



A
BOOK
THAT SHAPED ME


LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

NATIONAL
BOOK FESTIVAL

2013

WWW.LOC.GOV/BOOKFEST/KIDS-TEACHERS/BOOKSTHATSHAPE/



"A Book That Shaped Me"

The Library of Congress National Book Festival Summer Writing Contest

2013 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 National Book Festival in September on the National Mall.

In this, the second 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 2013 "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

Sofie Dalton

"The Penderwicks" by Jeanne Birdsall
Arlington Public Library

Maryland State Winner

Gavriel Eagle

"The Mozart Season" by Virginia Euwer
Enoch Pratt Free Library

2nd Place Grand Prize & Washington, DC Winner

Jessica Holloway

"Jefferson's Sons" by Kimberly Bruback Bradley
DC Public Library-Juanita E. Thornton/Shepherd Park
Library

Pennsylvania State Winner

Victoria Sullivan

"Electric Dreams" by Caroline Kettlewell
Abington Township Public Library-Abington Free Library

3rd Place Grand Prize & Delaware State Winner

Julian Jackson, II

"The Breadwinner" by Deborah Ellis
Brandywine Hundred Library

West Virginia State Winner

Shelby Rayne Freeman

"Ten Rules for Living with My Sister" by Ann M. Martin
South Charleston Public Library

State Finalists (winners indicated by asterisks)

Name	Library	Book Title	Author
Washington, DC			
Anu Hansa Desai	DC Public Library – Palisades Library	<i>Flotsam</i>	David Wiesner
Grace Dodd	DC Public Library – Southeast Library	<i>Wonder</i>	R. J. Palacio
Jessica Holloway *	DC Public Library -Juanita E. Thornton/Shepherd Park Library	<i>Jefferson’s Sons</i>	Kimberly Bruback Bradley
Eleanor Holt	DC Public Library – Southwest Library	<i>Out of My Mind</i>	Sharon M. Draper
TaKayla Keyes	DC Public Library – Capitol View Library	<i>My Teacher is an Alien</i>	Bruce Collier
Maryland			
Naomi Barnett	Prince George's County Memorial Library System-Upper Marlboro	<i>Lucy Finds Her Way</i>	Nancy Rue
Gavriel Eagle *	Enoch Pratt Free Library	<i>The Mozart Season</i>	Virginia Euwer Wolff
Madison Mohan	Enoch Pratt Free Library	<i>The Phantom Tollbooth</i>	Norton Juster
Isaiah Olujide	Prince George's County Memorial Library System-Upper Marlboro	<i>The Book of Daniel, The Bible</i>	Daniel
Catherine Jing Troiano	Prince George's County Memorial Library System-Upper Marlboro	<i>You Are Special</i>	Max Lucado
Virginia			
Sofie Dalton *	Arlington Public Library	<i>The Penderwicks</i>	Jeanne Birdsall
Gabriella N. Handford	Fauquier County Public Library	<i>Out of My Mind</i>	Sharon M. Draper
George Layton	Prince William Public Library System – Nokesville Neighborhood Library	<i>Hoot</i>	Carl Hiaasen
Abigail Spigarelli	Arlington Public Library	<i>Katerina’s Wish</i>	Jeannie Mobley
Elizabeth Sullivan	Prince William Public Library System-Bull Run Regional Library	<i>Island of the Blue Dolphins</i>	Scott O’Dell
Delaware			
Sarah Gessner	Brandywine Hundred Library	<i>Twilight</i>	Stephanie Meyer
Julian Jackson, II *	Brandywine Hundred Library	<i>The Breadwinner</i>	Deborah Ellis
Rebekkah Kehoe	Brandywine Hundred Library	<i>Pollyanna</i>	Eleanor H. Porter
Ryan A. McCrea	Dover Public Library	<i>A Warrior’s Heart</i>	Eric Greitens
Nicole Ng	Brandywine Hundred Library	<i>Smile</i>	Raina Telgemeier
Pennsylvania			
Clara B. Allem	Chester County Library System – Chester County Library	<i>Kisses from Katie</i>	Katie Davis
Tom Broadhurst	Parkland Community Library	<i>Horrible Histories Series</i>	Terry Deary
Jaime Elizabeth Daniels	York County Libraries – Red Land Community Library	<i>The Titan’s Curse</i>	Rick Riordan
Mallika D. Pal	Bethlehem Area Public Library	<i>Wonder</i>	R. J. Palacio
Victoria Sullivan *	Abington Township Public Library – Abington Free Library	<i>Electric Dreams</i>	Caroline Kettlewell
West Virginia			
Shelby Rayne Freeman *	South Charleston Public Library	<i>The Rules for Living with My Sister</i>	Ann M. Martin
Cheyene Hitchcock	Martinsburg-Berkeley County Public Library	<i>I Am Intelligent</i>	Peyton Goddard & Dianne Goddard
Addie Hughes	Martinsburg-Berkeley County Public Library	<i>Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire</i>	J. K. Rowling
Finnian Mungovan	Martinsburg-Berkeley County Public Library	<i>The Lightning Thief</i>	Rick Riordan
Justin Roberts	Roane County Library	<i>The Book of Job, The Bible</i>	Job

Kisses from Katie

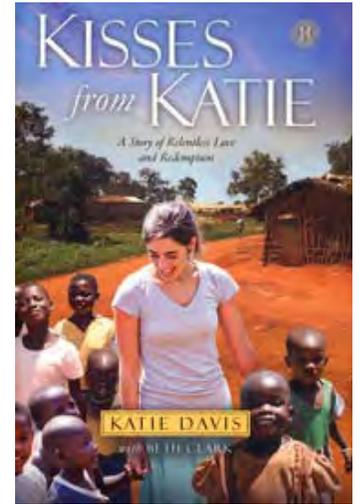
By Clara Allem

Pennsylvania Finalist

Dear Gianna,

I loved getting your letter last week. I miss you so much and wish we could sit down for a long talk. I would tell you about this amazing book that I read recently. The story of Katie Davis and her love for God and the people of Uganda has been life-changing for me. Since we can't get together any time soon, I will just write to you about what I've learned from reading this book.

Kisses From Katie is a biography of a young Christian lady who goes to Uganda to visit. During her time there, she falls in love with the people of Uganda, especially the children. She ends up moving there permanently and starting a life in this strange continent. Katie eventually adopts fourteen little girls who are the world to her. Her life isn't easy, but she relies on God's help every step of the way.



As I read about all these little girls being adopted, it amazed me to think that Katie gave up everything she had in America for them. But her perspective challenged me to think differently about the "stuff" that we would have to give up to go somewhere like she did. She says, "I loved my new life. It was wonderful in so many ways, but I would be lying if I said I didn't miss the comforts and the people of my old one desperately...But I wanted other things more...I wanted to feel needed, important, and used by the Lord. I wanted to make some kind of difference no matter how small. I wanted to follow the calling God had placed in my heart."

All this makes me realize that living in "rich" America with all the comforts and possessions isn't what makes me happy. It's the people! The people in my life that I love and care for. Each of us needs to find out what God's purpose is for us and then live that out. Can you imagine at nineteen adopting fourteen girls without your mother or father to help? That would be crazy!

The people in the village love Katie because she cares for them and spends her money to help the sick and hungry. She gives me the example to love and care for others even if I'm tired or worn out. When she was exhausted and the need seemed too great she wrote this: "I believe that God totally, absolutely, intentionally gives us more than we can handle. Because this is when we surrender to Him and He takes over, proving Himself by doing the impossible in our lives."

Katie gives me the example that I shouldn't hoard my money; I should help the needy. A lot of people in America think that they need money for new toys and snacks that are bad for them in the first place. While children in other countries are starving and working hard for even a morsel of food, people here are eating the latest snack. Katie has taught me that I should care about how others are suffering instead of focusing on just filling my belly.

Even though people think Katie is out of her mind for leaving everything and giving her life for these people, she still does what God wants her to do. She trusts God with her life, and I hope to do the same with mine.

I know that I can make a difference in the future if I try. I hope that I can help others as Katie is helping. People need food and water on a daily basis but most of all they need Jesus. I want to help all of those precious children and their families as Katie is doing.

Katie is my inspiration and now I know what I want to do when I grow up. I'm sending you a copy of the book. I hope you like it as much as I did.

Love you so much,
Clara Allem

Lucy Finds Her Way

By Naomi Barnett

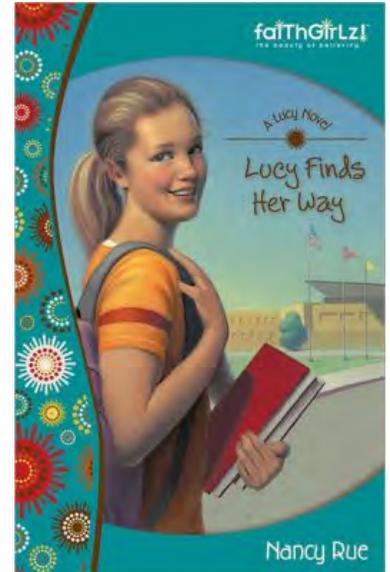
Maryland Finalist

A book that shaped me is *Lucy Finds Her Way*. This book is the fourth book of the *Lucy* series by Nancy Rue. All of the *Lucy* books have shaped me. It was hard to choose just one, but I finally did. Lucy is 11 years old, like me. The *Lucy* series is about Lucy growing up without a mother and God helping her along the way.

In *Lucy Finds Her Way*, Lucy is going to middle school. In the third book (*Lucy's 'Perfect' Summer*), Lucy's dad had to go to a blind school to learn how to do his job without someone else helping him. Aunt Karen was taking care of Lucy while her dad was gone. Lucy is not very fond of Aunt Karen. In *Lucy Finds Her Way*, Lucy has to deal with her best friend being bullied, the "queen bees" hating her, and playing the most popular kids in a soccer game.

This book is very meaningful to me because I am going to the sixth grade like Lucy. This book made me have a different view about middle school. It made me not afraid to show my individuality. Lucy is different from most girls because she doesn't like the color pink, going to the mall, and talking about boys. She'd rather play soccer any day. When every other girl in the school had a shoulder strap backpack, Lucy kept her regular backpack. Lucy doesn't care what other people think about her. When she was voted "class weirdo," she didn't change anything she did.

Lucy teaches girls like me to not be insecure. I'm short for my age. If people tease me in middle school, I won't let it get to me. I'll be like Lucy. Instead of just ignoring the people, I'll give clever remarks like: "I'm not small—I'm fun sized!" Lucy impacted my life for the better. She taught me many things that will help me in middle school. Lucy's lessons will stay with me forever.



Horrible Histories, Horrible Science, Horrible Geography, Murderous Math and The Knowledge By Tom Broadhurst

Pennsylvania Finalist

It wasn't one book that shaped me, it was a group of series that all had the same idea. The series were *Horrible Histories*, *Horrible Science*, *Horrible Geography*, *Murderous Math* and *The Knowledge*. All together there are more than 150 books. When I first started reading, I hated it. I really hated it, until my best friend showed me a book called *Stars, Planets and Slimy Aliens*. I was from the series *Horrible Science* and I loved it. It was not only packed with information, it was really really funny. They are not only words though; they have a lot of funny pictures that go with the words.



Now 4 years later, I spend most of my free time reading, and $\frac{3}{4}$ of that is *Horrible Histories*, *Horrible Science*, *Horrible Geography*, *Murderous Math* or *The Knowledge*. The *Horrible Histories* are mainly based in Europe, though I should tell you, and the only bad one I have read was actually about the U.S.

From the book *Vicious Circles and Other Savage Shapes*, I learned all about circles, how to calculate the diameter from the radius, the circumference and even the area as well as how to calculate any of those from any other of those. The only problem was that when we learned them in class 1½ years later, I was rather bored.

From the book *Woeful Second World War*, I learned (not surprisingly) all about WWII. Then when we took a trip to Paris, we took a train down to Normandy to see the D-Day beaches. And when our guide asked me questions I was able to answer them better than he expected. And because I already knew something about the war I was able to get a lot more out of it.

I am a bit ahead in school so those books give me a chance to keep learning even when my classes have some things I already know. I am even able to help my teacher sometimes because I know a lot of facts. Also the books have really increased my vocabulary. I sometimes see a word I don't know and I will ask someone about it and then I know a new word.

When I first walked into the Parkland Library I asked about *Horrible Histories* books and they didn't have any so I was kind of disappointed. They also didn't have any at the Bethlehem public library or the Allentown public library so when I saw the poster for the essay contest, I thought that it would be very helpful to people who had just learned to read, if they had access to books like these to encourage them to like reading a lot more.

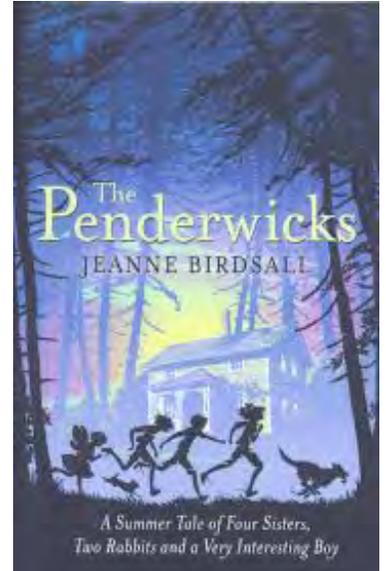
The Penderwicks

By Sofie Dalton

1st Place Grand Prize & Virginia State Winner

Out of the hundreds of books I've read, there have been books that kept me glued to my seat, books that I take out to dinner and books that lull me to sleep. However one book, that I've read at least ten times, brought me more joy and laughter than any other book. This book showed me that characters can come to life and become like our friends. This book is *The Penderwicks* by Jeanne Birdsall, and it inspired me to become a writer.

The first time my eyes made contact with the words of this book was when I was six years old. Together, my mother and I took turns gobbling up the words. I laughed and laughed until I could laugh no more. The book had such great characters especially Jane Penderwick, the third of four sisters, who loved to read and write and thought imagination was one of the world's greatest treasures. In the book, Jane is in the process of writing her own novel and gets inspiration from previous books she has read, just like me. It seemed like she would be a great friend in real life. I realized that characters in books could become people that we really get to know and care about.



After reading the book together, my mom read to me a bit about the author. Jeanne Birdsall knew that she wanted to become a writer when she was eight years old. Then it hit me that was what I wanted to do when I grew up! I was going to make people laugh and become friends with the characters in my books.

The Penderwicks really made an impact on my life. It taught me that imagination and adventure didn't have to involve dragons or wizards. An adventure book just needs a story with twists and turns and a little bit of humor. This book has tons of humor like when the Penderwick girls and Jeffery, the boy next door, chase their dog and a rabbit through Jeffery's snooty mother's garden ending up in trampled mess! I really want to bring the comedy of *The Penderwicks* into my own writing. I honestly think this book made me a better writer as well as reader. It gave me a brand new perspective on how to make people enjoy a story!

I wonder how Jeanne Birdsall figured out that she wanted to be a writer, maybe it was from another book just like *The Penderwicks*. I hope she knows someday that she inspired a little girl from Arlington Virginia to start writing. *The Penderwicks* changed my life because it was the first thing that gave me my passion. I will never stop writing, and I owe most of it to one phenomenal book and its equally phenomenal author, Jeanne Birdsall.

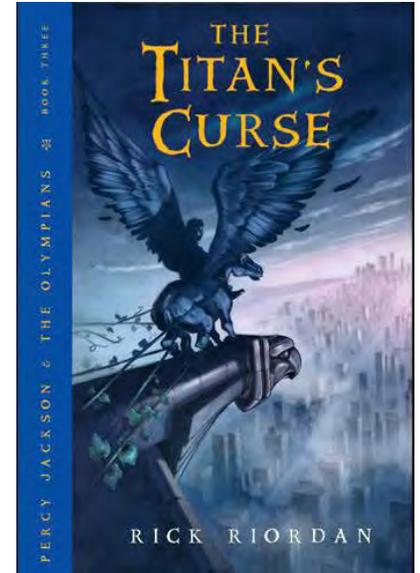
The Titan's Curse

“Or A Curse That Became a Blessing” by Jaime Daniels

Pennsylvania Finalist

This essay proved to be a challenge for me. I like to read, and I have read a lot of books. Most of them are fun, but I can't honestly say that they "shaped me." However, that recently changed when I read *The Titan's Curse* by Rick Riordan.

In the book, the main character, Percy Jackson, showed true friendship to his friend, Annabeth. Annabeth was missing, and Percy decided to go on a quest to find her, even though he was told not to. He could end up getting kicked out of camp because of it. When you are willing to give up something that's important to you for the sake of someone else, and show them that you care about them, that is true friendship. Percy's choice helped to shape a decision I had to make. I needed to choose which class to take next year: an advanced class, without my friend, or a standard class, with my friend. All of the rest of our group had been accepted into the advanced class along with me, but Courtney didn't make it. She felt really bad about herself. I chose to take the standard class to be with my friend, and to care more about her feelings than mine. It made both of us feel good, and I am happy with my choice.



Another way *The Titan's Curse* shaped me was when, at one point in the book, Percy called his mom to talk to her about his problems and to keep her informed about what was happening. He knew that he could count on her, even if she wasn't close. That helped me to see how important it is to always keep in touch with the people I know. My family recently moved from Arizona to Pennsylvania, and almost all of our family is back in Phoenix. Percy's choice to reach out to his mom with his problems showed me that I need to remember that I have been blessed with many people I can count on, even with the toughest of problems, even if they are far away.

Probably the biggest way I have been shaped by this book has to do with helping those around me. Towards the end of the book the goddess, Artemis, another of Percy's friends, was holding up the sky. Percy volunteered to hold up the sky for her so that she could fight the evil Titan, Atlas. That was a tough choice to make, because he knew he could have been crushed by the weight of the sky, but he still volunteered to do it for her. When your friends and family need help you should always be by their side to give them a hand. When my siblings are struggling with their homework or just need help, I volunteer to help them. When they, or other friends, are having a hard time at school or at home, I try to encourage them. We all need each other, and it's important to let your loved ones know that they are not alone.

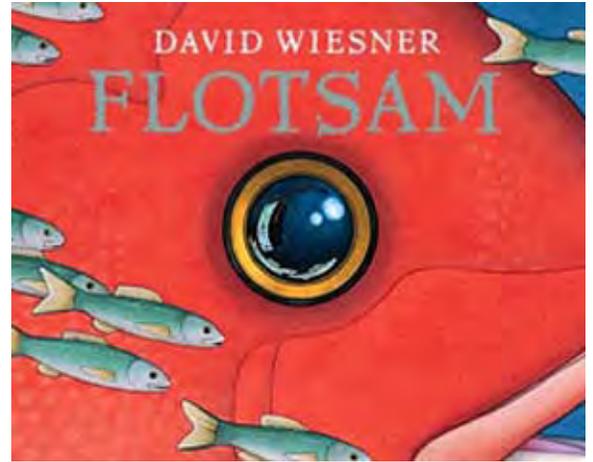
The Titan's Curse helped to shape my decisions, the way I interact with the people I care about, and how I behave toward them. I feel that I am a better person since reading this book. I hope that these things I have learned will stay with me as I get older and allow me to become a generous, compassionate person.

Flotsam

By Anu Desai

Washington, DC Finalist

I chose a book called *Flotsam* by David Wiesner for a Book that Shaped Me contest. The three main elements this book shaped me were observation, visualization and appreciation for imagination. The plot of the book is that a boy on a beach finds an underwater camera filled with splendid images from its journey through the sea. But more importantly, the boy finds a tradition that has been continued throughout the camera's many discoverers and he becomes part of the tradition. Here, I share with you how each of the story elements shaped me.



The first element I want to share here is observation. If you miss observing one detail in a scene of this book you miss most of the story. For example, there is a school of red fish in one of the scenes. If you don't observe the scene carefully, you may miss the one fish in the back of the school that is a robot. The book has no words so I noticed every detail in the big picture. This detail includes the red fish's neck and back fins which have hinges and gears fitted in between the scales. This particular skill shaped me because observation of surroundings is very important if you're a writer.

The second element in this book that shaped me is visualization. Told in stunning illustrations, this book taught me how a single image can show so much. For example, in one scene there was a huge whale's eye with the camera floating next to it, the camera no more than a speck. The eye conveyed so much power, yet in its depths you could see curiosity beading up there. Another example of visualization is in another scene where the main character was holding a hermit crab. In the face of the crab fear, confusion, and surprise were displayed clearly like a human face would have shown it. This particular skill shaped me because visualization is very important for the fantasy tales I like to write.

The last element of this book that shaped me is appreciation for imagination. For example, if I didn't appreciate imagination I wouldn't have understood why in one of the scenes there was a family of octopi, one who was sitting in an armchair and reading. In another scene, I wouldn't have understood why a small town was resting on a starfish's back. This particular skill shapes me here because it taught me appreciating imagination around you makes the world a more interesting place.

This book affects my writing because it taught me how to put more detail into my paragraphs. It also taught me how to make my writing more imaginative. Finally, it affected my writing since I learned to be more visual by painting a picture with my words.

Wonder

By Gracie Dodd

Washington, DC Finalist

What does it mean to have a normal life? Does anyone in the world have a normal life? Probably not. Because everyone has a disability. Can anyone even define normal? Does anyone even know what it feels like to be normal, I wonder. Compared to others, some people live very normal lives. But are their lives really normal? To them, they probably are not. I have life-threatening food allergies and have had severe reactions too numerous to count. I don't even have to eat the foods to which I am allergic, such as fish, shellfish, tropical fruit, sesame, eggs, and soy. And for nuts and peanuts and tree nuts, all I have to do is smell them on someone's breath and I could have a deadly reaction in minutes. I understand that I was given my share in life, and I should respect that and not try to keep fighting for a normal life - one where I won't have to always carry shots around, take Benedryl like it is another food group, and where I won't be recognized only as the girl who could die from her allergies.

Auggie Pullman, in R.J. Palacio's *Wonder*, dealt with the same thing. Because of his facial deformity, he went about trying to live a normal life. That is what I thought was the right thing to do. So did Auggie. We both had a life that we tried to change - a life where we were only recognized as the kid with the weird problem. But can you really go about living a life that isn't yours? Could I actually have fun, and be myself, in a life that wasn't the one that I was meant to lead? A life that wasn't mine? No. I couldn't. Auggie learned that, and he taught me that I should embrace the life that I was given.

When I read *Wonder*, I learned that I should accept my allergies and not try to fight them or hide them. *Wonder* helped me accept the fact that I am who I am and should be proud of it. The book helped me realize that I am not defined by my allergies. Auggie taught me to flick the insults aside; and while I must be vigilant against a reaction, I cannot live in constant fear.

I should not fight the current, but let it carry me. In *Wonder* it says, "Your deeds are your monuments." I know that my deeds will be the things that I am remembered for, my monuments, if I accept the life that I have been given. In *Wonder* it also says, "To thine own self be true." Am I being true to myself if I let my allergies get in the way of my life? Should the prospect of possible death stop me from doing what I want to do? And at the end of *Wonder* Auggie says, "Everyone in the world should get a standing ovation at least once in their life because we all overcometh the world." That is what Auggie has taught me. No matter what happens, live your life like it is worth the world because we all overcometh the world.



The Mozart Season

“Mozart, Allegra and Me” by Gavriel Eagle

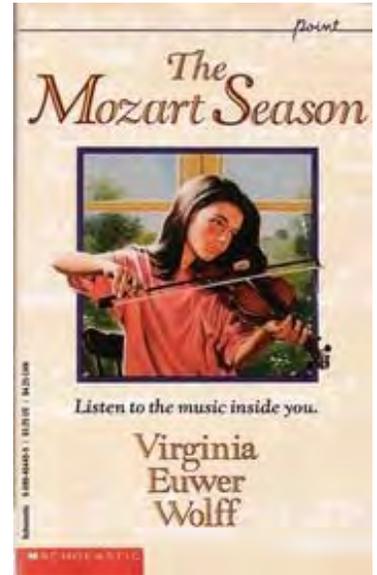
Maryland State Winner

The Mozart Season is a book that shaped my life in several different ways, especially because I too play an instrument, the cello. This novel inspired and still continues to inspire me to reach loftier heights in my music playing, and Allegra Shapiro's "I already practiced 2 hours before breakfast" attitude is one that I can call my own.

Something that caught my attention in the book was a scene from Allegra's performance of Mozart's 4th Concerto for violin. While she is playing the 2nd movement, which has a gentle quality, Allegra thinks about her great grandmother. She imagines her Alte Bubby Leah, in a white nightgown, climbing into bed by candlelight. The idea of connecting a story to the music is something I try to incorporate into my own playing.

Another anecdote told in the story, which Allegra shares with her mother's friend Deidre, relates a childhood memory. In it, Allegra remembers thinking, when she was a very little girl, that music was contained in the body of an instrument and when a person played the instrument, music came forth. Upon hearing this Deidre remarks, "You can still think that; it's as it should be." I thought that was intriguing.

This book by Virginia Euwer Wolff changed my day-to-day lifestyle and I now take the cello more seriously than I previously did. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge a valuable life lesson expressed in the final pages of this novel, which is (Spoiler Alert!) that Allegra does not win first or even the alternate spot in the competition, but she still feels that she is happy with and gained something from the whole experience.



Ten Rules for Living with My Sister

By Shelby Rayne Freeman

West Virginia State Winner

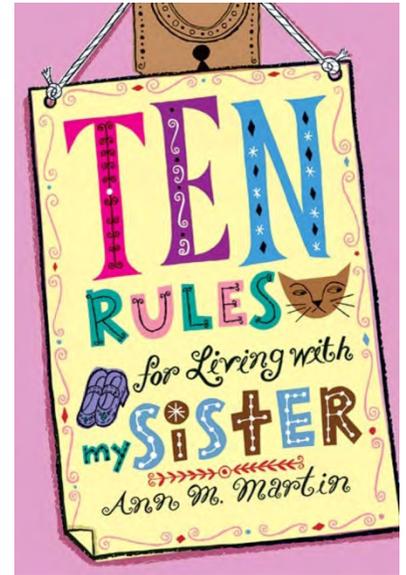
A book that shaped me is *Ten Rules for Living with My Sister*, by Ann M. Martin. I can relate to the main character, Pearl. Pearl opened my eyes and helped me learn how to enjoy each minute of my life, she taught me that I need to work with my little brother as a team, and my circle of friends is greater than it appears.

First, Pearl taught me, good or bad I can enjoy every event of my life. In Pearl's case her Grandma dies, and her Grandpa is moving into the "towers", a home for the elderly. As time advances she learns to enjoy spending every second she gets with her Grandpa, and life. Before I read this book, I too lost my Grandma, Juanita, and while reading this book I lost my Grandpa, Willie. My mind wanders back to the events with each of my grandparents and members of my family.

Second, guided by the title of this book, I learned to work with my little brother, Mannix, as a team. After about 20 sinister pranks on her sister, Lexie, Pearl realizes life is better when she copes with Lexie. Once realizing this, Pearl sets up ten rules to be better with her sister. With seeing this, I decided to follow suit and make a set of rules between me and my brother. It makes living with Mannix a little easier. He is only four years old, but he is getting the hang of it, listening to me and all.

In the beginning of the book, Pearl feels she had no friends. Her "best friend", was a first grader, Justine, but she moves away and Pearl can only see her every once in a while. Pearl is forced to find a friend, which she does, his name is J.B. the III, and he is fifth grader. As time advances Pearl learns how easy it is to make new friends. Encouraged by Pearl's strength, I decided to try and expand my circle of friends. It worked! I am now more outgoing and find it easier to have more than one friend.

In conclusion, *Ten Rules for Living with My Sister* helped shape me. After reading this book, I am confident that I am a better granddaughter, big sister, and friend. The events in this book will encourage me for years to come.



Twilight

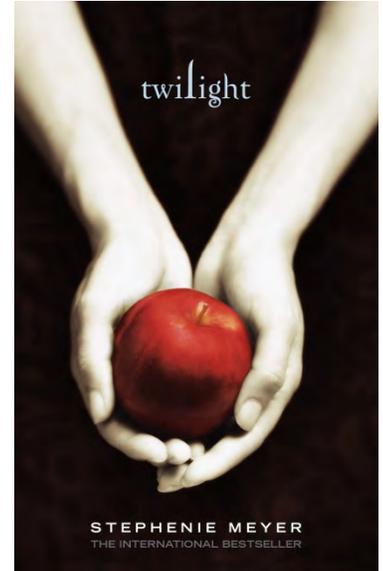
By Sarah Gessner

Delaware Finalist

I read *Twilight* by Stephanie Meyers for the first time this summer. *Twilight* made me feel like changing the way I see myself and the world. In the book vampires were different from humans. There are kids who feel different every day. They go to school and do normal kid activities like sports and homework. Every day these kids feel different even though they don't look different. Inside they feel different. This is just like the vampires in *Twilight*. Nobody else knows that they feel different on the inside.

In the book *Twilight*, all vampires are different from humans and they did things to keep themselves looking normal. For example, on sunny days they skipped school because the sun would expose their difference. Their skin would sparkle in the sunlight making them different from the other kids. The vampires also always got good grades because they never slept and studied all night. They could not let other people know this about them because it made them different. The vampires knew they were different from humans and some had special gifts. Bella's special gift was being a shield and Edward had a special gift for reading people's minds, except he could not read Bella's mind.

I always feel different from everyone else everyday. I can not explain it. I sometimes feel that I am not very smart. I have always loved to read. I read a lot. Reading helps calm my brain and it helps me focus. When I read I have a good memory. After reading *Twilight* I realized that being different isn't bad if you have a special gift. I never thought of reading as my special gift. Instead of looking at being different as a bad thing, look for a special gift. Without *Twilight* I would keep feeling like I wasn't special and invisible.



Out of My Mind

“Silenced” by Gabby Handford

Virginia Finalist

“Melody, if you had to choose, which would you rather be able to do—walk or talk?” asked Mrs. V., Melody’s neighbor. Mrs. V. asked Melody this question by standing over the girl with two blue 3x5 index cards, labeled *walk* and *talk*, begging her to point to her preference.

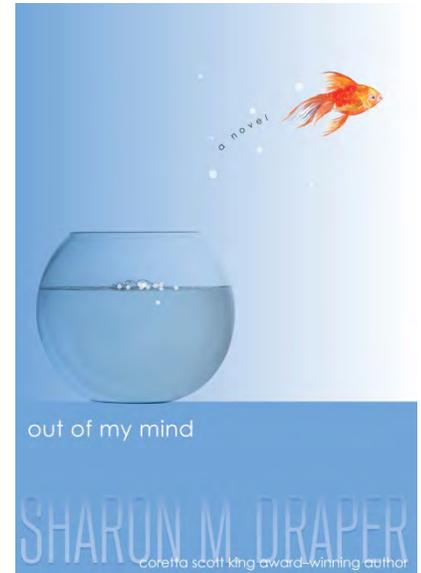
If Melody could, she would have screamed, “talk.” But because she was silenced by her disease, Cerebral Palsy—a condition that prevented her from walking, talking, or doing things independently—Melody was unable to answer. Melody learned to accept her challenges. I admire her for this, because I do not think I could. After reading *Out of My Mind*, by Sharon Draper, I realized that the everyday things I do, such as chatter, run, or write, are blessings. I know I take them for granted.

This book shaped me because it proved that appearance—the outer shell of a person—has nothing to do with how smart they are. The author explained this by making Melody, the 10-year-old protagonist, a genius by giving her the gift of synesthesia, the ability to see color as music plays. As Melody explained, “Mom loves classical. Big, booming Beethoven symphonies blast from her CD player all day long. Those pieces always seem to be bright blue when I listen, and they smell like fresh paint.” When Melody described this so vividly, it showed that even though she couldn’t do things that others could, she still had special gifts too.

Out of My Mind proved how hard it is for people to understand each other. Of Melody’s teachers, only two understood her: Mrs. Tracey, Melody’s second grade teacher, and Mrs. Shannon, from fifth grade. Mrs. Tracy figured out that Melody liked books, and she went out of her way to give her audio books to listen to. She even figured out that Melody wanted something harder than Dr. Seuss, after Melody threw them on the ground. Mrs. Shannon started the school’s “inclusion classes,” which gave Melody a chance to interact with average kids. These two teachers opened doors for Melody that would have otherwise stayed locked.

In my opinion, I think it is very important to have an understanding fifth grade teacher because children begin to deal with more mature issues. My fifth grade teacher inspired me to move forward and to forget the past, as Mrs. Shannon encouraged Melody to do.

Melody described her life as “living in a cage with no key and no door.” No matter how hard she tried to communicate, she could not say a single word, or speak a sentence. She also couldn’t move very well, and when she fell, the novel quoted that she was “stuck like a turtle on its shell.” One time when Melody felt “stuck” in need of words, was the summer before fifth grade. All she wanted was a Big Mac and vanilla shake from the McDonalds drive-thru, yet her father couldn’t understand her. This scene stuck with me because I’m always able to say what I want. Melody could not, and I never thought how hard life would be without being able to explain what I needed.



I am Intelligent

By Cheyene Hitchcock

West Virginia Finalist

The book that I read is called *I am Intelligent* by Peyton and Dianne Goddard. It is about Peyton's life as an autistic girl. Peyton's inability to communicate verbally or control her body led to continued misdiagnoses and separation from education and society. Throughout the book, her mother Dianne also talks about the challenges that Autism brings to her family. Peyton was diagnosed with Mental Retardation, Movement Disorders, Anxiety Disorders, Autism, ADHD, Epileptic Aphasia, Bipolar Disorder, as well as a few other things. By the time Peyton was 21 years old, she had received all the comprehensive evaluation possible and way too many medications had been given. Her behavior only got worse. Peyton was hopeless to everyone except her parents. At the age of 22, Peyton finally gets the chance to express her intelligence. A new form of communication was introduced to her: Facilitated Communication. People who have trouble communicating through speech use this. It is used by a trained person holding their wrist and they type what they want to say. She types "I am intelligent" a life changing sentence. With this method, Peyton is finally able to free her understanding and thoughts. She is also able to remove that label that society had on her as a hopeless mental retard.

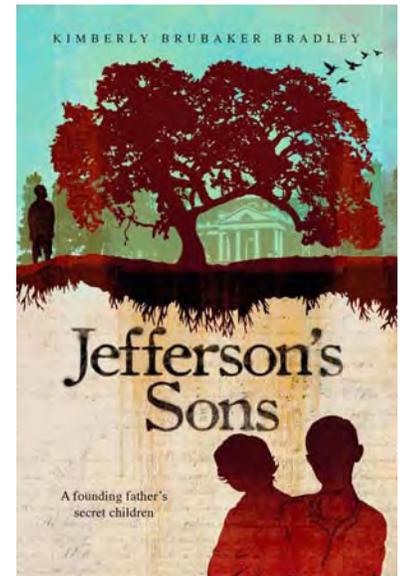


Autism has always had an impact on my life, but after I read this book it encouraged me to want to work with autistic kids and give them more of a chance. Last year in school my teacher's daughter was autistic. I helped to keep an eye on her and play with her EVERYDAY. One day the sensory room at school did not have a substitute so my teacher, Mrs. Parks, volunteered. When she was on her way to the sensory room I asked her if, during recess and our game time that we earned, may we come with you and help you with the kids instead of playing? I was so excited when she said yes! Later that day while my friend, my teacher, one of the kids, and I were sitting in the room listening to songs about money the little boy said "enny" for "penny" we were all so happy. This was the best day of my life for sure. On the last day of school we went to go see him, we took him outside to play and got our picture with him. My friend and I also donated \$30 the autism program. I will never forget him! This book and that experience changed my life! I now feel different about autism. I want to help them succeed in life.

Jefferson's Sons "Secret Sons" by Jessica Holloway

2nd Place Grand Prize and Washington, DC Winner

The book *Jefferson's Sons* by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley is about the life of Beverly, Harriet, Maddy and Eston Hemings. They are the children of a slave named Sally Hemings and Thomas Jefferson. The book follows the life of slaves that live on Thomas Jefferson's plantation called Monticello. Beverly and Maddy narrate most of the book. They tell the story of what life was like on the plantation. They share stories about the lives of the slaves, guests to the plantation, things that happen in the great house and at the blacksmith shop, and lessons that their mother teaches them.



Many of the slaves living at Monticello knew that Beverly, Harriet, Maddy, and Eston were Thomas Jefferson's children. Some of the slaves thought they were fortunate because they got better clothes, easier chores, violin lessons, and the overseers never bothered them. Yet, I learned that there was no good life as a slave no matter who your father was. Jefferson's children had to keep their identity secret. Although Jefferson was sometimes kind to them, he never treated them as his children. His children watched him embrace and play with his white grandchildren while he treated them as his slaves. They worked as servants and lived with the other slaves. Although they were never beaten or sold, they watched people get beaten and their friends sold away and they knew that their father was the cause of it all.

In the book, a slave named James Hubbard ran away. James was a strong, hardworking slave who worked on the plantation as a nail boy. He tried to run away with a fake pass. When James met an overseer he gave him the pass, but the overseer knew it was a fake. James was put in jail, taken back to Monticello, and whipped in front of everyone. After watching the whipping, Beverly couldn't believe that his father, who gave him a violin and was proud of him for learning to play it, was the same man who ordered James Hubbard to be whipped. Life for Jefferson's sons was very confusing and very hard for them to understand how their father could be kind to them and cruel to their friends.

This book shaped me because I learned that people are complicated and nobody is all good or all bad. Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, helped create the United States, and stated that all men are created equal. Yet, he also denied hundreds of people their freedom and made them work for him as slaves. History is complicated and there may be ugly parts of history that you don't learn about in school. I never learned about the Hemings family until I read this book. I now know it is important to do your own research and go beyond what you read in school books.

This book also taught me about how important skin color was in the 1800s and how it defined your life. Both Harriet and Beverly left the plantation, pretended to be white, married white people, and never talked about their past. Even though they left the plantation, I think their life was still difficult. They had to lie to everyone they talked to about where they came from and everything they had been through. Maddie left the plantation after his mother died, but his skin was too dark to live as a white person.

I am glad to live in a time when my future is not controlled by my skin color and I am free to be and become whoever I want.

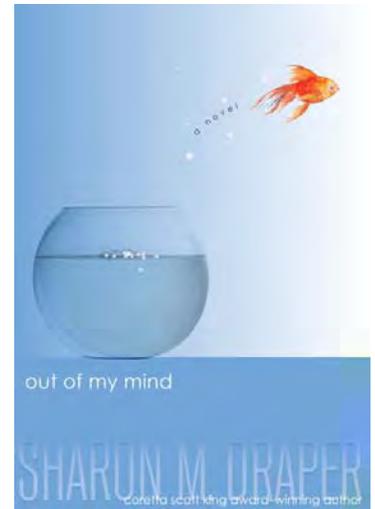
Out of My Mind

By Eleanor Holt

Washington, DC Finalist

The book that I chose is called *Out of my Mind*. The book is about a girl named Melody who has cerebral palsy, which makes her not able to move her body or speak. She is only able to move her thumbs. This is a real inconvenience because Melody has a photographic memory. She finally gets a device which enables her to type a sentence or words into a machine which then speaks the sentence or word that she typed. This helps her do many things that she wasn't able to do before. She made new friends and was, in her mind, a normal girl.

Melody's neighbor and family friend helped Melody be bold and confident. Once, Melody wanted her monkey toy but Ms. V (her neighbor and friend) would not give it to her. She told Melody that she would have to turn over herself and get it. Melody tried her hardest and got the monkey. Melody's mother was really sweet and nice to Melody but one night she heard her mom talking to her dad and she said that she loved Melody but she just wanted a normal child.



This book made me think about how non-disabled people treat disabled people. It made me angry that some girls in the book made fun of Melody for something that she couldn't control. This makes me think about my experiences with disabled children and how I handled the situation. In fourth and third Grade there was a boy in my class who had autism. He would have outbursts and was easily frustrated. People would be afraid of him and consider him violent. They would treat him differently than other kids. He had friends (including me) and was a nice guy but I would hear people talk about him behind his back.

Now I have a better understanding of how those children with disabilities feel. People are always going to treat you different, laugh at you, and say things about you behind your back. Before I used to treat disabled kids nicely, but always talk to them like they were small children or act strange around them. I realized that I had to start treating disabled children the same as other children.

The important lesson that I have learned from this book is to not judge a book by its cover. Melody may have looked on the outside dumb and weird but inside she was a very smart girl and very nice on the inside. And just like the boy in my class, on the outside he looked violent and scary, but on the inside he is a nice guy and very friendly.

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire

By Addie Hughes

West Virginia Finalist

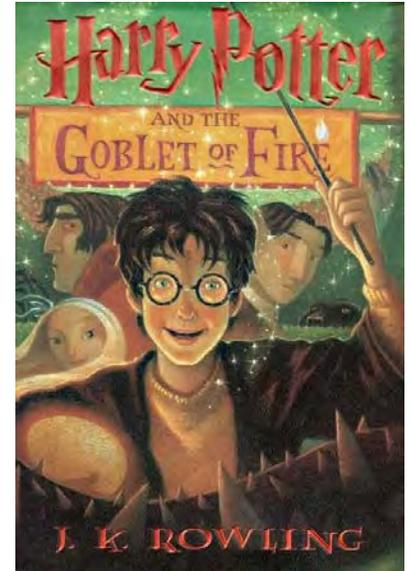
Has a book ever changed your life? Made an impact? Changed your beliefs? Made you like people you did not care for before? Can you relate to a certain character from a certain book? Hermione Granger, from *Harry Potter*, can relate to me in many ways!

First of all, Hermione is similar to me by all her knowledge and the love of libraries. She is always intrigued in some sort of book! Some of them are, *Hogwarts a History*, *The Rise and Fall of Dark Arts*, and *The Standard Book of Spells Grade 4*.

Next, she is like me because she hangs out with boys all the time. Hermione showed it does not matter the gender, just who you want to be friends with. Everybody thinks Neville Longbottom is a loser, everybody except Hermione, that is. Not many people from the book actually try to get to know Neville, just automatically say, 'I don't like him.' We both found out it does not matter if you are a boy or girl, just who you are. Boys are not always bad! Just like me, she does not care what people look like on the outside, but what they are on the inside. Do you care what your friends look like?

Lastly, Hermione relates to me by having courage. Some examples are, standing up to Draco Malfoy when he called her a dirty name, not being terribly scared when she was trapped in the same room with a troll, and standing up to Malfoy when he said something horrible about her friend's family. Some examples of myself are, jump off a fifteen foot tall rock into the water, standing up to people in tough times, and starting soccer being terribly scared. Courage is hard to have in certain moments, but it eventually comes to you!

To conclude, my beliefs have changed since I read about Hermione in *Harry Potter*. Now, I still believe there might be some sort of wizards and witches in the world. Who knows, I still have a chance. You have to be 11 to go to Hogwarts and I'm only 10. I am all of the listed things above, I was not before Hermione, but I am now! Although characters from books can sometimes change them, beliefs are 100% what you want to be and what you think is right!

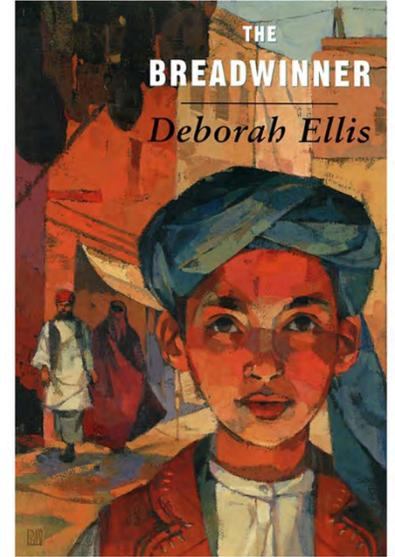


The Breadwinner

“Stronger Than a Linebacker” by Julian Jackson II

3rd Place Grand Prize and Delaware State Winner

2013 marks the fourth season that I have played football for the Wilmington Titans as a running back. For the past three years, the team has been made up of the boys, who play football and the girls, who are the team cheerleaders. However, this year was different because it was the first time a girl played on our football team. Most of us boys did not think it was fair to have a girl on our team. We felt like she wasn't tough enough, she wasn't strong enough, and we felt she should be a cheerleader or play a girl sport instead. Football must be her favorite sport because she did work very hard at the practices, and she did put forth a lot of effort during the scrimmages. She was also not afraid to get tackled by the team's linebackers. The new girl on our football team was very courageous just like the character Parvana in the book, *The Breadwinner*. Parvana is an eleven year old girl who lives under Taliban rule in Kabul with her family. She becomes the family's breadwinner after her father is taken to jail. Under the Taliban, girls had no rights. They could not go to school or even go outside without a man. Reading about Parvana's story helped me understand a different kind of strength that is different than the kind of strength you need on the football field.



In the book *The Breadwinner*, the Taliban enforces really harsh rules on the people of Afghanistan. They encourage neighbors to spy on each other and they also ban all books because they do not want any of the western world's influence on the Afghan people. The Taliban don't allow any of the Afghan people to make their own choices about what they wear, what they read or even what they eat. I imagine it is really difficult for families living in a country like Afghanistan, and I feel thankful that I live in America. I have the freedom to read any book I want to, and I am not forced to spy on my neighbors, and I can make my own choices about things I want to wear, read and eat. In the story, Parvana's father gets arrested, and Parvana has to dress up as a boy and earn money in the marketplace to support her family. I feel like that took a lot of courage, and it was also a lot of responsibility for an eleven year old girl. She has to worry about getting found out by the Taliban every time she leaves her house to earn money. Parvana also does not do normal activities like play video games, go to school or even play football like the girl on my team. Instead she has to be the strong one in the family and become the family breadwinner.

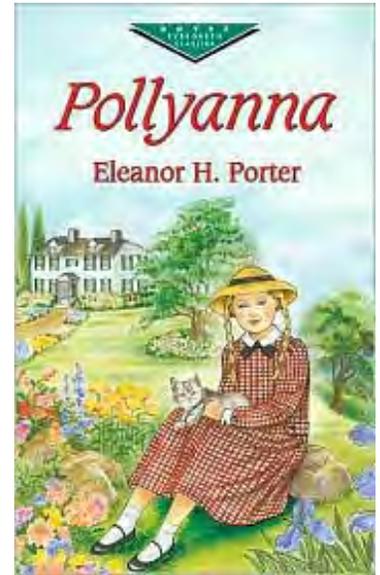
After reading the book *The Breadwinner*, I realize how people live in other parts of the world and how different they live from me. I know I definitely would not want to live in a country that wouldn't allow me and my family to make our own choices. I only have a younger brother, but, if I had a sister, I would want my sister to be able to go to school and play sports and maybe even play football on a team with boys if she wanted to. What I did learn was that being strong isn't necessarily about having big muscles or great physical strength. I learned that being strong also can mean being brave. It took bravery and courage for Parvana to dress up like a boy so that she could make money for her family. It also took courage and bravery for the girl on my football team to play with all boys, and to me, that kind of courage and bravery will always be more important than great physical strength.

Pollyanna

By Rebekkah Lynn Kehoe

Delaware Finalist

I believe that all books can shape your life in one way or another. If you take the time to understand and comprehend the book, you can find out how it relates to you and your life. Then you can choose whether to make some changes to your way of thinking or go on as before. Pollyanna, who seemed to have so little to make her happy, showed me how much I have to cherish. Pollyanna always found something to be glad about even if it was not what she was hoping for. One time she was hoping the Ladies Aid had a doll for her, but she got crutches instead. Earlier in life Pollyanna's mother died leaving her with her father. Her father loved her very much and even though they were poor, they were happy to have each other. Pollyanna's dad taught her the Glad Game so she could look for the best in everyone and every situation.



When her father died, the Ladies Aid of the church gave Pollyanna a trunk for her very few treasures and a train ticket to go live with her Aunt Polly in Vermont. Although the eleven year old did not want to go, Pollyanna was glad she had an aunt. Even though she found out she was unwanted, Pollyanna was glad she had a friend in Nancy the maid. When she arrived in Vermont, she was given a hot and buggy attic room where she found the view from the windows wonderful. When Pollyanna was struck by a car and paralyzed, she was glad she had been able to run and walk before the accident.

I try to think a little more like Pollyanna now, I did not make my travel soccer team this year, but I am glad I can be on the Courage team that will prepare me to try out again next year. My friend Carson did not make it into the Cab Calloway School of the Arts. I was sad for him. After thinking about it, I told him that I was glad he had the courage to try out and that I am glad he will go to the same school with me this year. My friend Eliza, who has Down Syndrome, sometimes is sad because she is so different. I tell her how happy I am that she has such a beautiful singing voice and that she is so friendly to me.

My aunt had a neighbor who had a pool. He was eighty-nine years of age. Sometimes, Mr. C could be crabby, like Mr. Pendleton in *Pollyanna*, but I think it might have been because he was lonely. So, I was happy to bring him crabs for dinner and to swim in his pool. That made us both glad.

Pollyanna always found reasons to be happy by looking for the best in people and situations. Since I read this book, written by Eleanor Porter a hundred years ago, I figured out that I should act like that also. By playing the Glad Game, I can help myself be a much more positive and friendly girl.

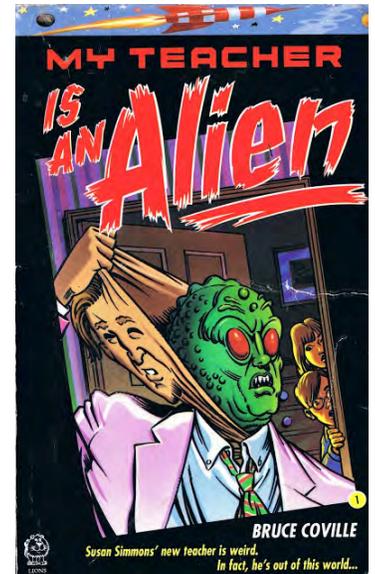
My Teacher is an Alien

By TaKayla Keyes

Washington, DC Finalist

I read this really fun book that has made me look more closely at the people that I know to see who they really are. The title of the book is, "My Teacher is an Alien" by Bruce Coville. As I read the story, I began to wonder if my teachers, friends and people I know are really who they say they are. Are they pretending to be one person because they have other motives?

The story is about a girl named Susan and a boy named Peter that came back to school from their spring break and found out that their regular teacher is gone. She is replaced by a substitute teacher named, Mr. Smith. Susan and all the children in her class were curious why their regular teacher, Ms. Schwartz was gone and Mr. Smith was taking her place. Susan follows Mr. Smith home after school one day and sneaks inside his house. She saw him take off his mask. He is not a regular person at all. He is an alien whose name is Broxholm. Susan tells Peter about Mr. Smith and they planned to unmask him so that everyone knows. They also discovered that Ms. Schwartz is being kept in "a column of blue light" at Broxholm's house and that he plans to take children with him when he goes back to his home planet. Susan, Peter and all the children in the band help to unmask Mr. Smith as an alien during a school concert. Peter surprises everyone by helping Broxholm escape and going with him on his space ship. The ending really surprised me because I thought Peter wanted to get rid of Mr. Smith as much as Susan.



Reading this story has changed me in a couple of different ways. First, Mr. Smith pretended to be human when he was really an alien. As I read, I wondered how many of my real teachers were wearing masks to hide who they really are. Some teachers talk to me one way and talk to other students in different ways that are very mean. Are they nice caring teachers or are they pretending to be nice while hiding their real feelings? Do they have hidden motives like Peter did in the story? Peter promised to help unmask Mr. Smith as an alien, but instead he helps him escape. Peter changed his motives for helping Susan without letting her know. Peter had good reasons for wanting to go with Mr. Smith. He did not want Duncan to be mean to him anymore, and his parent did not seem to care about what he did. I understand why Peter went with the alien, but I wish he had a loving family like Susan. I wonder how many of my teachers and friends had hidden motives when they helped me with school work or talked to me in class? I will be watching and listening when school starts in a few weeks. Second, Ms. Schwartz was kept in "a column of blue" light for several days. She did not want to be there while Mr. Smith was working in her place. I am not sure how Ms. Schwartz ended up at Mr. Smith's house, but I hope to keep something that scary from happening to me. I will think hard about visiting my friends or neighbors homes when their parents are not around. I will pay more attention to strangers in my school or neighborhood. I will always let my parents know where I am, where I am going, and who I am with. I do not think anyone would try to kidnap me, but you never know.

In a few weeks, I am going to start 6th grade and I hope my teachers are not aliens or anything strange. I won't judge any teacher on how they look, but I will keep a look out to see if my teachers are aliens trying to get students. Who ever is reading this are you an alien too? Ms. Schwartz is going to tell me if you are so don't try to hide.

Hoot

“Was Quite a Hoot (Literally)” by George Layton

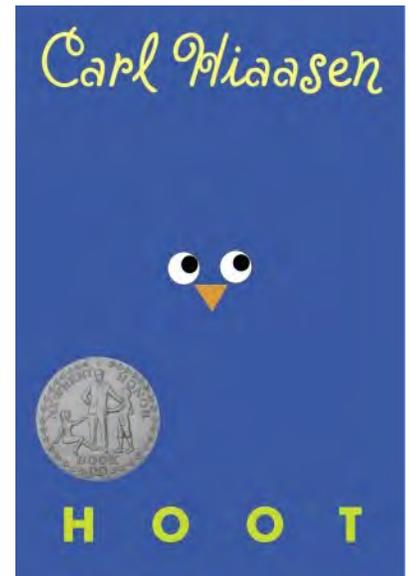
Virginia Finalist

When I was young, I read "The Lorax" by Dr. Seuss, which taught me to be aware and to care about the environment. Now that I am older, I found Carl Hiaasen's book "Hoot" relates to "The Lorax" but goes further – it reinforces the impact a kid like me can have on the world.

I like to think of myself as an eco-warrior. I like to find ways to save the world and take care of it, like recycling and using little gas and planting things; I'm in Boy Scouts, and they do a lot of environmental stuff. It's sometimes hard for me to visualize a way that I can make a difference in this giant world. "Hoot" is a story about kids who seem real and they took a small animal and cared. Just that can keep an animal from becoming extinct, or can change an entire town. It makes me wonder what small action I am doing today that will impact the world tomorrow.

It is not just the environment I can impact, it is also about the people around me. I can see a kid running down the street in need of a friend. That's exactly what happens in this book. A guy saw a kid running down the street off the side of the bus and wondered about him. They became friends. I want to be the guy who can be a friend to someone who might be a little strange at first. To quote another Dr. Seuss favorite: "A person's a person no matter how small".... Or fat, or skinny, or tall, or short, or glasses, or different. When friends band together, they can do big things like stopping a whole building from being built, and changing the way a town thinks about the way they build things.

The lessons in "Hoot" continue to shape me. Lessons like: kids can make a difference. You should make friends with people you don't know. Kids can work together and change things. And through it all, you may have a little fun.... I hope middle school is like that.



The Warrior's Heart

"Willing to Serve" by Ryan A. McCrea

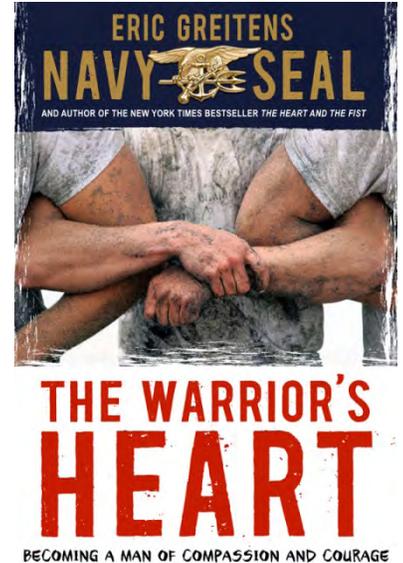
Delaware Finalist

"If not I, then who?" This simple question represents Eric Greitens' motivation to serve his country and become a protector of the helpless. In his eye-opening memoir, *A Warrior's Heart*, he explains how and why he became a Navy SEAL, volunteered in refugee camps on three different continents, and created an organization for disabled military veterans. Greitens' intense story forced me to question my strengths and weaknesses and my future path in life.

As a young boy in St. Louis, Eric enjoyed reading "Choose Your Own Adventure" books. In each story the main character was faced with difficult decisions, such as, "Should I return to the safety of the base camp or venture after the elusive monster?"* When he went to college, Greitens realized that his thrilling journey in life was not going to be handed to him. He was expected to explore for himself. This led Greitens to travel overseas to volunteer at refugee camps in Bosnia, Bolivia, and Zaire. There, he photographed and interviewed the residents to record their stories. Returning to America, Greitens recognized that he wanted to help people like the ones at the camps by protecting them when devastation strikes. This prompted him to join the military after graduation and then to apply to the Navy SEALs. After years of arduous training, Greitens became a SEAL and fought on the front lines in Iraq. Upon his return to America, Greitens initiated an organization called "The Mission Continues" for disabled military veterans.

When I first read this book, I loved the fast pace and the depth of Greitens' determination to serve. After rereading the book, I discovered certain similarities between Greitens as a boy and myself. We both saw a need in our community and fulfilled it. For Greitens, it was a lawn care business; for me, it was a youth chess club. Like Greitens I have had to plan my work for each week, serve my members' needs, and go beyond the expectations that people have of a ten year old boy.

Filled with the truthful realities of life, this book made me question if I, as a man, would be willing to accept the same challenges as Greitens. Would I have the strength to leave my comfortable home and live in harsh conditions for no personal gain? Am I willing to serve?



The Phantom Tollbooth

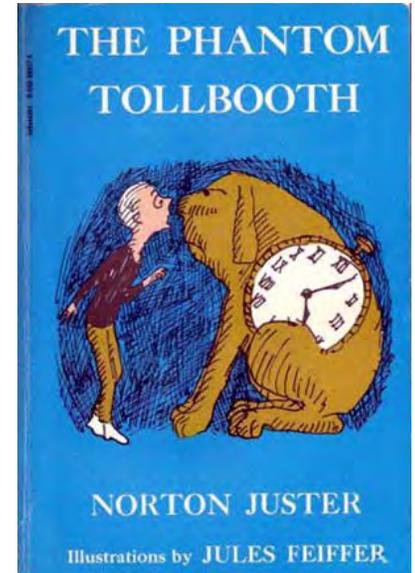
By Madison Mohan

Maryland Finalist

The Phantom Tollbooth, by Norton Juster, is a book that has definitely changed the way I see the world. Milo, the main character, thinks everything is a bore. Then one day a mysterious tollbooth appears in his room and he drives through it just because he has nothing better to do. Milo enters a fantasy world filled with an eclectic group of characters. Along his journey he realizes that life is not the least bit boring. He travels to the magical and educational lands of Dictionopolis and Digitopolis, jumps all the way to the Island of Conclusions, and rescues the princesses in the Castle in the Air.

Although I didn't think everything was boring before I read the book, I did take some things for granted. For example, I didn't think about numbers and words and where we would be without them. Without words, I wouldn't be able to do one of my favorite things: read! Without numbers we wouldn't know when our birthdays were, we wouldn't have phone numbers, and we would never be on time. As the Dodecahedron, a character from Digitopolis, once said, "Could you have tea for two without the two- or three blind mice without the three? Would there be four corners of the earth if there weren't a four? And how would you sail the seven seas without a seven? ...Why, numbers are the most beautiful and valuable things in the world. Just follow me and I'll show you." These ideas really helped me learn the value of numbers and words.

As I read *The Phantom Tollbooth* I started to see how reading and math were everywhere, and that we use these skills constantly. I have learned that even the most uninteresting things can become interesting when you look at them in a different way. And most importantly, this book has helped me realize how powerful the little things in life can be. Like Milo said, "Well I would like to take another trip... but I don't know when I'll have the time. There's just so much to do right here."



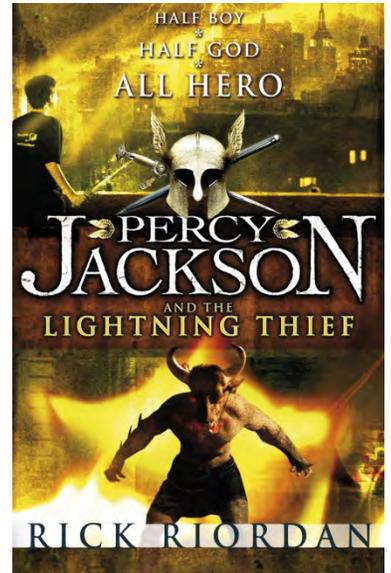
Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief

By **Finnian Mungovan**

West Virginia Finalist

Two years ago, I read *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan. Things have been different ever since. It made me interested in long books. It made me even more interested in series. It also made me LOVE mythology. This book opened a whole new world for me.

When I first picked up Percy Jackson, I thought it would take us FOREVER to read. But it was so good, my family could throw pillows at my head and I wouldn't even notice. (Yes, even when they hit!) The story was about a kid who finds out he is a demigod, Poseidon's son to be exact, who has to retrieve Zeus's master belt so World War III doesn't start. I was sad when I read the whole book, but then I found out there was a whole SERIES. Turns out there were other series that Rick Riordan wrote. The first series was just Greek mythology. The second, however, was Greek and Roman mythology. The third was Egyptian mythology. It was torture waiting for each book. I'm STILL in torture waiting for *The House of Hades*!



Now, I am REALLY interested in Greek/Roman mythology. I know the names of all the Greek/Roman Gods. The big three are the eldest gods, Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades. I'll name some others for you: Apollo, Hera, Ares, Hephaestus, Athena, Dionysus, Hermes, Aphrodite, and Artemis. I would like to read everything about them.

In conclusion, Percy Jackson changed my life. How? By making me interested in long books, series, and mythology. Do you think it would be cool to be a demigod? I do!

Smile

By Nicole Ng

Delaware Finalist

There are many well-written and inspiring books out there that have had some impact on my life, however, the book that I thought to have “shaped” me the most was a book called *Smile* by Raina Telgemeier. This story is about the life of the author, Raina Telgemeier, herself. Once you open up this book and start reading, you will immediately have the urge to finish it. The author and the illustrator did a fantastic job of painting a picture for the reader - you will feel like you are in the book. This book discusses many situations in which people can relate to, such as having dental work, finding new friends, and going through some tough times.

Many people choose to have some kind of dental work done at some point in their lives. This includes myself, and although I went and still go through pain, my braces are nothing compared to what Raina had to go through. Who would have known that one night would change Raina's life? On that unfortunate night, after a girl scouts meeting, Raina's friend's mom was driving the girls home. When they had arrived at Raina's house, Raina and her friend decided to have a race to see who could run to the house the fastest. Since her friend was getting ahead of her, Raina reached out her hand to try to get ahold of her friend's jacket, but she stumbled and missed. After that incident, she had permanently knocked out one of her front teeth, and her other front tooth got pushed all the way back and into her gum. Although what Raina had to go through that night was probably the most horrifying experience that I can imagine, that was just the beginning of her long, treacherous journey with dental work. Since Raina had knocked out her two front teeth, she had to visit a lot of different kinds of dentists and orthodontists. In order to correct her teeth, she needed to wear heavy headgear, a retainer with two fake front teeth attached, and then later she got teeth implants with braces. I have braces, too, and I know that it can be pretty painful and difficult sometimes, but compared to everything that happened to Raina, I would choose to have braces in a heartbeat. When I read about what had happened to Raina, I realized how fortunate I am. Some people, like Raina, may have experienced these awful and terrifying accidents before, but I am grateful that I was not one of them. For those who are unfortunately less lucky than I am, and are going through tough dental work, however, I hope you will stay strong!



Being able to have and keep friendship is an important task to accomplish in life. But, because life is not perfect, you need to make sure you find the right ones. Friends are supposed to be the people who cheer you up when you are down, make you laugh, and treat you like family. In middle school, Raina became friends with a few girls named Kelli, Nicole, Karin, Melissa, and Emily.

As the story progressed, the reader could definitely tell that they were not Raina's true friends. Those girls teased her, called her names, and always played jokes on her. Luckily, soon after the girls pulled a mean and embarrassing prank on her, Raina spoke up for herself and figured out that her middle school "friends" that she had made were not her friends at all. When Raina went to high school, she made some new friends; and they were different than her old ones. They made her feel more comfortable at school. These were Raina's first real friends, and they treated her like how friends should treat you. Finding new friends may be a hard job, but if your friends are not true to you, it is worth finding new ones. It is really important to make sure that you find the right friends. This book encouraged me to find new friends, and although it was a bit difficult, my current, new friends are proof that I had made the right choice.

Everyone goes through rough times in their lives, but you can always find a way to try to make things better. For instance, I have been through some hard times, like getting bullied. I successfully got through it by finding something that made me happy or feel more relaxed. Throughout the book, Raina went through many tough situations, whether it was about her appearance or about school. But, she always eventually found ways to deal with her situations, such as making new friends, doing what she likes, and just being herself. From her difficult times, Raina learned that she could not please everyone, so why not live her life the way she wants to by being herself, not someone else? For me, if I am ever feeling down, I take my mind off of things by listening to music or drawing. Everyone has a different way to cope with these times - you just need learn how to find it. This book has helped me find and think of ways to get through the obstacles in life that are thrown at me.

The book, *Smile* by Raina Telgemeier, has taught me many things that I think people can learn. Raina had successfully survived dental work, made new friends, and learned to deal with hard times. She has helped me push myself to achieve things that I would not have before, such as speaking up for myself. This was a great book and I thought it helped "shape" my life. I think the author, Raina Telgemeier, wanted the readers of her book to know that even though you may feel like you want to give up, stay strong. In the end, everything will turn out fine. All you have to do is smile.

Daniel – Holy Bible

By Isaiah Olujide

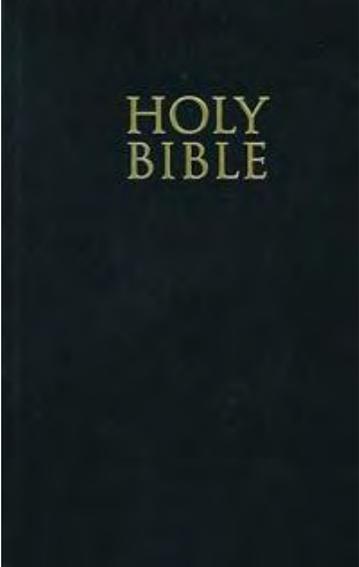
Maryland Finalist

A Book That Shaped Me is a book titled "Daniel". The book is believed to have been written by a man named Daniel sometime in the second century BCE. Daniel is the main character of the book. Daniel was a Jewish official working in a Medo-Persian king's court while in Babylonian captivity around the sixth century BCE. The book is a non-fiction book that contains several stories and historical accounts about events in Medo-Persia, and most of them focus around Daniel and his three companions: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

One way the book "Daniel" has shaped me is in the area of dealing with '**peer pressure**'. As a rising sixth grader, one of the things I face on an ongoing basis is peer pressure, but from reading "Daniel" I learnt from the story of his life that I can rise above it. There was an incident in the book when Daniel was first captured from his homeland and taken into captivity in Babylon. Daniel and his companions refused to eat the King's food, because it was not in accordance with their meal value system. Even though everybody else ate the food, Daniel was bold enough to ask for an alternative meal option. This book has shaped me because it has taught me to be able to resist peer pressure and maintain the good values passed down to me by my parents.

Another way the book has shaped me is that it has taught me to be '**bold**'. There is a story in the book where Daniel's friends were asked to bow down to a statue erected by King Nebuchadnezzar, who was a Babylonian king at that time. He had instructed the entire nation to bow down to the statue, however, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, boldly refused to bow to the image, because it was against their personal convictions. Even though the king was very furious about this, they were not ashamed to stand up for what they believed. This story has shaped me, because I know that as I start middle school, things may be different for me, and I may even be exposed to new stuff that I don't need, and so I will have to be bold enough to clearly say 'No' to such things, regardless of the pressure all around me.

In summary, the book "Daniel" has shaped me in remarkable ways, and I really hope that as I get older, I will continue to put to practice the great things that I have learnt from the book. The book also talks about how Daniel and his friends were very '**wise**' young men, and I know that one thing I need as a young person is wisdom to make the right choices in life. This will help me to do well in my school work, choose the right friends, and stay out of trouble. I really recommend the book "Daniel" to anyone, it is a great book that could change a person's thinking, and shape a young person's life!



HOLY
BIBLE

Wonder

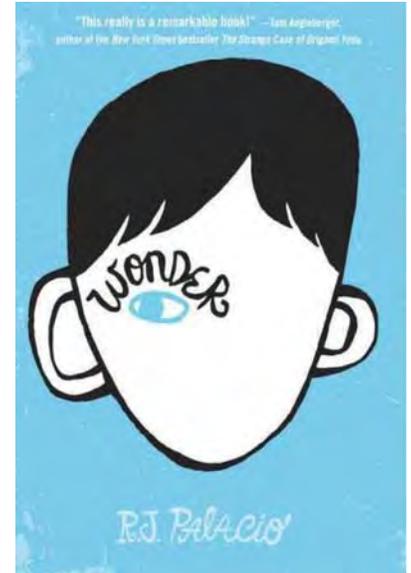
By Mallika Pal

Pennsylvania Finalist

'Wonder' is about a boy named August (Auggie) Pullman, who has Treacher-Collins syndrome, a rare craniofacial deformity. He undergoes 27 surgeries for his face, and pulls through all of them. His mom does not even get to see him when Auggie is born. August has been homeschooled by his mother until the 5th grade, when he starts to go to Beecher Prep. This story is about how Auggie survives life at school, at home, from his own perspective, as well as from his sister, her friends, and his friends. This is how 'Wonder' by R.J. Palacio shaped me.

I felt enormously grateful for my happy and healthy body, and that my family has never had to deal with treating various disorders or diseases. I have always wanted to be a surgeon or a nurse when I grew up. Now, my hopes are higher and I am more passionate and focused on becoming a pediatric specialist I hope that through my efforts, I can bring relief to, and perhaps even save, kid's lives. There are children like Auggie all over the world, especially where my parents come from, India. Even a simple deformed lip is an expensive, impossible surgery for most. By joining forces with organizations like Doctors without Borders, and volunteering my medical time in poor countries like India, I aim to bring hope into the malformed children's lives. I also realized at the end of the book that I should treat people for who they are on their inside, and to not judge them just on whom they present themselves as on the outside. Some characters in 'Wonder' bully Auggie just by looking at his face, but other characters try to figure out who he really is, and those people become his friends. Near the end of the book, Auggie gets an award for courage. About a month or two after finishing 'Wonder', my 9 year old best friend's mom got very sick and passed away. My friend asked me to come to her house the next day, and I said yes. I felt scared, wondering how she would react and what I should do. Then I thought of Auggie. He had to be strong and brave throughout his first year at his school, and after thinking of him, I felt much braver.

I also think the relationships in the story are incredible. Auggie has a sister named Olivia who really goes over the top for August I thought about my brother's friend, who has an autistic brother. I thought my brother's friend also really looks after him, just like Olivia did for Auggie. August Pullman's parents did not hide Auggie from everyone else. They let him explore the world, and face the challenges. Auggie has taught me to so much! I thought of him when one day at my favorite gymnastics sport gym meet, I was on the uneven bars, and got something called a rip, which is an opened up callus. It hurt when I put pressure on it but I pushed myself to do my best. Or when jellyfish while surfing stung me. I was a little scared of the sea animals, and got calluses from the board, but I pushed myself, and challenged myself to do my best and have fun. When Auggie was little, he hid his face from everyone by putting on a R2-D2 mask/helmet. Nevertheless, as he got older, he took it off. I am going to pretend that mask was made of my fears, and I am going to try to take it off. I learned that the only way to get rid of my fears was to do them. So I tried new things, like surfing, to get rid of my fear of sea animals, or skiing, to conquer my fear of looking down from huge heights, like when I am on the lift and gymnastics and Tae Kwon Do, to get used to the pain. And, of course, who doesn't like roller coasters, just for the fun of it? I really enjoyed this book, and I hope you read it too. This is how 'Wonder' by R.J. Palacio shaped me.



Job – Holy Bible

By Justin Roberts

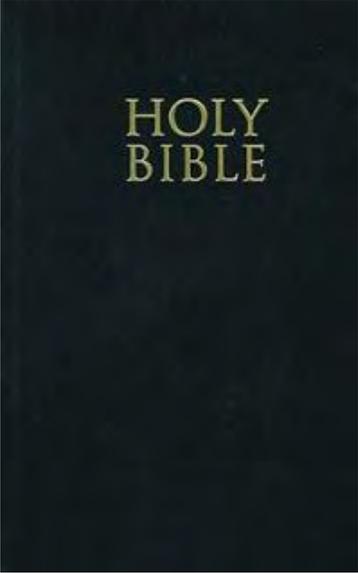
West Virginia Finalist

In the beginning the Devil betted with God that he could make Job curse him. Job was a rich man. He was also a man of God. God said to try, but he couldn't touch Job. Well he killed all of his kids. He also killed all of his cattle. He took a lot of stuff away from Job. He still didn't curse God. Then the Devil started on how if he could touch Job he would surely crack. He gave him skin worms all kinds of stuff to his skin. He still held strong. He became very depressed. So some of his friends told him to curse God and get it over with. He still held faith.

So now when I feel a little angry I'll think hey I will get through this. I've been more thankful for my things too. Just knowing that Job lost everything, and I've got more than I need helps me be more thankful. It also gives me more faith. Knowing God is watching over me makes me feel better. So the book of Job has changed me.

Some affect it has had on my life is that I have a better time doing things. Such as having fun with my brother and my sister, with my mom and dad, and also with the rest of my family. I have also picked which friends I need to hang around with. I now think are they good examples or bad examples.

Some things I now look for in a friend is if they'll hurt me or help me. It's also fun to hang around with other Christians. I'm also trying to stay out of trouble as much as I can. It's just been more fun. I do recommend this book to others that are struggling.



HOLY
BIBLE

Katerina's Wish

“Dreaming Success” by Abigail Spigarelli

Virginia Finalist

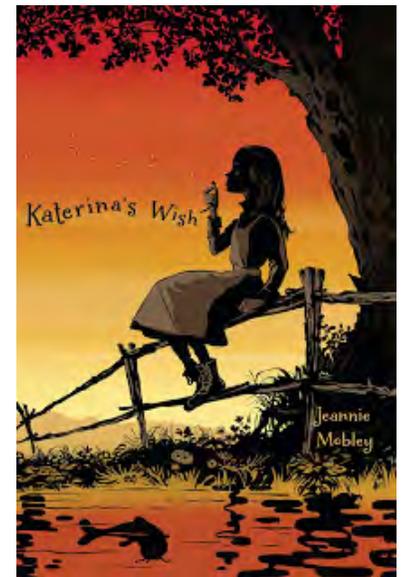
Everyone has a dream that they want to come true. One of my dreams is raising chickens. I want chickens for two reasons. The first reason is to be able to have a pet that is a unique playmate, both amusing and useful. The second reason is as an egg source. I care about eating healthy foods and I would also enjoy creating a healthy environment for my chickens. After reading *Katerina's Wish* by Jeannie Mobley I learned that to accomplish a dream you need some assertiveness, enthusiasm, and magical belief.

In the year 1901, Katerina and her family emigrated from Bohemia to America to follow their dream of getting a farm. Instead of finding their wish granted, they find themselves stuck in a mining camp in Colorado. Her family is not able to provide even for their basic needs, let alone save enough money to buy a farm. Katerina realizes that she needs to be assertive to save for a farm. Without even waiting for her parents' permission she starts raising money. One opportunity leads to another and, despite many obstacles, she eventually saves \$180. In order to accomplish my dream of raising chickens, I can see that I also need to be assertive. Some of the obstacles that I have faced are the size of our yard and zoning. Even though I am just a child, Katerina's example shows me that I need to take action to get chickens. My first step will be learning more about our city's zoning. If that can't change, I will start learning about the basics of caring for chickens so that I am ready when I do have a place for them.

Even with her assertiveness, Katerina sometimes felt discouraged. This was partly because of what her mother said, "only a fool believe[s] in dreams" (p. 1). Katerina wondered if her mother's prophecy was right when her Papa was fired and her family was told to leave the mining camp. At the last minute her Papa found a farm that could be leased to them with her \$180. Her Papa later reflected on one of the darkest moments, "You gave up on all your hopes and plans...giving up sets you up for disappointment" (p. 226). My mother also makes me feel like my dream of raising chickens can never happen. Reading Katerina's Papa's advice gave me new enthusiasm for my dream. I do not want to give up.

The final ingredient for success came when Katerina and her little sisters found a "magic carp" and each girl made a wish (p. 244). Katerina was just pretending that she believed it was a magic fish; she wanted her sisters to be happy. Once she accomplished her dream, Katerina decided to tell her sisters that there was no fish involved with their dream. One of her sisters asked, "but if there is no magic fish, what is there to believe in?" Katerina replied with, "your dreams... once we believed we could get our dream, we all started working harder for it and didn't give up" (p. 244). One of their neighbors had taught them, "Believing can be powerful magic" (p. 244). I don't need a magic fish either. Just believing in my dream of raising chickens creates the enthusiasm that I need to sustain my efforts to make it happen.

In conclusion, Katerina learned that being assertive brought her one step closer to their dream. She also learned that she needed some enthusiasm which her father gladly gave her. There would have been no triumph without magical belief. With assertiveness, enthusiasm, and believing magic, I too can accomplish my dreams.



Island of the Blue Dolphins

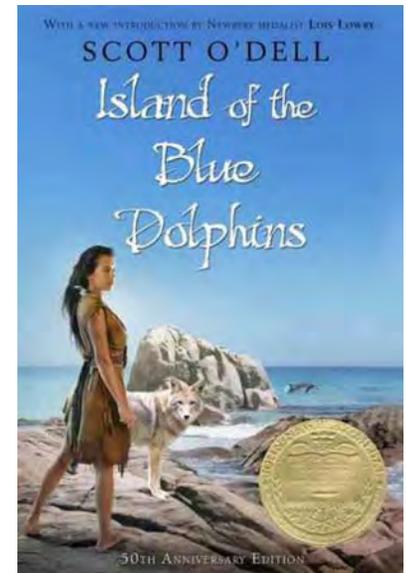
By Elizabeth Sullivan

Virginia Finalist

If there is one book that has shaped me, it would be *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, by Scott O'Dell. This book was recommended to me by a friend at school. She said that this was the best book she had ever read and that I, "...totally had to read it." As I got further into the book, I discovered that this book was not a good book for me. It changed the way I look at the world in that people have different opinions and that is not always a bad thing. Even though I am able to get along with my friend, we look at the world with different eyes and see different things.

When I first started this book, I hoped that it would be just as good as my friend said. However, as the chapters passed, I started to feel sad. For example, on pages 21-38, the author describes a battle happening between Russian explorers that landed on the island and the Ghalas-at tribe. This battle ends with only 15 of the original 47 men of the tribe surviving. Sadly, the father of Karana, a young Ghalas-at girl, is not one of these 15 men. As I was reading, I hoped that this was the dreadful beginning of an otherwise cheerful story. However, I read on to find that the women and the children of the tribe abandoned the island in fear of more attacks. Karana and her younger brother rush to the shore just in time to see that, "The ship had disappeared"(38). Just when I thought the depression would be over, a storm of sadness washed over me again. Her younger brother, Ramo, is attacked by wild dogs and Karana saw that he had, "a deep wound in his throat... I knew that he was dead"(45). This episode brought a sick feeling to my stomach and tears to my eyes. Having a younger brother myself, I couldn't think about someone else's brother dying in such a violent way. Karana ends up killing every dog, except for the leader. When she sees the sadness and pleading in the alpha dog's eyes, she can't bear to end his life. She eventually befriends the dog, as she comes to know as Rontu, and he becomes her closest companion. They face many adventures together. On pages 51-53, Karana lets him out for the night. He does not return and it turns out that she finds him just in time for him to inch towards her and look at her one last time. This passage brought up the time when my dog died. I don't understand why anyone would find this experience entertaining.

This book changed the way I see myself, my family, and the world. Before I read it, I thought that I was not the luckiest person in the world. Now, I still have that opinion, but I know that others have lives much harder than mine. It also changed the way I view my family. I used to think that having to do the dishes was intolerable, but now I am grateful that my family is alive and they love and support me. Finally, this book changed the way I think about the world. It made me realize that everyone is different and that's a good thing. My friend said that *Island of the Blue Dolphins* was the best book that she had ever read. In contrast, I was happy to flip the page and read the words: "Author's Note," instead of possibly: "As the boat pulled up on the shore, I saw that my sister and rest of the tribe was dead," or something equally dreadful! Even though I did not enjoy the book itself, reading it made me realize that it is the contributions of different viewpoints are what make the world a phenomenal place to live!



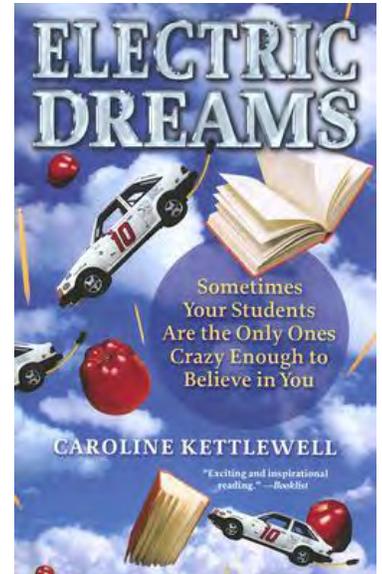
Electric Dreams

By Victoria Sullivan

Pennsylvania State Winner

The book I read is entitled “Electric Dreams” by Caroline Kettlewell. It tells the true story about high school students from Northhamton County School District, who win a prestigious electric vehicle competition. The main reason this book shaped me is because it is about real kids who feel like “long shots” and doubt their talents. I can relate because I like to write stories but I usually do not show my work because I am afraid of what others may think.

In *Electric Dreams* a young teacher from California is sent to a small town in North Carolina, known for being last at everything. In his second year there, a fellow teacher registers both of their classes in an EV, or an electric vehicle competition and all the big tech schools will be there. When their students hear of this, they think it is a joke, and are stunned by the realization that their teachers are serious. They have very few resources. After pushing past their own self-doubt, the students track down a Ford Escort and convert it for the competition. They amaze all when they slowly climb the scoreboards and beat even the very fanciest of schools.



This book shaped me because it shows that determination and confidence are what truly count. They aren't perfect, and they don't even score perfectly. They defy the odds while learning and growing. When some competitors tease them because where they are from, they shrug it off and keep their heads up.

Electric Dreams influenced me to do what I love with pride. This book persuaded me to show my parents my writing, and much to my surprise, they loved it! I even let my friends read some writing pieces and they thought they were great. My dream is to be a writer, and I'm proud of that. “*Electric Dreams*” showed me not to doubt myself, and inspired me to *trust myself!*

You Are Special

By Catherine Troiano

Maryland Finalist

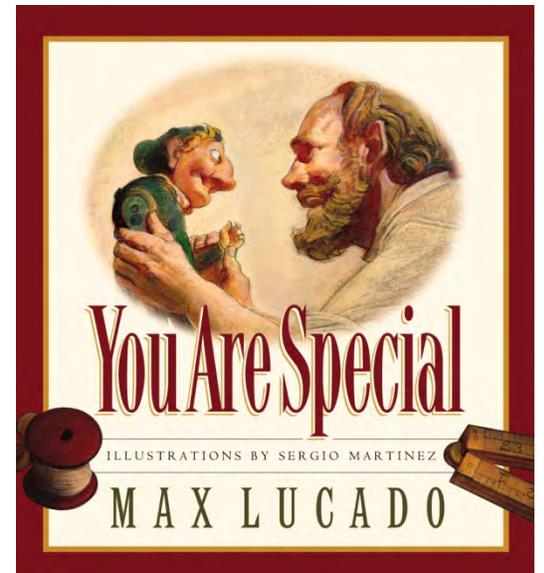
There are several different books in the world. All are special in their own way. Some speak to me differently than others. There is one book I remember from when I was younger that truly shaped me. It is called *You Are Special* by Max Lucado. This book taught me about the diversity in this world and that everyone is special, just in different ways.

In the book there is a village of wooden dolls. They give each other stars and dots according to their looks and skills. I think if we had stars and dots we would have a little of each because we are far from perfect.

There is one wooden doll names Punchinello. He was not like the other dolls. He couldn't run as fast or jump as high as the others. Plus he looked different. I think sometimes we can relate to Punchinello. Sometimes we feel like we don't fit in with other people and we feel like we are covered in dots.

Punchinello met another doll named Lucia. Lucia had no stars or dots. She told him to visit Eli, the wood carver who in this story represents God. Eli told Punchinello to always remember that he was special. When someone gave him a dot he remembered what Eli said and the dot fell off. I believe when someone tells us that we are not good enough we should remember that we are always special to one person: God.

This book taught me that we shouldn't judge people, and that everyone should get a chance to shine. I know that no two people are the same and just because they are different they don't deserve a dot. That story taught me a very important lesson which I will remember forever.





“A BOOK THAT SHAPED ME” SUMMER WRITING CONTEST AWARDS CEREMONY

SEPTEMBER 22, 2013

Welcome

John Y. Cole, Jr., Director, Center for the Book

Library of Congress Literacy Awards

Dr. James H. Billington, Librarian of Congress

Presentation of State Finalists & State Winners

Fred Bowen, The Washington Post KidsPost, Sportswriter

Presentation of Grand Prize Winners

David M. Rubenstein, Co-Chairman, National Book Festival Board

Julian Jackson, II, Brandywine Hundred Library

3rd Place Grand Prize and Delaware State Winner

The Breadwinner, by Deborah Ellis

Jessica Holloway, DC Public Library

Juanita E. Thornton/Shepherd Park Library

2nd Place Grand Prize and Washington, DC Winner

Jefferson's Sons, by Kimberly Bradley

Sofie Dalton, Arlington Public Library

1st Place Grand Prize and Virginia State Winner

The Penderwicks, by Jeanne Birdsall



Letters About Literature Contest

Alessandra Selassie, National Winner from Washington, DC

Closing Statement

John Y. Cole, Jr., Director, Center for the Book

