and start reliving the same day over and over again. In this situation I learned more from the author than from her characters. What an interesting idea? What would you do if you were caught in the same day, every day? I haven't gotten to repeat any days yet but I realized that to ask the families at school to donate to our fundraiser, we needed to be imaginative. So when we made the posters and letters, we used lots of great photos of animals. Who can resist a cute picture of an adorable puppy? At least I hoped it would work. And like Amanda and Leo, I learned that you cannot start an idea without being prepared for an adventure. Many adventures followed for us including when our Principal let us make the announcement for the fundraiser on the loud speaker!

Lastly, it made me believe a lot more in magic! For instance, many times in *Eleven Birthdays*, Wendy Mass mentions magic connecting everyone together and a special magic that can help heal someone if they feel sick. I am not so sure about hocus pocus magic but certainly a magic is created when we positively believe in ourselves and that anything can be if we work hard enough together. Amanda and Leo forgave each other and became friends again. People (and animals) can even feel better if we work together to help them. This is a special kind of magic just like in the book and we are all able to do it. My whole school helped the animal shelter by bringing in food, blankets, toys and towels. In a way, we made our own magic. An empty box magically became filled with all these items. And an animal shelter that needed a little bit of help, found it. I am also thankful for the bit of magic our Principal, Mr. Mac Clay showed us. He never treated us like kids and always believed in us. He gave us the opportunity to fulfil our dream of helping the animals who really needed help. We are lucky to have him as a Principal.

When I finished *Eleven Birthdays*, I quickly read the remaining books in the series. Wendy Mass has a way of taking average nice girls who are not given every privilege in the world and making them develop into someone much better for having less. Her characters inspire me to be courageous, imaginative, and adventurous and to see the magic around us. More important, the book inspires me to do something more with those gifts. I am looking forward to my next project helping animals. And when I hit a stumbling block I will remember how the characters in *Eleven Birthdays* would have handled it and push through to find a solution. *Eleven Birthdays* really inspired me to do more to help animals. Who knew a bunch of papers with typed words could do so much!

Red Kayak

Julie Walsh

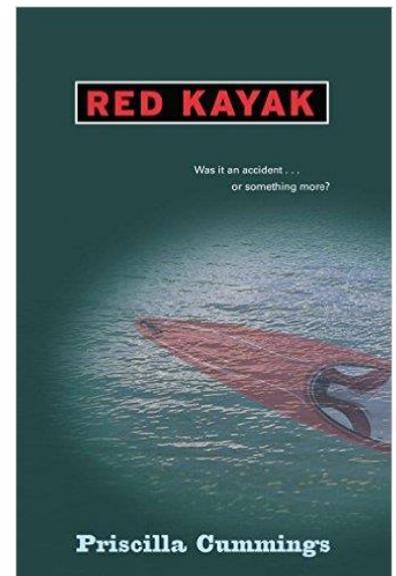
Maryland Finalist

No book has ever made me cry. Except one, the book that has shaped me. A story with heroes and victory, then heart break and loss. Books have the power to change you. Stories are like magic confined into pages. The book I'm talking about is none other than *Red Kayak* by Priscilla Cummings.

How do I explain? Well...There's a boy named Brady. One day Brady and his friends, J.T. and Digger, are standing at their bus stop when they see Mr. DiAngelo paddling on his red kayak in cold water. They all know that if he falls in he could easily die. No one says anything. They just go to school. During Spanish class Brady gets called to the office. His dad explains that a kayak has gone missing, but Mr. DiAngelo wasn't in it, it was Mrs. DiAngelo and their son, Ben, who Brady had baby-sat. Brady rushed home, got in his tiny boat, and, with his dog, he looked for Ben and Mrs. DiAngelo. It's a cold day, Brady is freezing, but all he can think about is Ben. Mrs. DiAngelo was found, but Ben is still missing. Tilly, Brady's dog, barks and points. Brady can't ignore her instincts. Ben is attached to a dock. Brady does CPR on him all the way to the medics. When they take Ben away one shouts, "We got a pulse!" Back home, everyone congratulates Brady. Until the next day. Brady's mom takes him out of school. "Ben died." She said. Brady can't believe it, Ben won't ever get a second chance. They go home but Brady only wants to find the kayak. Eventually, he does, but it's sunk. He doesn't tell his parents. When Mrs. Di Angelo gets out from the hospital, Brady does yardwork for her. One day he clears out their greenhouse and finds his dad's drill with red specks of paint on it. Brady decides to hide the drill, but tells his dad that he wanted to get an object out of the water. Long story short, they pull up the kayak and it has holes in it. Brady tells his dad the whole story including the part where Digger and J.T. were plotting to drill holes in the kayak. Brady then confronts the two and tells the police. J.T. and Digger go to court and plead guilty. Brady still partly blames himself for Ben's death. The theme of the story is to do the right thing, even if you're afraid. This is shown when Brady tells his dad about the red kayak, even though it killed inside him to rat out his friends. The theme was also showed when J.T. and Digger confessed, they did the right thing and they knew the consequences for 2nd degree murder.

This book affected me greatly. If I hadn't read this story I wouldn't appreciate a lot of things. One time my family and I hiked up a mountain. After an eternity of walking my stepmom said, "Ready for the fun part? But I'm deathly scared, so I'll be staying back." A huge cliff was revealed! I eagerly climbed and climbed. Finally, I reached the peak and tried to sit down. My footing was off and I almost fell thousands of feet, but my stepmom grabbed me. Usually I would just say thanks, because this kind of stuff always happened, but this book changed me. I will always be thankful for my second chance.

Books have the power to change you, it's no secret. I believe that every story changes you, somewhat. However, one book stood out to me. One book impacted me more than the rest. I definitely would recommend *Red Kayak* so we all can experience a new, better way of thinking. You should also read this because it's an amazing story! I would like to personally thank Priscilla Cummings for writing the amazing book *Red Kayak*.



The Mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg

Lauren R. Woods

Delaware Finalist

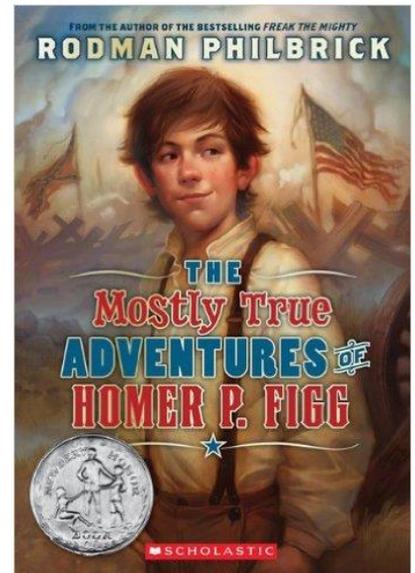
When I think of a book that shaped me, I think of *The Mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg*. This book intrigued and inspired me throughout the entire story. Homer, the main character of the book, overcame great challenges to save his older brother, Harold, who had been sold into the army illegally. His story was both compelling and motivating.

This book inspires me to be persistent when striving for my goals. Through some of the toughest times during the Civil War, Homer never lost hope of someday finding his brother Harold. Homer stowed away on a ship with no food or money just to get closer to his brother. He took risks and made sacrifices. Homer knew what he needed to do and was not giving up until he succeeded. I try to mimic Homer's commitment and strive to achieve my goals.

Creative thinking is a powerful and necessary tool when faced with new challenges. Homer always formulated an idea or plan to get himself out of some of the most difficult situations. Homer was able to outsmart two of the most dangerous bandits, Stink and Smelt, with planning, clever thinking, and perseverance. He later found a job in a traveling circus heading right toward the location of his brother on their planned route. Ultimately, he was able to achieve his goal and reach his brother. I utilize creative thinking every day in the classroom, on the softball field, and when working with my siblings. When faced with a unique situation, I have discovered that thinking outside of the box has had a positive impact on the outcome.

This book demonstrates that we are all capable of achieving great things. Homer was cared for by his older brother, Harold, for most of his life. When Harold left, Homer found his own courage and was able to stand up for himself. He showed an enormous amount of courage as he crossed a battlefield on a horse surrounded by strangers. He demonstrated the power of kindness and compassion when he gave up his possessions to help runaway slaves escape a gang of bandits. He tried to always do the right thing and acted from the principles his brother had taught him. Homer's adventures helped him realize that he could accomplish great things on his own if he kept his mind to it.

The Mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg provides important life lessons for any age. It demonstrates persistence, creativity, and above all triumph over adversity. It is a model and inspiration to shape both children and adults on the principles we should all strive to achieve. I know it shaped me.



Never Ever Give Up: The Inspiring Story of Jessie and her JoyJars

Savannah Wright

Washington, DC Finalist

“Your child has cancer. She has twelve to eighteen months.” Those might be the worst words that can ever be said to a parent. Yet they are told to over forty parents each day. They were told to Stacey and Erik Rees. They were the parents of Jessica Joy Rees, who was diagnosed with inoperable brain cancer on March 3, 2011. But although Jessie’s parents were told she had twelve to eighteen months to live, Jessie earned her wings and joined Jesus after only ten months. After her passing, her father wrote a book about Jessie’s fight.

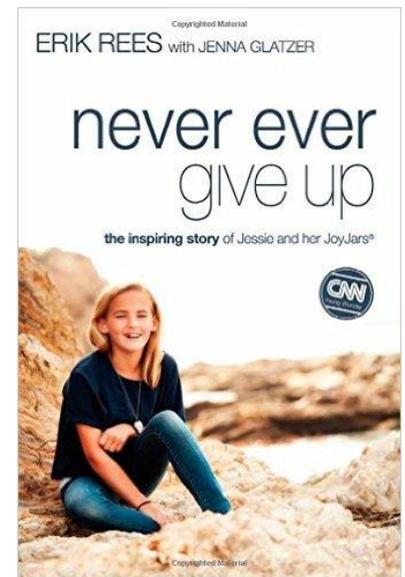
The book has changed the way I think of things in many ways.

It is about a courageous girl, named Jessica Joy Rees who got an inoperable brain tumor at age 11. The cancer that Jessie had was called diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma, or DIPG. One day, while her dad was driving her home from getting her radiation mask, he was telling her about how some children with cancer never get to go home. Then she asked the question that changed everything. “How can we help them?” Those words were the beginning of an international movement called NEGU (NAY- goo). Never Ever Give Up. When Jessie got home from the hospital, she took toys and put them in paper bags for kids with cancer. When her parents saw what she was doing, they thought it was a great idea and wanted to help. The next day when Jessie went to Children’s Hospital of Orange County, she brought the paper bags with her. The doctors at the hospital thought it was a great idea, but asked that they replace the paper bags with plastic jars. She kept doing this, and soon found a name for the jars: JoyJars. They were jars stuffed with joy. In Jessie’s ten months of battling cancer, she stuffed and sent more than 3,000 JoyJars to children’s hospitals.

This book has had an impact on my life because it is so amazing that an 11 year old girl could be going through so much herself, but still be able to think of others. On January 5, 2012, Jessie went to heaven. Now, the Jessie Rees Foundation makes and distributes JoyJars all over the world: to seventeen countries, all fifty states, and over one hundred seventy five Ronald McDonald houses. Jessie’s wish is that every child diagnosed with cancer receives a JoyJar. That’s something to be amazed about.

Jessie’s wish is slowly coming closer and closer to true each day. Her story is shared with many people every day, and even more JoyJars are distributed every day.

As I walk around each day, I think about how amazingly brave Jessie was, and how lucky I am to not have to go through what Jessie did. I also think about how she was still only twelve: two years older than myself, yet she helped kids all over the world keep hope. The book was how I found out about Jessie, and I now often think about how she inspired so many.



“A Book That Shaped Me” Summer Writing Contest Awards Ceremony

Welcome

John Y. Cole, Jr., Center for the Book, Library of Congress

Letters About Literature

Gabriel Ferris, Level 2 National Prize Winner
Walter Isaacson, author of *Steve Jobs*

Presentation of State Finalists & State Winners

Fred Bowen, The Washington Post KidsPost Sportswriter
Lola Pyne, Office of Communications, Library of Congress
Bryonna Head, Library Services, Library of Congress

Presentation of Grand Prize Winners

1st Place Grand Prize & Virginia State Winner
Alexia De Costa
Arlington Public Library
who wrote about *Rules* by Cynthia Lord

2nd Place Grand Prize & Pennsylvania State Winner
Allison Templeton
Bucks County Free Library
who wrote about the *Harry Potter Series* by J.K. Rowling

3rd Place Grand Prize & Maryland State Winner
Naria H. Lemma
Enoch Pratt Free Library
who wrote about *Homesick* by Jean Fritz

