

Massachusetts Letters About Literature 2016
Massachusetts Center for the Book
www.massbook.org

Level I Top Honors Award

Dear Anne Braff Brodzinsky,

My name is Calla and I'm 11-years-old. I was adopted from inside the United States when I was two days old. I love my family more than anything in the entire universe but I often feel alone and sad when I think about my birthparents and adoption.

When I was eight, and my mom first bought me your book, *The Mulberry Bird*, I thought, "Oh no, not another book about adoption," and refused to have anything to do with it. But that night she started reading it to me and my brother, who is also adopted. In the beginning I wasn't really paying attention, but after a while I got pulled into the story. One of the main ways you did this was by using personification, with birds as the main characters. I love animals and sometimes it's easier for me to understand things through animals.

As I listened to the story, I felt very emotional but at peace. I felt like there was a soft blanket wrapped around me, safe and reassuring. I felt sorry for both Mother Bird and Baby Bird. Their separation was tragic. Mother Bird tried all she could to help her baby. She was determined and strong even when she knew that she might not be the best mother for this baby. She still tried and she ended up making a wonderful but extremely hard decision. They could have had such a good life together under different circumstances. But as it is, the baby bird did have a very good life with his adoptive parents.

Adoption has always been a hard topic for me to talk about with others. Especially when kids ask, "Why didn't your mother want you?" When I explain to them that my birthmother placed me for adoption because she loved me and wanted the best for me, I feel like it's myself I'm trying to convince. Your book is told from the point of view of the birthmother bird. It helped me finally convince myself that my birthmother really only wanted the best for me, and it was extremely hard for her.

In third grade, your book inspired me to write my own story of adoption. I wanted to teach people about the love and sadness involved in adoption. In my book *The Adventures of Snowy the Owl*, I told the story of a young, male snowy owl facing struggles and finding happiness in his own adoption story. I am currently writing a sequel where his family adopts two younger twin snowy owl sisters from his birthparents. In both stories I include a few chapters from the birthparents' point of view. Writing these books has helped me to understand that other kids are facing similar challenges around their adoption.

Your book is moving, inspiring and wonderful. Whenever I am feeling sad now, I think about the baby bird and how he found happiness and wisdom. I also know that I have two families: "One far away but not forgotten, and one that [greet me] each morning."

Sincerely,

Calla

Calla
Bedford
Grade 5