

Massachusetts Letters About Literature 2016  
Massachusetts Center for the Book  
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Level I Honors Award

Dear Lensey Namioka,

I am different. I talk differently, I think differently from the people around me, but just like the narrator of your story "*The All-American Slurp*" I always find a way to fit in. When I read your story I had a feeling, a feeling of connection, a connection that made me feel that I was not alone because I was the same as the narrator in your story.

The girl in your book is new to America, she has only one friend, no one else. She does not act or talk the same as the girls and boys in her school. For example, she wears a skirt to school, not jeans. She and her family don't know how to act at a buffet or how to eat celery like the Americans do. She feels really embarrassed about it, she tries to find ways to fit in. For example, she convinces her mom to get her jeans and a shirt, so she can dress the same way as her friends in her school.

I'm the same way. I'm from an Arab country, my family and I speak Arabic, a language different from English. I could not fit in when I came to America. I had no friends and no one to talk to. I used to be in a public school with only one friend. My parents tried to help me to fit in, but it didn't help. Just like the narrator who felt embarrassed at the fancy French restaurant, I felt embarrassed because I was different and stood out from all the other people around me.

After a year in a public school, my parents enrolled me in Alhuda Academy, a school where most of the students share both my culture and religion. And just like your narrator found a friend who helped her fit in with people in America, I also made friends who helped me. Just like Meg helped your narrator feel confident and strong, my friends and parents helped me feel confident and strong. After a while, your narrator and I solved our problem.

Dear author, your book made me feel a connection and that connection made me realize that just like your narrator, even though I'm different from other people, I am not the only one, and that it will turn out just fine. Your book changed my life and it made a big difference in my life.

Sincerely Yours,

*Tala*

Tala  
Worcester  
Grade 5