

Letters about Literature

Eric Triche's seventh-graders write letters to authors.

Dear Jerry Spinelli,

It was 1 in the morning, the middle of summer, and I was bored to death. I remember raiding my sister's bookshelf waiting for an amazing book to glide into my hands. That's when your book "Stargirl" first caught my eyes.

It was only till I reached the final page of the novel that I realized how much it had changed the way I think about the world. Now that I think about Stargirl in more depth, I've realized that maybe the "normal" people are really the different ones, that everyone has a Stargirl in them. The people we say are normal in my view are the ones who are holding back. We all just hide our inner selves to be reserved and "normal." The people who are always stiff and stressed should relax a little bit, dance in the rain, and do something weird and wacky for once. My main point is that it's okay to be different.

This book changed the way I think about being popular or being part of the "in crowd." Of course there's always going to be those times where you have thoughts like, "Oh, I wish I had her hair," or, "Man, she's so good at soccer, I wish I was too!" Now, I always try to find good qualities about myself that maybe some other people don't possess. You don't always have to be popular, but I think you should always be respected by others and not be excluded because of your differences.

"Stargirl" isn't just about a girl who's completely different and independent, but about a girl who is true to herself and what she does. Stargirl might sing happy birthday to people in the cafeteria, and dance in the rain; but she only does these things because she wants to, and is not afraid to show her true self.

With Sincerest Regards,
Ava Shafiel

Dear Rebecca Stead,

Before I read "First Light," I really took my mom for granted. Your book really spoke to me personally when Lana and Thea talked about Thea's mother. Mia's very upsetting death made me stop, put down the book, and think what it would be like to lose my mother.

My mother is a wonderful, caring person, and I love her. I can talk to her about anything, and she stops what she is doing to give me her attention. I'll tell her about a problem at school, and she'll hold me tight, reassure me that grades are just a notice on what I need to work on to succeed, and help me get through it. Or if I have troubles with a friend, she'll point out what I did wrong, what they did wrong, and what to do next time. When I make a victory in this battle of life, she is always there to celebrate with me and make me feel so good inside.

Thea's mother Mia was a strong person in her life. Thea was inspired by her mother and continued to fight the battle her mother had begun. I want to do that too. I want to

be a marvelous mother like my mom.

Since I was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes last summer, my relationship with my mom has gotten extremely powerful. My disease is very challenging to deal with, but we have gone through it together. I was diagnosed in Seattle, Washington while staying with grandparents, and my mom was in Virginia. She flew back to be with me in the hospital, learned about the disease, and brought me to my new home. We tackle this challenge together. I can't bear the thought of losing her now.

But not all kids have mothers like that. Some mothers aren't there when they are needed most. Or they have passed away like Thea's mother. Then those children have to endure the hardships of not having a mother to talk to, even if they wanted to.

Because Thea grew up without her real mother, she became very strong and determined. It made her even more driven to finish what her mother has started. And because I grew up with my mother, I know what type of person and mother I want to be. Thank you for showing me and opening my eyes to what a wonderful mom I have, how blessed I am, and how grateful I should be.

Sincerely,
Kendall Langum

Dear C. S. Lewis,

Your book "Out of the Silent Planet" is AMAZING! It changed my ideas and feelings about extraterrestrials. I have always believed there may be life on other planets, and your book inspired and convinced me that there could be other life even if it did die out.

I am fascinated that you described Mars the way you did because when you wrote the book we didn't really know anything about the planet, and now some scientists believe what you described may actually have been true. In this generation, we have discovered there may have been life-sustaining water or other liquid on Mars as you wrote. You describe a planet that is dying, and many people now believe that Mars is a planet that died. There are craters running through it, and gullies once left from water just like you described in your book.

This makes me think: Was Mars a civilization that was created and then went extinct? Were we then created to take its place, and will we become extinct and another civilization be created in our place on, say, Saturn, until the perfect civilization that never dies out is formed? I wonder if you believe that life was once on Mars?

I love the way your characters represent the forces of good and evil in our lives. I love how the good Oyarsa and Eldils interact with each other and people. It makes me wonder what it would be like to live in the perfect world Earth will never be. I wonder what it would be like if man had not sinned and earth had not become the "silent planet." Imagine a world with no global warming, no pollution, no murderers, no wars, no disease, no birth defects, and no poverty. I have always tried to treat people right, and your book encourages me to continue to do so.

Best regards,
Dominic Cohen



Rachel Child, Thoreau Middle School, 7th Grade



Ben Collie, Thoreau Middle School, 7th Grade



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