

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

Level I Honors Award

Dear Beverly Cleary,

Looking back on my life up until the third grade, it seemed perfect. I lived in a big, comfortable house with my Mom, Dad, and brother. My only concern was finishing that final page of math homework and trying to be popular. That was until one day, one day that rocked my world to its very core. That was the day that my parents told me they were getting a divorce.

I had known this was a possibility for a while, but I denied it. I kept on saying to myself, "They're my Mom and Dad, they would never split up". But they did, and my heart was shattered to pieces with one blow. I felt like everything in my life up to that point had been a complete lie. Even though everyone offered "anything they could do," I felt completely alone because nobody understood me. To add to my problems, my best friend had just moved away, I was sobbing all the time, and I didn't fit in with the other boys at my school. That was until I was changed forever by your book, Dear Mr. Henshaw.

In your book, I quickly connected to Leigh because he felt completely alone and had his heart shattered by the breaking up of his parents. Leigh was deeply frustrated by his father's absence from his life and I was deeply depressed because my life would never be the same. As I read on, I saw Leigh get knocked down again and again by life's issues. Leigh's problems ranged from kids stealing his lunch, to his fear that his father may get remarried. But when Leigh found happiness writing, reading Mr. Henshaw's books, or enjoying nature, my spirits rose and I felt something that I hadn't felt in a long time. Hope. Hope that like Leigh, I could find happiness, even in the worst of times.

Your book has changed my view of life forever. It has given me a way through the hard times. I'm now much happier than I ever was before. I coped with my parent's divorce by doing things I enjoy, such as reading, writing, sports, and cooking. I have made new friends that I can count on to help me and I try to enjoy the present, rather than dwell on how my life used to be. I have a great relationship with both my parents and have accepted their choice. Beverly Cleary, you have shown me that life is full of problems, big and small. But you have also taught me to enjoy those simple moments of happiness that can light up the darkest of times.

Sincerely,

Lee

Lee
Attleboro
Grade 6