

Massachusetts Letters About Literature 2017
State House Awards Ceremony
May 16, 2017

HONORS
LEVEL II

Dear R.J. Palacio,

Wonder has really changed my outlook on the world, on other people and on life in general. I have started to see people for who they truly are, beyond just their physical features. I've stopped making assumptions and judging books only by their covers.

Your book *Wonder* has helped me look beyond people's skin and external elements. One of my favorite scenes in *Wonder* is when Auggie has his first middle school lunch. He finds an empty table at which to sit, presuming it would stay empty. Then, to his amazement, Summer asks if anyone is sitting at the table and makes friendly conversation with Auggie. Her reaching out to Auggie helped him feel welcomed at his new school.

Coincidentally, a couple days after reading this heartwarming scene, we received a new student in my fourth-grade class, Carla. I was really inspired by Summer and I imitated her and sat with the Carla at lunch. Before reading *Wonder*, I likely would have kept my space from her since I was an athletic tomboy and she was dressed as a girly-girl, wearing all pink. To my astonishment, we ended up being best friends by the end of the year due to this inspiration from *Wonder*.

Wonder has also transformed my outlook on the world, helping me to see the good in so many things. Throughout the whole book, Auggie was trying to see the good with the help from his family, despite the fact that his face didn't look the same as everyone else's. After reading *Wonder*, I started doing one-day challenges with myself to try to avoid complaining and to see the positives in everything and everyone. Although this can often be a lot of work, it does change my experience in life to think to myself that "everything happens for a reason" and to ask, "What is the good in this situation?" After I started doing this, it was really rewarding to reflect on how much good I now found in each day.

After reading and imitating *Wonder*, I believe I have become a better person. For instance, when I walk down the street instead of saying "She's pretty" or "Wow, she's tall," I now think more to myself "She looks really friendly" or "Wow, he looks really generous." Although these assumptions might not always be correct, they help me focus on finding the good.

In conclusion, *Wonder* is one of my all-time favorite books because it has taught me many essential life lessons and caused me to experience life in a new and better way. Thank you so much for writing this meaningful and inspiring book. Hopefully, *Wonder* will motivate many future readers to be more compassionate, considerate and kind too!

Your fan,

Ally

Grade 7

Massachusetts Letters About Literature 2017
State House Awards Ceremony
May 16, 2017

HONORS
LEVEL II

Dear Ms. DiPucchio,

"One Monday morning in September, Mrs. Barrington rolled out a big poster with all presidents' pictures on it. Grace Campbell could not believe her eyes. "Where are the girls?" she asked in shock." Today I'm also asking, "Where ARE the girls?" Women make up half of our world, but it's dispiriting to see that in US politics, we are grossly underrepresented. Only twenty percent of the Senate is made up of women and in the House of Representatives, we make up only nineteen percent. When I found this out I could not believe my eyes. As of 2010, there are about one hundred and fifty-seven million women in the United States. And out of the millions of women out there, only a handful has the chance to be part of this country, politically.

All over the world, women are fighting to be heard, starting from Grace in your book, *Grace for President*, to people such as Hillary Clinton. In your book, Grace Campbell is a game changer who wants to prove to everyone that she can be president even if it is just a mock election. With hard-work, patience, and confidence, Grace wins the mock election. She teaches people that not all presidents have to be men; women can be great presidents too! Now in the real world we have an individual similar to Grace. Hillary Clinton was the nominee for the Democratic Party and almost our first female president. For such a developed country, there is still one thing we are behind in. Unlike other countries, we still have never had a woman for president. So why are we so behind in this? Why won't we give women a chance just to prove their ability? Unlike Grace, Hillary Clinton did not win the election even though she also was hard-working, patient, and dedicated to making this country a better place. Although she lost the election, she paved the way for many more women to go farther than we have ever gone before.

In your story, when Grace asks the person representing Wyoming why he didn't vote for the male candidate, he says "Because I thought you were the best person for the job." Although Hillary Clinton did not make it to the White House this year, there were still many positive outcomes of this election. This year a Somali- American by the name of Ilhan Omar was the first Muslim woman to be elected in not only Minnesota's House of Representatives, but the first Muslim woman to be elected in any state's House of Representatives. She came to America as a refugee at a young age and used the Quran to be sworn into office. What makes this scenario so powerful? Despite an election cycle full of hateful rhetoric about Muslims, refugees and women, the people in Minnesota, like the boy from Wyoming, chose to look beyond appearance and consider what a person has to offer. They chose the best person for the job.

For me and many other Muslim girls out there, Ilhan's victory is a new start and a chance to

change people's perspective of us. Reading *Grace for President* gave me hope. We can show the world what we have to give. At the end of the story, Grace imagined herself as the first woman to be inaugurated as the United States President. After reading this book and seeing all the recent strides women are making this year, I imagine myself being able to achieve something just as impressive. Something like being the first Muslim woman to be inaugurated as the United States President. Thanks to the courageous acts of women in this world and the courageous acts of book characters like Grace, this seems to be a real possibility.

Girls. G-I-R-L-S. The ones who will be heard, whether the world likes it or not. The ones who now have hope for the future to achieve great, grand things. The ones who will not be controlled by others and will now follow their dreams. Whether their dreams are big or small, they will fight to achieve them. These dreams will not stay dreams; they will become realities. Hillary Clinton's loss isn't the end. The world is changing and we must fight to be heard because we are what the world needs.

"Where are the girls?" Grace Campbell asked. Here we are, Grace. And this is just the beginning...

Sincerely,

Saja

Grade 7

Massachusetts Letters About Literature 2017
State House Awards Ceremony
May 16, 2017

HONORS
LEVEL II

Dear Primo Levi,

To begin this letter, I would like to express to you my admiration for your survival of the notorious and atrocious Auschwitz concentration camp, and your willingness to make recollections of your inhumane experiences of ten months in the camp. I admire your courage to relive your brutal memories, which many who were lucky enough to live to tell do not ever do so. Your book, *Survival in Auschwitz*, has changed the way I perceive many people, and opened my eyes to some of the real struggles of life -- not meaningless problems like not having the latest phone, or not wearing expensive clothes. I have made many interesting deductions from your book that I would not have come upon in most other books. Your earnest thoughts about the unavoidable selfish nature of humans, and how fast our character can change, guided me towards the conclusion that we can only be as good as our environment allows us to be. It is very hard to put my specific observations and thoughts into this letter with accuracy. The fact that you are able to record every detail of your ten months at Auschwitz in a way that lets the readers understand thoroughly amazes me. Not only are you a brave man, you are a skilled writer.

I have always been interested in the books written about the Holocaust. I think that the reason I enjoy reading these books is because I am easily drawn into the emotions of the people in the books. For me, this makes reading these books feel like actually being in the events that occurred. The experience is always both exhilarating and terrifying. I feel the emotions of the people in the books as deeply as they do. To me, this kind of reading experience is the most interesting and risky kind.

One of the main reasons I appreciate your book so much is because you have written it in a simple yet meaningful way, without any exaggerated accounts of events or writing that was solely meant to evoke sympathy. You wrote a story with room for me to stop and think for myself, but also gave your riveting conclusions to many questions you had spent months pondering. Your book brought to my attention that my life is full of countless luxuries many of which I should not take for granted. I could have been you, Mr. Primo Levi, or the millions of other once-regular people, and one day be snatched from my cozy home and thrown into a ruthless concentration camp to work to death for the sole reason of having a different religion than most others. I now understand that I am lucky to just be living in a peaceful time, when much of the world is not in a devastating war.

In the concentration camps, you described how all the prisoners had to eat for a whole day was one bowl of soup, one cup of coffee substitute, and a chunk of bread. Millions of the prisoners died from starvation, and just having a piece of potato in their soup was a blessing for them.

Once strong men became skeletons, and barely had the strength to walk. People who had loved to talk and laugh had no happiness to do so anymore. Even the thought of any personal enjoyment was a dream, when living for another day was the biggest problem. They had not been like that before. You had not been like that before. You all had been stripped of your lives. The Nazis stole your life and happiness, and prevented you from carrying out your usual way of life. The Nazis forced you to surrender everything you had: your personality, your will to live, even your children. But I agree with you on the fact that the Nazis also faced a terrible end. They had made themselves monsters, and they could not reverse the changes they made on themselves or their victims. I do not think that many of the Nazis had been like that before, and that many had no problem with Jewish people until they were ordered to think that way. You were not any different from the other people in the world before, until you were declared different. And I could be in a situation like yours, Mr. Levi, and experience what you had to. We all could. It was just your terrible luck that separated you from the others.

Even though I do not live in a time with a war going on or events like the Holocaust happening, your book made me realize that I should be thankful for living in a peaceful time, when I am not in danger of being killed at any time. I wonder about the purpose of many objects in my room, and think about how there are people outside of my warm house who are fighting to survive, just like you did. Just one sweater from my closet could save one of them, when I almost never wear some of my clothes because I do not like how they look. During lunch at school, I look at all the food that every student, including me, throws away just because they do not like it, or because they do not have enough time to eat. I do not see many students pack away their leftovers and save them for later, because they know, and take for granted, that a meal will be waiting for them when they go home. I hope that more people will realize that these luxuries might not always stay with them throughout their life, even if they are not plagued by some horrendous event like the Holocaust. Your experience was an extreme example of a misfortune, which made you realize how fast everyday life can change into a living nightmare. I thank you for writing *Survival in Auschwitz*, because it helped me understand that nothing about my life can be taken for granted. I will definitely read it again, and find learn new and valuable lessons from it.

Sincerely,

Cynthia

Grade 8

Massachusetts Letters About Literature 2017
State House Awards Ceremony
May 16, 2017

HONORS
LEVEL II

Dear Kathryn Purdie,

People aren't always what they seem like all the time. Some people hide their true selves from other people, because they don't want to be seen. At the same time though, they want to be noticed, as an existing human being. Most people only know the mock me, not the real me, deep inside. It was all thanks to your character Sonya that I finally discovered this fault, a fault I never admitted to. *Burning Glass* helped me realize this.

Not many people knew the real me. The cheerful, spunky, talkative girl, masked by the shy, downcast, and "amazingly smart" girl. I let the real me come out occasionally, in little wisps, but I fear that people will hate me, for being me. Also, I don't want to be involved in what people call "drama." Anyway, they seem to like that shy girl in the corner just fine. I don't want to be hated, I don't want to be underestimated, and I don't want to seem dumb, so as a result, I believed in all the lies that everyone thought was true, about that shy, "talented" girl over there. Sonya reminded me of myself, as she is also cheerful, spunky, and talkative. We both didn't want to admit to our faults.

Sonya's attitude in the beginning of your book was aggravating, and I hated her so much. I wanted to go up to her and shout, "Shut up and get a life," right to her. Most people wouldn't think I would say such things, but I would. Anyways, back to the point. Towards the end of your book, I realized something important I had never realized before. Sonya acts just like me! Realizing this opened the real me, to myself. I was quite surprised!

The most notable similarity between me and Sonya is that we want attention, but at the same time, we absolutely hate it. If we were so "talented" and "awesome," shouldn't we be getting all the attention? But then again, the spotlight is hard to bear, with everyone looking at you. Another thing is empathy, putting yourself in someone else's shoes. I fail at this, and so does Sonya at times, our hateful thoughts running across our minds, dark and mean. I felt terrible, the wave of guilt a dark pit in my stomach. I wanted to disappear.

Sonya's struggles opened myself to the light, mentally, and also, physically. Seriously! The windows were open and I was sweating! Terribly! Also, remember what I said about Sonya in the beginning of your book? Well, when I realized Sonya was just like me, I began to panic. Will anyone despise me like how I used to despise her? I used to think to myself every night secretly before going to sleep, filling my own mind with terrible thoughts, thinking how I was going to fix myself. One night, I finally woke up inside. I sat down, crossed-legged like the Buddha, and raised myself up. I was living in a lie, and I was nothing inside, and this has to stop. *I'm Sonya! If I don't show my real self, I will attract the wrong crowd, and sooner or later, I would be crying on my bed, again, trying to resolve the new problem. So here's the truth. Who cares about what*

is thought to be right, do what you believe in! When these thoughts ran across my mind, I had a new goal, to become the person I really am. I am not alone. That's a promise!

Some people aren't like what they seem. Everyone thought I was so smart and kind, it was so annoying! I'm just like everyone else, just a moody, humorous, and irresponsible kid! It may take a while for me to show everyone my real self, but every little bit counts. I got to speak out, I got to shout out, I got to be louder. Not every wish can be granted on its own. I'm so grateful I came across your book, dear author, Sonya is quite inspiring, and I hope I will be able to complete my goal. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Kyla

Grade 8

Massachusetts Letters About Literature 2017
State House Awards Ceremony
May 16, 2017

HONORS
LEVEL II

Dear Kendare Blake,

Telescopes are inspiring and eye-opening. When you look into one, you see things you never would have noticed without one. You notice things that have been forgotten, overlooked, or unseen, and the experience of looking through a telescope can change how you see yourself as a person, or how you look at others. Telescopes enlarge the smallest details, and those details become unmistakable. *Three Dark Crowns* acted as an inner personality telescope to me, one that opened my eyes to small yet powerful attributes of myself that I have never noticed enough to deeply think about. Your book has been an eye-opener to me, as I noticed qualities like Mirabella's loyalty, Katherine's silent determination, and Arsinoe's cleverness, traits which I glazed over in myself before reading your book *Three Dark Crowns* provided a telescope to me, forcing me to finally notice traits I share with your characters, traits that make a huge difference in your story. I now realize how important it is not to overlook the seemingly unremarkable qualities that are actually strengths you have inside yourself.

Mirabella was an extraordinary character with outstanding ability. She was extremely powerful, and favored among most people to be victorious. However, this extreme ability was not what changed me, and inspired me. Mirabella also had an incredible sense of loyalty to her sisters, who she was destined to hate. The strength of her loyalty lay with the people she loves, not with the ones who love her, including her sisters, and a few members of the temple. This loyalty is so strong, yet surprisingly subtle to her peers, and even I, who is not forced to kill people I love, need a telescope like Mirabella to see it inside of me. Mirabella's loyalty made such a huge impact on this story too, from saving Arsinoe, to running away and finding Joseph, and much more. Mirabella helped me see how loyalty can change things, and this changed my view of myself. I began to think about who I was loyal to, and who I care so much about that I would be as loyal to them as Mirabella was. She proved to me that a small trait like this could change my life, and this changed the way I looked at myself I have started noticing how people show loyalty to each other, and how it makes a difference. I have seen results of loyalty, and experienced the feeling of people being loyal to me. I will not try to show my loyalty towards others, and use it to make a difference, as Mirabella showed me that I could. I now look at myself as being able to show others that I appreciate them, and will be there for them, and hope that this will have a positive effect on others as well.

Arsinoe was somewhat powerless and vulnerable at the beginning of the story. She had virtually no special abilities, and seemed to have a huge disadvantage in the competition. But one quality especially jumped out at me from Arsinoe's personality. This was her cleverness. Now, I know cleverness is not something that goes completely unnoticed, but the way she makes use of what she has instead of dwelling on what she doesn't really makes me think. Whenever I read about Arsinoe, I think about how hard it must have been to be powerless and know that if something didn't happen, you would die. But Arsinoe was clever enough not to mope about her flaws, and to take actions, seeking alternatives to her missing power, and fill-ins for her flaws. Sure, dark magic is dangerous, but better than not taking the risk and dying without a chance. This sense of resourcefulness in Arsinoe is practically unnoticeable to her friend, and they even try to steer her away from some of these ideas, but makes such a big difference, and saves not only her, but Jules, Joseph, and more. Resourcefulness like this was overlooked by myself before reading your story. I never realized its importance, until Arsinoe acted as a telescope for me to see it inside of me. I began to try using this quality when I was upset, or lacking something. That has really changed the way I look at myself, after realizing the strength of resourcefulness, I have thought of myself as more powerful to change something, even if it seems

impossible. I remember Arsinoe when I need to solve problems, and find myself being more and more successful. This telescope has changed the way I see myself, from helpless and powerless, to able and effective. Now I know I can make a difference, even if I feel powerless.

Katherine was similar to Arsinoe in terms of ability. She had little power as a poisoner, and was extremely weak from consuming so much poison. However, Katherine was a very skilled poisoner, and had a knack for poisoning. Katherine had a strong, yet vulnerable personality, but her silent determination struck me as outstanding. Katherine was in a tough position, with the poisoner clan having been rulers for so long, and with her very limited power, things weren't looking good for her. However, what I noticed was how effective not giving up is. Katherine was very determined to get better, to be powerful, to accomplish consuming poison, to win the crown. It was a secret determination, and something that was hard to notice. However, this determination was so powerful, and if she had not had it, the story would be so different. She was determined to stay alive, to make Natalia proud, to impress Pietyr, and this is what motivates her throughout the story and provides success. This has changed my view of myself deeply. I have realized that I have determination inside of me, secretly, and only with this telescope was I able to see it. Now I see myself as able to do anything as long as I set my mind to it and work at it, like Katherine's determination did for her. I see myself as stronger with this new determination, and more confident in what I do, because I know that if I have a spark to do well, as Katherine does, something will be accomplished. I have a changed interpretation of determination, and understand its huge effect, and will try to put my secret determination into good use, as Katherine did.

After reading your book, I feel like it has been one big telescope, searching through the galaxy of my personality for hidden qualities I overlook. As I reflect on the story, I realize that the telescope you have created has spotted so much. From Mirabella's life changing loyalty, to Arsinoe's powerful cleverness, to Katherine's secret determination, I feel changed. While reading, I feel like your advanced characters have personally targeted me, and searched my personality through your novel to make me a better person. Your story *Three Dark Crowns* has not only served me as an amazing, engaging, thrilling book, it has glanced deeper into me than I thought possible with a piece of literature. I look at myself differently now. I see myself more powerful and able to make a difference now that I have recognized my resourcefulness that Arsinoe has shown me. I see myself as more devoted to what is important after observing Mirabella's loyalty, and making it my own. I see myself as more capable of things, and more confident after witnessing Katherine's determination. This telescope has caused me to look at myself differently, and I truly appreciate the impact it had on me. Through telescopes, you experience something you would not be able to recognize without one, and the overlooked becomes unmistakable. That is what *Three Dark Crowns* has done to me.

Sincerely,

Lily

Grade 8

Massachusetts Letters About Literature 2017
State House Awards Ceremony
May 16, 2017

HONORS
LEVEL II

Dear P.C. Cast and Kristin Cast,

I've rewritten this letter over and over in my head, but I could never find the words that did this book justice. *Marked* might not have been exactly the book those who run this project were picturing; however, it changed me. Literature works like that, though, where the smallest word can have a huge impact.

Basketball is my favorite sport--no doubt about it; however, during one game I played too hard and got a concussion, which ended my season. Waiting out those days were some of my gloomiest times, I wasn't able to do anything but sit in my room in the dark for hours. No one to talk to, feeling alone and angry that I had let this happen in the first place. One day after work, my mom came home with this big set of books. At first I neglected the books, not wanting to give up my freedom of doing other things. However, when my mom brought out the board games, I knew it was time to read. I distantly remember the sound of the plastic breaking once *Marked* was removed from the pack. I slowly opened the smooth texture of the glossy book cover, the paper almost groaning as it was being opened for the first time. I figured it would be another scary, quick read that I was used to which wouldn't interest me enough and I'd put off reading for months on end. Was I ever so wrong!

Being a small sixth grade girl, and living in one of the smallest towns I have ever seen, makes the rest of the world seem so much bigger. Two sides of a river filled with tiny old fashioned neighborhoods, schools are on either side but never overflowing with many new students. We were never a popular town. It's the kind of place where everyone moves from or they stay here for their whole life and go to a nearby college. My parents keep me in a bubble. I fear once I leave this place that I will never be able to make decisions and know how to grow up. If I end up crawling back to my home, what will I ever accomplish? *Marked* showed me that outside of my little world there are chances and experiences I could never imagine. Zoey never wanted to leave her little world, but once she realized there were bigger and better things to do with her life, she ended up having the time of her life.

Throughout this story, I felt pulled along beside Zoey in her crazy ride toward finding herself. Every time she cried I felt her pain, and in every breath taking moment, I was standing in awe right next to her, sharing an amazing experience. Half way through the book Zoey is called to a meeting where she quotes "I should have probably been afraid of the odd sensations breaking over me, but they filled me with an almost unbearable lightness -- I felt Good!" I felt as if I was her experiencing new things and being excited when they turn out better than expected. I related it to the first time my parents took me to water country, and I was so excited, yet was timid by the towering water slides. Where I would slip through and rush down the wave of water, captured by the tube.

After I had opened this book many emotions flowed through my brain. Jealousy, a repeated punch to the stomach feeling as if the wind is knocked out of you constantly. A rush of self-doubt flowing through the brain, making me want to scream. This book sent a waves of jealousy through my brain, based on how Zoey could just relax and be herself. I had wanted to be this heroic person who didn't have to worry about impressing everyone.

Zoey only had one place in the world that she wanted to go. She states "Like my little Bug could read my mind it seemed to turn all by itself onto the highway that led to the Muskogee Turnpike and, eventually, to the most wonderful place in this world-my Grandma Redbird's lavender farm." This sentence really caused me to pause in my reading. At this moment I closed my eyes and pictured it, a little farm hidden down a long dirt road; however, instead of Zoey visiting her beloved grandmother it was me visiting mine. The summer before I had started reading this series, my grandmother passed away and sent my family into chaos. You see, I had a special bond with my grandmother. When I visited her she made the rest of my world disappear. It was if she was part of a life that never changed and never ended. We shared the same type of attitude so we clicked really well, just as Zoey had less in common with her mom but clicked with her grandmother.

Besides Zoey visiting her grandmother I had a pinch of jealousy in the fact that she remains true to herself no matter the influence around her. Throughout the book she became special, chosen and very important, as she stayed true to herself. All I wanted to be was her. She was not afraid to be herself as I was in 6th grade, and still am. I still sometimes try to change myself to get along better with the people around me, I'm not proud, but it's something I'm working on. Zoey kept true to what she believed in and trusted herself to not get into too many sticky situations. *Marked* is the first book of a series, meaning the ending had a bunch of loose ends that just hang one off a cliff, where in most books everything is supposed to wrap up perfectly with the characters and every terrible decision they got themselves into was magically solved. *Marked's* loose ends made it much more relatable.

This book has helped me learn and change my mind about what's outside my small town. Showing me the world and bringing on a swarm of interest to discover what exactly I am missing. Sparking an interest to learn what the word vast really means. It brought me to places I could never have dreamed of going and changed my view of my friends and family.

Your Appreciative Reader,

Maya

Grade 8

Massachusetts Letters About Literature 2017
State House Awards Ceremony
May 16, 2017

HONORS
LEVEL II

Dear Ichigo Takano,

There are several feelings that consume the human heart -- love, rage, grief, joy, fear, just to name a few. But what is the strongest feeling? What is the strongest emotion that is felt by the heart and that consumes you until you can't think of anything else? That puts you in a dark, gloomy place of remorse, surrounds you with nothing but the past, and leaves you thinking "what if?" What is it that makes you wish that you could start all over again just so that you don't have to go through the anguish of this feeling? Ms. Takano, I would like to ask you this question, although you most likely already know the answer.

The future is very unsteady, isn't it? A single choice could change the future, and the hardest thing about making choices is that there usually isn't a good or bad choice. The consequence of the choice could either seem like a "good thing" or a "bad thing," though the aftermath of choices is not immediately evident when brought up. In the future, my fellow eighth grade classmates and I could end up not remembering each other, or we could end up being closer than ever. What if we forget all the small things we laughed about or the big things we discussed as a group? What if we leave off on bad terms?

"What if?" This is probably the most frequently asked question. "What if I had studied harder, then I would not have gotten such a bad grade?" "What if I hadn't procrastinated, then I would not have submitted that assignment late?" These are just a couple of the "what if" questions that I ask myself in my daily life. What comes with "what if" questions? Regret. All the memories I have from when I was very little are either very happy or very regretful. As funny as it sounds, the memories that I regret are the ones that are the most vivid.

Your manga, *Orange*, taught me that no matter how hard I can try to erase them from my memory, regretful choices will always be in the past, and I do not have the power to change them; although, I do have the power to change my future. "How?" You may ask. A choice. A single decision can alter the future, ever so slightly. Naho is the perfect example of not wallowing in regret of a bad decision. Rather she controlled the situation by taking initiative and she was able to save Kakeru from killing himself. Naho was able to save herself from that future regret.

On another note, people say that "we don't know what we have until we lose it," but I think that we all know what we have. We just never think we will lose it. Kakeru didn't know what the effect of him not coming home one evening would have on his mother. Coming home to see that she hung herself was also something he did not expect. What happens now? He thinks, "what if came home that night, would my mother still be alive?" Kakeru regrets not coming home that night, and that regret puts him in a dark place where a choice he made is chaining

him down to where not even his close friends could pull him out of since this dark place Kakeru is in is his own heart. I am graduating middle school this year. It hit me like a bus that I might never see my classmates again. I never thought that they would disappear since we all were always together. Just the eight of us. The perfect group is what I'd like to call us. I bet high school will have me wrapped around its fingers, and I know that I will regret not keeping in touch. Then again, that is a choice for the future; a choice that I still have power over; a choice that I will need to make. And just like Naho, I am going to save myself from that future regret.

So thank you Ms. Ichigo Takano for shifting my paradigm and teaching me that regret is a feeling that envelops the mind and heart, so it's better to look forward into the future, hopeful. And that with every tick of the clock, with every passing minute, I will be faced with new and unexpected choices and I am expected to decide between two options, neither obviously good or bad, that can alter my future just like how a gentle spring breeze inconspicuously pushes the compass atop of the schoolhouse, centimeter by centimeter, but no matter how small the difference in movement is, the compass still moved, altering the direction it is pointing in in a small yet significant way.

Ever so grateful,

Ridha

Grade 8