

# 2011

## Writer to Writer



A Writing Challenge for  
Adult Learners in  
Bay Area Literacy  
Programs





**Writer to Writer, 2011**  
**Letters of Participants from BALit Programs**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
--------------------	---

## BENICIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

Nazanin Ashtiani .....	2
Patricia Gonzáles .....	4
Tiffany V. Porquis.....	5
Marta Lopez Soria.....	6

## CONTRA COSTA COUNTY LIBRARY

Mona Anhari .....	7
Irina Alimova .....	8
Sharon Zhao .....	10
Project Second Chance Book Club.....	12

## LIVERMORE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Veronica Molina.....	13
Gloria Pecheco .....	14
Pablo Rangel .....	15

## NAPA CITY-COUNTY LIBRARY

Marcela Cervantes.....	16
Anonymous .....	17
Olivia Moreno .....	18

## SAN MATEO COUNTY LIBRARY

Arcelia Avelar .....	20
Guadalupe Contreras .....	21
Maria S. Corona .....	22
Gabriela Garcia .....	23
Elizabeth González.....	25
José Hernandez.....	26
Susie Ho .....	27
Siew Lee.....	29
Maria Rico.....	30
Reina de los Santos .....	31
Quizzie Vickers .....	32

## **SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY**

Ramona Addison .....	33
Gilbert Calistro .....	34
Eugene Cook .....	35
Muawattia Mabrey .....	36
George Oliver .....	37
Ronald Pacheco .....	38

## **SANTA CLARA CITY LIBRARY**

George Arevalo .....	39
Ying Chen .....	40
Suzie M. Keels .....	41
Saman Lahidji .....	42
Ron Maniglia .....	43
Maria Yue .....	44
Lina Zhou .....	45

## **SOLANO COUNTY LIBRARY**

Osmina Albarado .....	47
Patricia Amanda Bentancourt .....	48
Monica Caballero .....	50
Ernesto Ceja .....	52
Maria Duran .....	53
Felix Gomez .....	54
Amelia Jimenez .....	55
Eng Kor .....	56
Claudia Lopez .....	57
Rosario Losoya .....	59
Santos Lozano .....	60
Julia Mora .....	62
Maribel Padron .....	63
Amelia Ramirez .....	64
Maria Reyes .....	65
Terry Robinson .....	66
Eufrosina Ruiz .....	67
Cynthia Segura .....	68
Victoria Toe .....	69
Veronica Vargas .....	71
Norma Villanueva .....	72
Anonymous .....	73

## **SONOMA COUNTY LIBRARY**

Anonymous .....	74
Ana Tah .....	75

## 2011 Writer to Writer Challenge

Bay Area Literacy (BALit) is pleased to sponsor the 2011 Writer to Writer Challenge, a writing activity created by California Library Literacy Services (CLLS) at the California State Library. Adult learners in library literacy programs throughout the Bay Area were invited to read a book of their choice and write a letter to the author, sharing their thoughts and opinions about how the book affected them. This volume contains their wonderful letters.

BALit is a consortium that serves adults in the Bay Area who choose to improve their reading and writing skills. BALit's 25 member programs are located in libraries from Mendocino County to Santa Clara County. Each year these programs serve some 6,500 adults, helping them to achieve their goals and expand their opportunities.

More information is available at [www.balit.org](http://www.balit.org).

## Nazanin Ashtiani ~ *Benicia Public Library*

---



Dear Mrs. Santa Montefiore,

First of all I want to congratulate you for your accomplishments, and wish you continued success in your career and life. Actually when I saw your book, the first thing that drew my attention was the name of it: *Perfect Happiness*. I thought “What a nice title! Who is not looking for that? I am sure everyone is looking for happiness”.

Your story is about a nice lady, Angelica, who is a writer, mother of two, good, dedicated wife, and a very nice friend. But somehow she felt being neglected by her husband and disconnected from her current life. One night she met a gentleman at her friend’s party and had a chance to sit beside him. From the very beginning she was drawn to him and his mannerisms. The way that he treated her made her feel like a new person. He helped her to find her confidence back.

Dear Mrs. Santa, I think your story’s main character is representing a numerous number of modern women, but not everybody has a chance to find the real meaning of happiness the way that she did. That was something that made me uncomfortable throughout your story. The way that Angelica abandoned her children and husband and lied to them to me was unacceptable. I believe most women and mothers won’t act that way; they may fantasize it but their loyalty and self respect keep them from following their hearts and desires. I hope you don’t take it wrong! I liked your story very much! As a woman, wife and person who tries to be nice to everybody, I understand Angelica’s feelings and sympathize with her. I think a lot of people may feel neglected and unhappy too, but they try so hard to stay on the ground and find a better solution and remedy to cure their broken wings.

The best thing that I loved about your story was using a very meaningful quote in the beginning of each chapter. Like chapter one: “The happiness of your life depends on the quality of your thoughts.” I also liked the way that you divided your book into three sections; desire, experience and wisdom. That was very wise and eye opening. Angelica lied to her family and friends to follow her desires but at the end she realized by experience that fighting for the life and love that she’d had is the best thing to do.

There is no ideal life, including the people in it such as parents, husband, partner and friends, but by loving ourselves first and living in the moment and accepting other's shortcomings, we can pursue happiness. It needs a lot of work and practice but it is possible!

Sincerely,  
Nazanin Ashtiani

## Patricia Gonzáles ~ Benicia Public Library

---



Dear Patricia Reilly,

I had read your book *Princess Diana*. I think it is an excellent history of real life. She was a beautiful woman with good feelings and had a good education. But it is sad to know her husband broke her life. This woman gave her heart to him. She was in love a lot with him.

Diana had a big heart. She loved her children and gave her life for them. She sometimes worked with the homeless and helped the Red Cross. Her trip to Bosnia called attention to the 26,000 homeless people. Diana supported Mother Teresa and both worked together to visit hospitals and orphanages, caring for the sick and poor.

The good people always go and always leave a good feeling in our hearts. I think we are following the steps of Diana. It is a blessing to help other people. We will never forget Lady Diana.

Sincerely,  
Patricia Gonzáles

## Tiffany Porquis ~ Benicia Public Library

---



Dear Mrs. Mitali Perkins,

I'm Tiffany, a novice learner. I happened to read the book of yours which is the *Secret Keeper* and it is really a heartfelt story. I was kind of reading my own experience in life because Asha's story is like a mirror and I was looking at myself in it. Not everything that she'd gone through did I go through too but I really felt "me" in the story and the impact to her when she loses her father. I really love her characteristic of being very affectionate to her family. We are all like her in that the family where we came from is the most precious gift from God and nobody can ever replace them. That's why we're really afraid to lose them but life isn't consistent so when I was on the part of the story where her father died everything flashed back on my mind. The hardest part is accepting the reality, especially if it's sudden. I can't still move on because everything is fresh in my memory. I still feel the pain and tears still fall in my eyes. I felt it in Asha too.

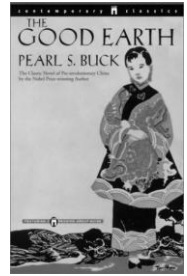
In the part where Asha was being scrutinized by her relatives it captured me and made me remember those times that I was also treated like that. Being scrutinized constantly in front of everybody really ticked you off and what do they expect you to feel about it? Happy or proud? I feel so little, worthless, envious and insecure but I can't tell them that I am hurt, or even confront them that it is not right anymore. I am like a firework that in just a second I'll explode. Don't they know that each of us is unique? Probably they don't. They are so mean but I have nothing to do with it so what I do is I keep it in myself, try to hold my temper and write it down on my big notebook, yeah big so that I can pin down all, I mean everything I feel. Releasing those bad things is a relief. Asha is beautiful inside so I'd rather be ugly and beautiful inside than physically beautiful but inside is ugly as pit bull's face.

Overall, Mrs. Perkins, the story was really great, astonishing and touched my heart. For me it's a big accomplishment that I've read your book and understand the story. How I wish I can have Asha's characteristics that I don't have like being optimistic, not giving up for her family's sake in spite of all odds, standing on every decision she made, shrewd and strong. She is a good example to everybody. Your book was an inspiration. Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,  
Tiffany Porquis

## Marta Lopez Soria ~ Benicia Public Library

---



Dear Pearl S. Buck,

I love this book. *The Good Earth* is the name of the book. I want to tell you something. When I chose the book I didn't really like it, but when I started to read it, it was interesting to me. To marry is something special for the women but in this book you show how it can be different to marry in another country like China. The parents arrange their daughter's wedding and they pay for it.

Hard times are when the families get problems about money like Gung Lung's. They had to move to another state to work. The most important, as Gung Lung's family did, is to have the whole family stay together.

The Chinese culture can be different than our life. Gung Lung's father told him to marry, but not with a pretty woman. Gung Lung went and picked one homely woman who was a slave, and she knew how to be a very good woman. And it is for that it affects me when her husband brought another woman into the house. That is when my feelings came. The thing is, all women are important. In life a wife spends a lot of time with their family. They merit respect.

Pearl S. Buck, thank you for writing this kind of book. It is very good to read these books. These books sometimes help us to become aware of the importance of family. It is not important to be a pretty woman. I remember when Gung Lung told his wife, "Your feet are big." Oh for me that was sad to read that because she was not a pretty woman but she was a good wife and mother. She didn't deserve that. It doesn't matter if the woman is pretty or not. The important thing is to be a good person in our life. We don't see when we die. It is important to see in life, how special are our moms and our loved ones. Love them now.

Thank you Pearl S. Buck for writing this book. It helps me to be conscious of the importance of life, family, weather and land. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Marta Lopez Soria

## Mona Anhari ~ Contra Costa County Library

---

Dear Francisco Jimenez,

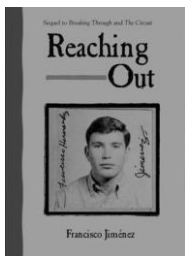
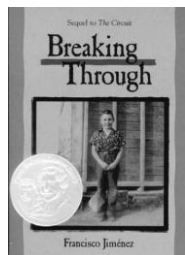
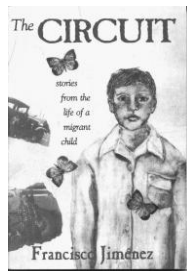
I am a student and have read all three of your books (*The Circuit*, *Breaking Through*, and *Reaching Out*) about you growing up. Your father seemed caring and was a good husband and papa in the beginning, but he obviously changed. He seemed to become depressed with disappointment by life not going the way he expected. I feel badly because he never knew how lucky he was by having such a wonderful family. The burden of life was not just on his shoulders. It was divided equally and unfortunately he never noticed.

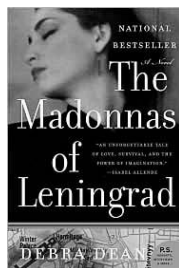
I admire your mother's even-temper and the way she always tried to bring the family together with love and understanding. I remember the time when your sister took your coin (which was so important to you) and spent it on gum. You were so angry but the way your mother talked to you made you understand that things are replaceable but not family. I also liked when your mother, in those difficult times, managed to save some money to buy you new clothes when you were starting college. She must have been so proud of you.

I admire you so much for how responsible you were with your family, work, and school. Through your perseverance you became a good example for the whole family by going to college. I am sure your book will give hope and encouragement to many people with similar struggles.

I am so interested in what happened to your whole family. Did any of your siblings get a good education like you did? What are they doing now? I hope your Mom is living in her dream house now.

Sincerely,  
Mona Anhari





Dear Ms. Debra Dean,

My name is Irina Alimova. I am a newcomer to USA, living here of about two years. Soon after my arrival I came across your book *The Madonnas of Leningrad*. It was of particular interest to me because I spent most of my life in Leningrad/St. Petersburg (Russia), including the whole time of Leningrad's siege during the Second World War.

At the time of the siege I was a 16-year-old schoolgirl, whose education was interrupted by the war and I worked first at a munitions factory and later as an electrician at the substation that supplied the municipal tram network with electric energy. I was awarded the medal "For the Defense of Leningrad" for this work. After the War I continued my education, receiving a PhD degree in physics.

Quite naturally I acquired the book and read it with ever growing interest. While reading, I involuntarily compared myself with the heroine of your novel. The living conditions and the situation of the city that you described were almost the same as what I experienced myself.

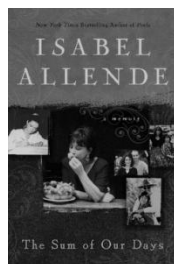
Of particular interest for me were the pages describing the life inside the Hermitage – the Leningrad most famous museum. Its docents, in spite of famine, severe frost, bombing and shelling, kept in memory a huge bulk of information about the painters and canvases. Some special cases are known, when the tour guides gave a detailed description of some paintings, standing before the empty frames, left at their places after the evacuation of the painting themselves. Rare listeners were either military men, pupils or the museum staff members, living in the museum basement.

While reading, I've noticed some inconsistency in handling of the city objects names, such as streets, bridges, squares and palaces. For example, while mentioning some important locations right in the center of the city, you used their present-day names, but not the ones they had at war time. So, going from one street to the other, you sometimes moved not only in space, but took leaps in time by about 50 years! These inconsistencies originated from the peculiarities of the renaming process of the city itself (from Leningrad to St. Petersburg) and some (but not all!) of its objects, which took place in 1991.

So, you could hardly take all this into account, but I think it can be of interest for you to be informed about such inaccuracies.

I am grateful to you for showing our city under such tragic circumstances to the American people. Thank you also for the hours that I spent reading your book. It is about my native city and in it, about one of the heroes of your novel – the Hermitage museum, which I love deeply and to which I paid a farewell visit on the eve of our flight to the USA. So, finally I can say “*spasibo and prekrasno.*”

Sincerely,  
Irina Alimova



Dear Ms. Allende,

English is my second language, and I am also working on my English with my tutor, Kathy. In addition, I am taking an English class at the community college. Last December, when I asked my English professor to recommend something to read during the winter break, she mentioned you, Isabel Allende, and she also told me how much she loves your books.

With your name in mind, I started to search for your books in the libraries, and then I began to either listen to or read them. I listened to *Daughter of Fortune*, *Portrait in Sepia*, *My Invented Country*, *The Sum of Our Days*, *Island Beneath the Sea*, and I also read *The House of the Spirits*. I liked all of them, especially *The Sum of Our Days*. I listened to it twice. I loved it very much, and I still remember how I smiled and laughed with your stories while I was listening.

A big impression I got from this book is your determination to do whatever you think is right in your heart. When you ask Willie to marry you, I adored you. I really admired your courage. When you were looking for a wife for your son, Nico, I was worried what if Nico found out, but I think you are a good mother, and you know what the best is for your son. I loved you even more when I listened to the chapter where you described yourself as the “Mother-in-Law from Hell”, I laughed when you went freely in and out of your son and your daughter-in-law’s home. I felt sorry for you and Lori when you threw away the old dishcloth which Lori had treasured for twenty years because it belonged to her dead grandmother. I was surprised when you rearranged their living room furniture and changed the rug, and I laughed when you said, “What on earth made me take a rug to a designer?” I knew why you did that. It was because of love.

I also liked the chapter, “To China in Search of Love”, which described how your husband’s bookkeeper, Tong, found his young wife. I smiled when Tong said that he wanted “a woman who had not been contaminated by America.”, and I asked the same question as you did, “Do you believe there is such a woman left in this world?” As a Chinese immigrant myself, I wanted to tell Tong that one of the reasons why many people came here was because they were already “contaminated by America” in China, and they yearned for freedom and independence, even though they knew there were a lot of difficulties to overcome.

Ms. Allende, your books are easy and fun to read, and it helps improve my English greatly. I am going to read your *Paula* this summer, and I know I will love it just like all of your other books.

Thank you for writing such great books!

Sincerely,  
Sharon Zhao

## Project Second Chance Book Club

### *Contra Costa County Library*

---

Dear Ms. MacLachlan,

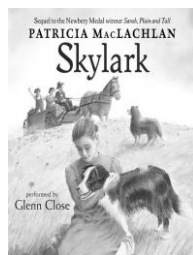
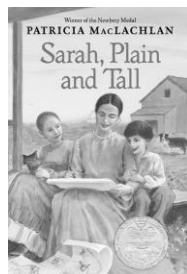
We are members of the PSC Book Club. We read or listened to *Sarah, Plain & Tall* and *Skylark*. Some of us plan to read the next two books, *Caleb's Story* and *More Perfect than the Moon*.

We like that Sarah is a very strong-minded woman, very independent. Was there someone in your life who was similar to Sarah? Jacob reminded one of us of her own father and how much he loved his land. He never wanted to leave his land, his home in Mexico, because he was born there and that's all he knew, just like Jacob.

Most of us had never read a book from this time period (late 1800's). Why did you pick this time over the present for a story? We never knew that in those days you found a new wife by putting an ad in the newspaper. We wondered why Jacob put an ad in a Maine newspaper; it was so far away from his home on the prairie.

There were many special moments in the book so it is hard to pick one favorite. One of us picked when Sarah learned how to drive the wagon. It seemed like Jacob was not planning to teach her, but Sarah was eager to learn right away. Another of us loved when the kittens were born and how one was orange, like the cat down the road from them. It was also a special moment when they surprised Sarah with a birthday party and the neighbors came and danced until midnight.

Sincerely,  
Project Second Chance Book Club



## Veronica Molina ~ Livermore Public Library

---



Dear Isabel,

I enjoy reading, and today I am learning English. My first book to read in English is Isabel Allende's biography. It was written by: Mary Main.

I share many of your thoughts relating to life. I think the person who has no time to give has no time for love. Your biography only reinforced what I thought of you. One thing that I really appreciate about you is your association to help Latino people. I also enjoy helping Latino people.

I have read some of your books. I like them all. My favorite is *The House of Spirits*.

The magic of your books is that they mix reality with imagination. If you do not like the real thing, with the magic you change your reality. Rosa wanted to look like a mermaid. Rosa imagined herself as a woman with white skin, green hair and gold eyes. This made Rosa happy.

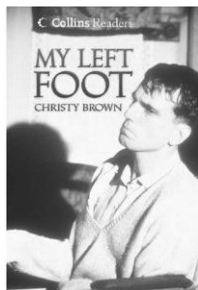
I would like to have lived a childhood without monsters. In real life we live with our childhood monster every day. Now I'm grown. I try to imagine my childhood in another way. These monsters do not destroy my life today. My imagination let me see a different kind of life then my childhood. I'm trying to make the people I love happy.

I will keep reading and learning from your books. Receive from me my admiration and respect.

Sincerely,  
Veronica Molina

## **Gloria Pacheco ~ *Livermore Public Library***

---



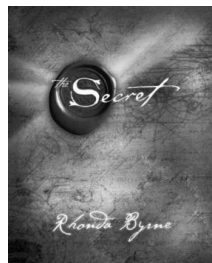
Dear Christy Brown,

I have finished reading *My Left Foot*. Christy, I really enjoyed reading your book. I admired you and your mother in many ways. When you were diagnosed by your doctor he told you that you had cerebral palsy. Your mother, even though she had eight children, had time and patience to care for you and taught you to read and write. When you used chalk on the floor, the first letter you wrote was the letter "A". Your mother was so proud of you. You never gave up even when the doctor told you that you were unable to use any parts of your body, but your left foot. You proved him wrong. Christy, in your struggle with your disability, there were moments when you wanted to give up, but you didn't. The end of the book was sad; it made me cry when you gave your mom a bouquet of red roses. Thank you for sharing these difficult experiences in your personal life.

Sincerely,  
Gloria Pacheco

## **Pablo Rangel ~ Livermore Public Library**

---



Dear Rhonda Byrne,

It is an honor to address you at this time and let you know the impact of your book titled *The Secret* has made in my life. It came to me at the very precise moment I needed it most. I was living in a dark and troubled time, filled with self-doubt. Today I am a much happier and self-assured man. I have no doubt that I can obtain anything I set my mind to do. Following your guidelines correctly gave me the tools to cross mountains and seas to achieve a better life.

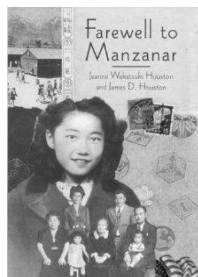
I thank you and everyone that supported your efforts of bringing the secret to the entire world.

May you and all your loved ones be blessed.

Sincerely,  
Pablo Rangel

## Marcela Cervantes ~ *Napa City-County Library*

---



Dear Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston,

In this book, *Farewell to Manzanar*, we can know about when you were a little girl. You tell us about your life in a camp called Manzanar in your life with your parents, brothers and sisters. The family was happy and very united but they suffered discrimination because they had Japanese faces.

When your family left the camp you thought you should not be discriminated against because you spoke English the same as everybody else.

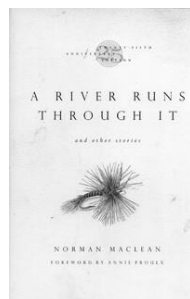
At one time in your life you had a double impulse – am I Japanese or American? You felt that in order to be accepted you had to study hard, read books and make good grades.

This book motivates me to learn the English language and I can tell my children to study hard - they can do well in this country without forgetting their Mexican culture.

Sincerely,  
Marcela Cervantes

## Anonymous ~ Napa City-County Library

---



Dear Prof. Maclean,

I didn't do much reading before reading *A River Runs Through It*, your book. It made me want to read more because I like to go hunting, finishing, and camping and gold minding so I know how it is to be out in nature and how awesome it is.

I'm a construction worker and sometimes a tree man. I'm also a volunteer fire fighter. I know how hard tree work is and I know how hard training is with the fire department.

I also really know how frustrating people are and how there's always someone you don't want around but it will hurt the feelings of someone you care about if you tell them what you think of that person.

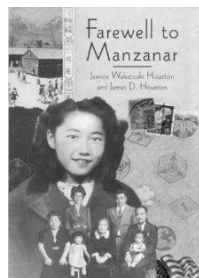
In summary, I like your book *A River Runs Through It* because it reminds me of things I have done and people I don't care for but have to tolerate. The book also reminds me about how sometimes there are things that happen that you would never believe if you weren't there at the time!

Thank you so much, master at your craft, Prof. Norman Maclean!

Sincerely,  
Anonymous

## Olivia Moreno ~ *Napa City-County Library*

---



Dear Jeanne Wakasuki Houston and James D. Houston,

I want to thank you for your wonderful book, *Farewell to Manzanar*. I love the way you describe things in detail, you made me feel as if I were there.

I enjoyed Chapter 5 “Almost a Family,” where you described how things were different at the camp. You mention your old round wooden table in your dining room, in that house you left. I think the great time that you can share with your family is during meals. But when you moved to the camp you stopped eating as a family. Your brothers and sisters ate with their friends, and would beg for food, hoping to find something to eat. You said, “No matter how bad the food might be you could always eat till you were full.”

I know what it is not to have enough food, and you never complain or think about how healthy it is. Your only choice is to eat, because you are hungry no matter what it is.

You made me remember when my mom would put us under the table to eat during the windy weather, usually February and March (in Mexico). You couldn’t even see things clearly because there was dust everywhere. Under the table was a very nice option, the table cloth protected us and our plates from the dust. I was so little, I enjoyed that part, but the reality was we were living in a hard situation.

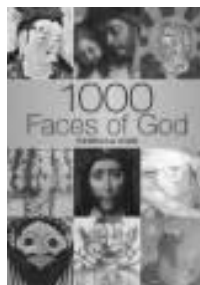
When you mentioned you were living in a cubicle, which was very small, and was used basically just to sleep in, this reminded me of my life. My family had just one small room and everything was there, two full size beds, a table, and a stove. During that time my mom was pregnant with her fifth child. She didn’t have money to pay the doctor, so she just decided to have the baby at home with some assistance from our neighbor. I remember waiting outside the house with my sister for several hours, and finally we were able to come inside. When we entered we saw a new baby. He was fine, but my mom was not very well. She had anemia and took a while to recover. For several years 5 people slept in a full size bed.

Your story and my story are sadly a reality. Probably you and I today, are living in a much better situation, but one thing that makes me upset is to know that even today some children are living in a similar situation to the one that you lived in during the war or as mine in a very poor family. I

hope every person who reads your book can think and understand what it is like to live with such situations.

I think you are amazing to share your experience with others. To be honest you encouraged me to be bold, to talk to you about my own childhood, things that I don't even want anyone to know about me. Thank you so much. It feels good to talk about my life. I cannot change anything, it is what it was, but always I want to look for a positive point. All the things I lived through made me the person who I am, and probably I am not the best, but I am not the kind of person who gives up easily, and also I am very sensitive to the suffering of others. I wish I could help everyone, but I recognize my limitations, so I encourage everyone to have a positive attitude. My dad told me, "If there is a problem, then there is a solution, so there is no reason to worry."  
Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Your friend,  
Olivia Moreno



Dear Ms. Hind:

I read your book *Las 1000 Caras de Dios*. I think that someone who takes the time to put the book together the way you did is very impressive. It's not easy to find all the pictures and illustrations from all over the world.

I think the book is very creative. The way you organized the pages is very interesting. The other thing I liked about your book is that you are not focused on one religion. That leaves people free to choose whatever they want to believe and to learn and decide. I don't feel like someone put me in a little box. I'm free to choose and to keep looking for more options and more information for myself.

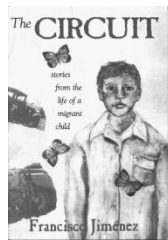
The things I learned from the book are that there is a hierarchy of God and that was one of the most impressive things. I learned also about the scrolls. I almost feel excited by looking at the illustration of them. When I read about the dictation from the angel Gabriel to Mohammed, I could almost imagine God talking to the angel.

I wish some of the words on the scroll could be readable. Also I wish there could be a documentary or video based on the book.

Sincerely,  
Arcelia Avelar

## Guadalupe Contreras ~ *San Mateo County Library*

---



Dear Señor Jimenez:

I have been reading your stories in your book *The Circuit*.

I have many feelings when I read the stories: happy, sad, surprised, and proud.

I see that your life was similar to my life. I didn't receive any toys in my childhood because my parents didn't have money either. I didn't have parties and colorful cakes, but I loved my parents and when I started to work I helped them. Also, my Dad was like your Dad. He was mad all the time, he wasn't friendly, and he never let me go hang out with my friends. That's why I got married at the age of 16!

I think you have a huge heart and are full of love. I'm very proud of you; you are a very brave, smart, and generous person. Your book will help many people to value life and know we have to help others. We also must believe in God because God can give us miracles. Everything we need to do is to have faith in Him.

Sincerely,  
Guadalupe Contreras

## Maria S. Corona ~ *San Mateo County Library*

---



Dear Victor Villaseñor,

You and I have a lot in common. So far from what I have read from *Lluvia de Oro* I have had lots of thoughts about my ancestors. I am sure they lived like your family did. Both sides of my family are from Jalisco, Mexico. Reading your book motivates me to get information, but I can't go so far back. Like you, I also want to make a small book about my father. I know that I am going to call it: *The Memories of the Family of a Bracero*.

In your book you say, "When I turned twenty I arrived at a point where, sadly, I did not want to hear about the past." Like you when I was younger, I would see pictures of my grandparents and parents. But I just saw them. I did not feel I wanted them. Now that I have kids and I want to write the story for them so they know a little bit about where they come from, I feel I need those pictures. But they are hard to find. My uncles and aunts don't know where they ended up. I am planning to go to Jalisco one day to see if I can find any.

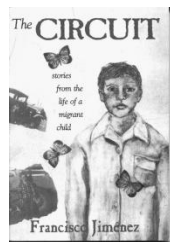
You also made me think when we are young we judge our parents not knowing what they have been through. It's when you get older and you start to live life like it really is, that's when you realize life is not easy. Only they know what they went through. That's when you think, "With all their errors, in their way, they did love us." But life was hard for them and they were in their own world.

I admire you because you got so much information that when I am reading your book I don't want to stop. I just want to keep going and going to see what is going to happen next. Also one day I do want to go to see La Mina in *Lluvia de Oro* where your grandmother and mother Guadalupe lived when your mother was small, because I imagined everything when I read it. I know it will be different, but I want to stand there and say, "Here is where it happened."

Sincerely,  
Maria Socorro Corona

## Gabriela Garcia ~ *San Mateo County Library*

---



Dear Francisco Jimenez,

When I read your book *The Circuit* I identified with many of the challenges you had to overcome in your life.

I think about you and how you felt when you went to school. Because you couldn't speak English, you didn't understand anything. I remember when I, too, was in a similar situation. When I had my first baby it was a very difficult time.

I went to the hospital. I had to stay in the hospital until my baby was born. The doctor told me how I might feel and how I could help in my baby's birth, but I didn't understand anything he said. I couldn't understand English at all. I felt very confused and I was in a lot of pain, so when my husband translated for the doctor I couldn't really hear him.

My baby had a problem. The sound of his heart was lower and he couldn't breathe. The doctor told me you must do as I say. Your baby should be born immediately. But I couldn't understand him, so I didn't do it. This made the birth of my baby more complicated.

Finally, my son was born on October 31, 2002. It was Halloween Day, but I didn't know what that meant. I saw a lot of doctors come into my room with machines and they wore costumes. I was scared of the costumes and the machines. They explained to my husband what was happening. He told me everything was okay, but I saw in his face, he wasn't telling me the truth.

Right after my baby was born, the doctor took my baby and put him on a little bed and then closed the curtains. I couldn't see what was going on. I only saw my baby. He was purple. He didn't cry. I felt very worried because my baby wasn't breathing. Finally, after half an hour, the doctor gave me my crying baby.

When my baby was better I felt better. But when I got home I then experienced a deep depression. I worked on my feelings and I finally got better. Because of this experience I became determined to study English. I used CD's and computer programs. I've also been taking English classes for one year. I have to learn English for my family and me. I never again want to be in that situation. That was very traumatic for me.

I'm a mother of two young boys ages 8 and 6. My husband and I are the first generation in this country so my sons don't speak English well yet. They are in a similar situation as you were in Elementary School. After reading your book where you express the frustrations you suffered, but also the tenacity to not give up, it made me think of the difficulties my sons will also face during their academic training. I don't want my sons to give up either. Your book helped me realize that there are many opportunities to improve yourself so that I can help and encourage my boys in their long journey.

Thank you for sharing your life experiences. I have read your other books and I hope you will write more. I enjoy how you write. It motivates me because it helps me remember that whatever I want to do, I can do. I just have to work hard to accomplish my goals.

Sincerely,  
Gabriela Garcia

## Elizabeth Gonzalez ~ San Mateo County Library

---



Dear Ms. Collins:

Thank you for writing the wonderful and fantastic novel, *The Hunger Games*.

Even though I didn't know how to read a lot in English when I started reading *The Hunger Games*, it was very interesting! I could not stop, even though my eyes were itching from reading a lot in the night, I wanted to know more and more...

The thing I like about the book is the relationship between Katniss and her sister Prim when she stepped forward to take her sister's place in the games. Also I like the triangle love between Gale, Katniss and Peeta. About the games even Katniss and Peeta know they will need to fight and kill to be alive, which was strange for me to read because they were just kids.

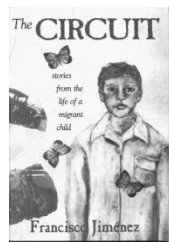
I was so excited about *The Hunger Games* that I was looking for *Catching Fire* before I even finished. Now I have finished *Mockingjay*, too; and I am looking forward to the movie.

Thank you again for writing this trilogy.

Sincerely,  
Elizabeth Gonzalez

## **José Hernandez ~ *San Mateo County Library***

---



Dear Francisco Jimenez,

When I read your story, I discovered many similarities from my childhood. I also had to take care of my little brothers so that my mother could cook or make tortillas for the family. I started pulling garbanzo beans with my father when I was around six or seven years old.

Unlike Francisco Jimenez, I was not able to continue my education, but I always dreamed about returning to school. When I first came to the United States, I also had a difficult time communicating with people who spoke only English. I remember seeing Francisco Jimenez a few years ago at the Half Moon Bay Library. I always remember what he said about people who did not know how to read or write. They were not necessarily dumb but maybe did not have a chance to go to school. These words inspired me to continue my schooling and I was able to complete my elementary education. Now I am working on my secondary education. I am also working on improving my English vocabulary. I still dream of getting my GED from high school.

Thanks to Francisco Jimenez who inspired me and to all the people who are helping me to make my dream come true.

Sincerely,  
Jose Hernandez

## Susie Ho ~ *San Mateo County Library*

---



Dear Mr. Mortenson,

What a wonderful story —Three Cups of Tea! I would like to tell you how much I appreciated the book and what I learned from you.

My tutor selected this book as my reading assignment. As soon as I started to read this book, right from the Maps and Introduction, I was attracted. The Korphe area is so new to me. I cannot get to know this area from books, news, movies or TVs. The only thing familiar to me was the mountain Himalaya- the highest in the world. I wanted to understand how people were living there and how they looked at the rest of the world.

In this book, you helped me to discover and see a brand new world! There, the people are smart, hard working, and kind. They are not only helping each other but also helping a stranger without requiring anything in return. This is something totally different from our modern world here.

I really appreciated Haji Ali's wise words, "These mountains have been here for a long time, and so have we. You can't tell the mountains what to do. You must learn to listen to them." Yes, in our modern world, talk and presentation seem to be very important, but sometimes we forget to keep quiet, listen and reconsider. Slowing down a little bit is not a bad thing. We often forget to respect other's wishes because we fail to listen to what they need

For me the most important chapter in this book was 'Haji Ali's lesson'. The meaning of the three cups of tea was warm. When he said "We may be uneducated. But we are not stupid. We have lived and survived here a long time." It really touched my heart. It is true, although he and his people did not have a real school in that area, they still got knowledge from generation to generation. Not only that, they also learned from their own experience. I would like to share this thought with my family and friends.

I want to thank you for writing this book and letting us go through the journey with you. You not only shared the good work but also the dangers and problems in that area.

Your kindness and strength supported you to make your dream come true. What I loved is that you also made the dreams of all your supporters come true. Such as in Chapter 15, after looking at the pictures of Korphe

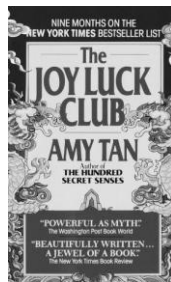
School, Mr. Jean Hoerni, your long term supporter, called a childhood friend in Switzerland and said “I built a school in the Karakoram. What have you done for the last fifty years?” At that time, I could imagine his smile and pride. You helped him reach his dream and have a wonderful life. After I read this paragraph, I was tearing. Mr. Hoerni was a Swiss, you are American, and Korphe school’s students and teachers are Balti people - what a peaceful world you build up! Just like Jahan said, you made a promise and you kept that promise. I would like to learn to do the same.

Thank you! And may God bless you and your family!!

With best regards,  
Susie Ho

## Siew Lee ~ *San Mateo County Library*

---



Dear Miss Tan,

Most people know *The Joy Luck Club* because of the novel has been adapted to film. Before I read the book, I heard many people comment on this film. It was an amazing film. Recently I read this book. It made me break down and have the feeling that all the mothers are the same in the world; they love their children, they want to get the best for their children, and they will do everything for their children.

The series of stories addresses the desire of the Chinese mothers for their daughters to have better lives in America than they had in China. They made sacrifices to come to the United States and make a better life for their daughters, providing them with more opportunities. All the mothers expected their daughters to have the typical Chinese character and to obey them. Similarly the daughters were rejecting their mothers' ideas; they expected their mothers to understand the American way and let them decide their own things. Moreover, in the stories you can see the clash between the values of the Chinese mothers and the new lives embraced by the American daughters. The Chinese women hoped to be lucky, and their hope was their only joy. The mothers were also very superstitious.

I will like to tell you a true story about the superstition in my family. Thirty years ago, one day my father came home with a lucky black stone. He was so excited he told my mom that today he met a prophet who was selling the lucky black stone. He claimed that he was from China. He intended to come to Singapore to help people with illness. He told my father to put the lucky black stone on the glass and pour in the water. One cup per day will cure any illness. The lucky black stone cost \$50 Singapore dollars, which equals to US\$300 today. The monk said to my father, they need the money to build the temple. My uncle was sick at that time, so my father bought this lucky stone. After drinking the water for three months, my uncle was still sick.

I believe one's love and respect for one's mother is deep with one's bones. I have great respect for people who leave behind their home country and their families. It inspires me and makes me want to make them proud. I really admire you and the way you have conveyed this message to everyone who has read the book or seen the movie.

Sincerely,  
Siew Lee

## Maria Rico ~ *San Mateo County Library*

---



Dear Mr. John Steinbeck,

I read some of the short stories from the book *The Long Valley*. I chose this book because my family also lives in the Salinas Valley. I saw the movie "Cannery Row." The man in the movie was like Ed Ricketts, one of your best friends. He lived in Monterey where they canned sardines. My sister-in-law packages fruit and vegetables in plastic bags and they call where she works a cannery!

Someday I hope to visit your home and the museum in Salinas, California.

Sincerely Yours,  
Maria Rico

## Reina de los Santos ~ *San Mateo County Library*

---



Dear Ms. Muñoz Ryan,

I have recently read your books *Esperanza Rising*. I enjoyed reading it very much because my experiences were the same as hers.

Like Esperanza, I also learned a new kind of job, a new language, a new way of living. I also lived with a lot of people in the house like Esperanza. I lived in a mobile home. I didn't know anybody. We came in 2005 because my husband's brother lived here.

Like Esperanza I had to learn about the different ways to cook and I lived far from my country. I didn't work in the fields, but worked as a house cleaner in a hotel.

You have to be brave to start a new life.

When I came to America I was afraid and worried but now I am very happy because I learned the way to live in America.

I have more opportunities and life is more peaceful, but sometimes I miss my life in Mexico.

Reina de los Santos

## Quizzie Vickers ~ *San Mateo County Library*

---



Dear K.C. Smith:

My name is Quizzie Vickers; I have been a fisherman for many years. I know the hows and the whats about the sport of fishing. Yet, I've gotten some good pointers about fishing from your book. It is great to know that the cool name for a fisherman is an angler.

If I didn't know where to fish, but I do, your book told me to contact the city park for places to fish. I love to fish. I have fished at: Clear Lake, CA, Stockton, CA off of Eight Mile Road, San Francisco, CA (behind Oyster Point); Pacific Pier (for crabs), off of Highway 1. I've fished in salt water (ocean), and fresh water (lakes, ponds, rivers and streams).

My favorite fishing place is Ensenada, Mexico; there I have caught Halibut, Barracuda, and Link Code Rick fish. I love fishing!

I am a witness that the plastic tackle box is the best, the other one will rust.

Thank you for writing *Boys' Life Series: Let's Go Fishing*. The book sure will help many who want to learn the nuts and bolts about fishing. It is a great book to read. I enjoyed all the pictures of all the fishing gear, various fishing trips and the fish.

A Fisherman,  
Quizzie Vickers



Dear Walter Mosley,

This is my first time reading a book about slavery. I made a powerful new connection because it is part of my roots. It brought me in more than I expected.

A light turned on when the slaves were so mistreated. Not having enough food to eat, being branded like an animal, and being chained at night—I can't imagine. When 47 and Tall John went to get the medicine for Eloise to save her life, they were delayed by the storm. When they returned they were beaten and Mud Albert was killed. It helped me to understand how they were treated. I felt sad and angry.

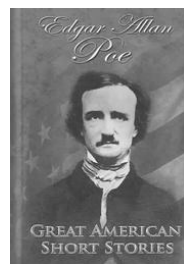
I was in church during the sermon; I made another connection with the book. I felt there was a link between the book and Christianity. John had superhuman knowledge and power. John came from another place to save his people like Jesus did. As Jesus used miracles to heal, so did John. Wall used his power for evil. Tall John used his power for good. Good comes from God and evil from Satan.

Reading 47 opened my eyes to the reality of the life of slaves. I know now I will search for my own roots from that time.

Sincerely,  
Ramona Addison

## Gilbert Calistro ~ *San Francisco Public Library*

---



Dear Mr. Hutchisson,

I very much enjoyed reading your book *Poe* on Edgar Allen Poe. It gave me pure insight into what Poe was like as he grew up without his real parents and what he was like as a young man.

I'm wondering what intrigued you to write about Poe's life. It seems to me that you got engulfed in his personality and that drew you into his dark world. You know what got me was that a lot of what you wrote about his drinking didn't match-up to what I have heard about Poe. What I read was that he was a falldown drunk, an alcoholic, but your book mentions that a lot of his friends and people who knew him said he drank very little. That is something I can relate to because I'm a drinker. There have been occasions that I drank too much, like Poe, but also there have been times that I only drank a little and people still accused me of drunkenness. My experience with drinking is that Poe wasn't an alcoholic like some people accused him of being.

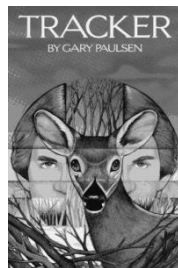
With Poe's writing about the supernatural I can understand where he's coming from. Before I got on my medication, I too had dark days filled with similar thoughts of the supernatural. My dark shadows came through the walls of pain. The connection I feel with him is that both of our shadows move in the dark. Like Poe, I believe that death has no real meaning in the sense that there is no afterlife. Is there another door that we walk through when the light touches the dark? Poe saw so much darkness in the world because of the tragedies in his life and this darkness came out in his writing.

The person who smeared Poe's name after his death got under my skin because I feel Poe didn't deserve that kind of smudge on his life. When individuals read your book they will be able to draw their own conclusions because you provided so much information on Poe's life, I appreciate your work because Poe was a very complex man.

Your Friend,  
Gilbert Calistro

## Eugene Cook ~ *San Francisco Public Library*

---



Dear Mr. Gary Paulsen,

*The Tracker* is a great book. I understand that John and his grandfather had a really good relationship. John knew his grandfather had cancer but he noticed no change in him.

*The Tracker* is a touching and understanding story which is all about love and caring. The boy and his grandfather work the barn and farm together. They went hunting together. I wish I had gotten along with my grandfather like that. John was a blessed kid.

John's grandfather told him he was going to take a year off and he would have to go hunting alone. John wanted his grandfather to go with him because it was fun when they went together. They had a really good working relationship around the barn. They communicated well at breakfast and had a pretty good understanding with each other.

One day I would like to meet you. This book inspired me to read more. I loved your stories. I have also read Brian's *Winter and Bass Reeves*. I have learned a lot more words and even began looking words up in the dictionary. I can't wait to read more of your books. I am excited about reading.

Warm regards,  
Eugene Cook

**Muawattia Mabrey**  
***San Francisco Public Library***

---

Dear Shaneika Henderson,

My tutor Annie and I read your article "Always Dream Big" in the *Project Read Update* newsletter (Winter, 2009 Vol.26, No. 1) and it inspired me as a Learner to read such a big story by another Learner. First of all I have to admit I thought you were a man because I started in the middle of the article and I related to your story as a man, but maybe it's more because we are both single parents. The words were so strong it caught my attention and this made me want to read the whole article. I thought about my own kids and my own struggles as a single parent.

I related to the part when you said that we have to keep on trying and fighting everyday to learn and help our kids. I can also say that I have had days when I have felt like it was "hell on earth." That was really well put.

I appreciate you sharing your story with the Project Read family. I really felt good when

I read your story. I would like to thank Brian for putting the newsletter together. It means a lot to read articles out of the newsletter not only for the learners but also for the tutors, and the Project Read community.

Maybe one day I can have my own article in the newsletter so it can affect someone else like you affected me. From one great parent to another, keep your head up. Thank you for sharing your story.

Sincerely,  
Muawattia Mabrey

## George Oliver ~ *San Francisco Public Library*

---



Dear J California Cooper,

When I read your books, *Stars Seeking Midnight Suns*, for example, it makes me too emotional to sit and read them at one time. The tears start running, then the mood starts to lighten up. The character starts to see doors in her inner soul start to open. I as a reader can see the doors in my mind start to open like a light turned on as I read your books. I also like the way your books always put education in your character's mind's eye.

I am 52 years old, and I am starting to read more of your books. I find them inspiring. They make me want to pick up more books, not only yours, but other writers' books, too.

Your number one fan,  
George L Oliver

## Ronald Pacheco ~ *San Francisco Public Library*

---



Dear Stephenie Meyer,

I am Ron and I am at Project Read at the San Francisco Public Library learning how to read. I am writing this letter because I got an assignment to write a letter to the author of a book I thought was interesting.

*Twilight* was a good story because it was a beautiful love story about a teenage girl and a teenage vampire boy that falls in love in a little town where they live.

I felt it was an interesting story because you used teenagers and that it was so good for the younger generation. It made the younger generation pick up a good book and it makes them want to learn how to read.

I didn't like the starting of the story because it was for teenage girls, but it got interesting when it talked about vampires and their lives.

Being a Project Reader, an older man learning how to read and write, it was a privilege to read your book. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Ronald Pacheco

Dear Raymond,

I read your poem called “Fear.” I feel the same way you do. I can’t read and write without asking somebody to help me. I wish to be able to read and write and even spell without asking for help or having people laugh at me.

When I was growing up in school, I used to feel bad because people would call me “retarded.” It made me very angry and I wished to go up to them and show that I could read and write but I couldn’t.

I think you and I are not alone. There are a lot of people like us out there.

Thank you very much,

Sincerely,  
George Arevalo



Dear Ms. Burnett,

I am enjoying your charming book *The Secret Garden*. It is the first novel in the English language I've tried to read. I find it both a pleasure and a challenge.

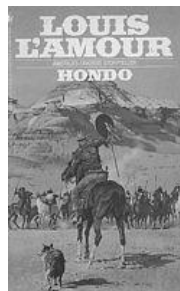
As a mother, I can relate to Mary as she tries to make sense of a strange country and new people all by herself. I enjoy watching her figure out what to do. I've just reached the part of your book where Mary meets Colin, and I'm very interested in what will happen next. I think Mary will try to help him, but I don't know for sure.

I'm also a gardener, and it's been great to learn the English names of many plants and flowers I knew only in Chinese. I love the way Mary imagines a beautiful garden and is willing to work very hard to make it happen. I know just how she feels.

It's also interesting to compare the way English and Chinese novels are written. Many of your descriptions are new to me, and I'm learning a number of new words in context as I go along.

This is a wonderful story and a good start to my English language reading. I'm looking forward to finishing it and reading another story all by myself. Thank you for writing it.

Sincerely,  
Ying Chen



Dear Louis L'Amour,

I enjoyed your book, *Hondo* more than the movie *Hondo* starring John Wayne. I liked your use of words describing what you were writing about, you used so much detail, so I had a picture in my mind and I had a feeling that I was with that person riding a horse or in town.

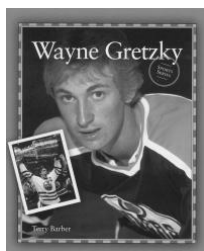
Reading the story where the story changed scenes, from one place to another was new to me. At first, I didn't know what was going on when you change from a Ranch to a town seen with the lady's husband getting himself into trouble and later he was killed.

Your characters seem to come to life in the story as you create the seen and I could read that part over again. In the movie the seen was gone and I would have to see the movie again to see that seen over again. This was how I read your book *Hondo*. The ambush seen, I needed to read over a few time to get all the details you had written in that part of the story. When the Indians killed the dog with a spear this was a sad seen with details that made me sad. I read this part over a number of times so I understood all the details that you had about the dog and the Indian who killed the dog. Once I had read a few chapters I had a hard time putting the book down. You kept the action moving and the story is what I liked best about *Hondo*.

My teacher Linda Watkins found a few more of your books for me to read. Now I am reading your book, "Mustang man." I love the words used in the first chapter, "I just want to wrap myself around the nearest horse and take off down the country," yes I will enjoy the book, "Mustang Man." I have two other books by Louis L'Amour to keep me busy reading, thanks to Linda.

## **Saman Lahidji ~ *Santa Clara City Library***

---



Dear Mr. Barber,

Hello, I am Saman Lahidji. I'm in a reading program, Read Santa Clara, at the Santa Clara City Library. I recently read your book, *Wayne Gretzky*.

I've always admired Wayne Gretzky and when I saw his picture on the front of your book I checked it out of the library to read it. I really enjoyed it.

It made me remember when I was 9 or 10 years old and wanted to play hockey. My friend introduced me to the game; he played in a league and took me to watch a game. Then I started a beginner's class and learned the basics. I enjoyed it and was excited to be playing hockey. We practiced in the street on roller blades and made our own equipment; for example, we used his mother's garden kneeling pad for a chest protector. We also made a goalie glove out of a baseball catcher's mitt, foam rubber, and duct tape.

We saved our money and bought better equipment. We had lots of fun but I knew I'd never be a professional hockey player.

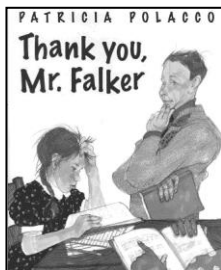
I am still a big hockey fan especially for the San Jose Sharks. I think no one can beat Wayne's record but they are still trying.

Thank you for writing these great biographies about interesting people I admire. I have already checked another one out of the library, about Amelia Earhart and look forward to reading it.

Sincerely,  
Saman Lahidji

## Ron Maniglia ~ *Santa Clara City Library*

---



Dear Patricia,

I enjoyed your book *Thank You, Mr. Falker*. In the fall, the literacy program I'm in called Read Santa Clara had a storytime for adults. During the storytime, one of the books that was read to us was your book. I am a 55-year-old man who related to the character in your book who struggled with reading. Trisha was called a "dummy" by the other students. I was called "stupid" by students and family. I understand the frustration of not being able to read even though I am a smart person in all respects. But the reading and writing kept me down in confidence.

I was touched by your story, especially when I found out that the character Trisha was actually you. It makes me feel envious that you were able to overcome your reading difficulties. Although I haven't gotten the art of reading and writing down yet, in the last four years, I have made tremendous improvement.

Thank you for writing your story. It brought tears to my eyes. But don't tell anybody. Keep up the good work in writing more children's stories. From one "toad" to another "toad," thank you for touching my heart.

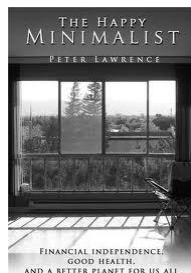
Respectfully,  
Ron Maniglia

## Maria Yue ~ *Santa Clara City Library*

---

Dear Peter Lawrence,

I liked your book *The Happy Minimalist* very much, has a lot of useful information. We all need that information because we buy too many things we do not need.



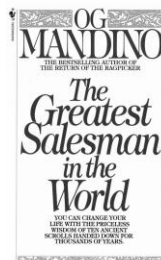
We over spend than what we make, just like our government. I liked what you said about how you spent money on useful items, mostly things you need not what you want. I wish I could live like you but I have house mates who help me pay my mortgage. I need few things in the house to make it look nice and comfortable so the rooms are always occupied. But your book will help me think twice before I buy things.

Last year in read Santa Clara's book of learner writing I wrote a story about how we should spend money and time wisely.

Sincerely,  
Maria Yue

**Lina Zhou**  
**Santa Clara City Library**

---



Dear Mr. Og Mandino,

I held your hands, I followed your steps, and you and I opened your *The Greatest Salesman in the World* together. I read your words, I read your spirit. When my eyes beheld the poetic touch of those wonderful and wise words, my soul was deeply moved. When I closed your book, the hot blood began to boil in my chest and the fire of life began to burn. My heart was raised by a magic power. A ray of sunshine shone into my heart. When I start a new day, I, like you, found that I had three new partners: self-confidence, self-esteem and enthusiasm. I just know that my life has accompanied your book....

When I opened your book before, I knew nothing about you or your book. With respect to you, I began to search for your creative trajectory. I discovered that your life had experienced ups and downs, from being a pilot to being a tramp, from being a tramp to becoming the world's greatest speak and writer. Your life has been so brilliant. You are touching through two thousand years ago that camel boy named Heidfeld who successfully changed his fate, build vast business empire from nothing, telling us how to deal with the legendary wealth and happiness, and, through ten scrolls, to convey the idea that success and fulfillment in life are necessary for wisdom.

I can say that you are Heidfeld. Heidfeld is you. I just found out that more than more than 30 million copies of *The Greatest Salesman in the World* sold and your book has been translated into 18 languages. Your book created a lot of desire to change one's fate. The success of your teaching, not just the abundance of material wealth, informs us that life can have a totally different existence. Not only you changed yourself, you have also changed the people's lives. You change the world through changed your readers' lives.

Mr. Og Mandino: Let me hold your warm and powerful hands. Let me follow your steps -- you and I opened the pages together again. I am a realtor. Thank you so much for teaching me the life lessons: how to be an entrepreneur, a boot-strapper, and how to motivate myself to be a really successful sale person. Thank you so much for influence me to believe myself. I sent successfully oath. I sprinkle my love to the world. I try my best to help those most in need of help. All my life has been or will become wonderful. Help me achieve the highest wisdom, vision and opportunities. I

just want to let you know -- I am ready! Trust me! I have taken the action and you will see the changes. I know that if I persist, if I continue to try, if I continue to charge myself, I will succeed. And I believe that day will come for me...

Sincerely Yours,  
Your most loyal fans: Lina Zhou

## Osminda Albarado ~ Solano County Library

---



Dear Mr. Steinbeck,

*The Pearl* is an excellent book that teaches a good lesson to all the people who have the opportunity to read the story. I think the author of *The Pearl* is an exceptional author who describes each word with real feeling. When I read the book I could imagine the places that the author was talking about in the story. And the language he used to describe every little thing was very easy to understand because I could imagine the colors, noises, the feeling and the emotions of the story. For example, on page forty-one he describes the main character as follows:

"He felt alone and unprotected and scraping crickets and shrilling tree frogs and croaking toads seemed to be carrying the melody of evil"

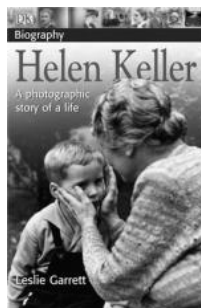
This book is about a family who are a happy family in the beginning of the story, Even though they did not have a lot of money. The problems for the family started when their baby Coytito was bitten by a scorpion. They looked for the doctor, but the doctor did not help them because they did not have money to pay for treatment. The family went to the sea to fish like they usually did every day. Kino and Juana were very desperate to get the money to pay the doctor. Kino decided to dive in the water to look for some oysters and he found one big oyster that had a pearl, the most beautiful pearl of all. The pearl took the attention of all the people and everybody wanted to get the pearl. Some people thought of how lucky Kino's family were to have a big pearl and wished the best for the family, but some other people wanted to steal the pearl from Kino's hands. One night somebody tried to steal the pearl, but Kino was determined to fight for the pearl. Trying to save the pearl, he killed three people and his baby Coyotito too. Now all of Kino's dreams were gone. Kino and Juana then decided to throw the pearl back in the water.

One thing that I really did not like about the ending of the story was that Kino killed his baby. That made me feel sad even though it was an accident. I think that this book is a fascinating story that teaches a good lesson. What is the lesson? For me the lesson is that what we wish for most may not be the best thing for us. It is better to be happy with what you have already. I really enjoyed reading this book because the author brings me into the story through my imagination using all of my senses. *The Pearl* is a great book!

Sincerely,  
Osminda Albarado

## Patricia Bentancourt ~ Solano County Library

---



Dear Leslie Garrett,

When I picked to read the book, *Helen Keller's Life*, I did it because in my country there is an institution that helps special needs children and it is called Ann Sullivan. Likewise I am a teacher of Kindergarten and love children.

Thanks to you Leslie Garrett, I have identified with the struggles and I am lucky to know the history of Helen Keller and her teacher Annie Sullivan.

This story has helped me to open my eyes, heart and mind, to the people who are born with difficulties of not being able to see and listen. I sit in admiration for the courage of Helen Keller's determination, her vitality and passion, for learning and to dominate the skills of reading, writing, speaking even though at the age of two a childhood disease took away her abilities to read, write and speak. But thanks to her teacher Annie Sullivan that came into her life so that she could get out of the world where it was very lonely and to be an example for people to live their lives with courage and strength.

Her strong, vital character and with her great will she manage to graduate with honors at Ratcliffe's University, she became a better, activist for the poor and to fight for the blind and deaf so they will have better opportunities. Helen was an exceptional person that we all should bearing in mind that we have the gift, sight, hearing and the language skills.

It has been for my constant reflection and an inspiration to improve my attitude towards the challenges that are presented to me, while learning the English language. There are moments in which I feel that in spite of my efforts, it is going to be very difficult to dominate the language and to overcome the negativism I have. Thank you Helen Keller for injecting a good dose of will power to continue forward with the challenges that are presented to me. Thank you! Annie Sullivan that you have made me think over the role that we fulfill as teachers to affect the life of our pupils, since you offered the necessary tools to Helen that she could understand the world around her and accompany her through life every step Helen took just like a mother would do.

We teachers are like migratory birds that pass through the lives of our pupils! WHAT DELICATE TASK!

We have a great responsibility as teachers, and it depends on our work to open the doors of opportunities for our pupils and to leave fingerprints in there lives and souls in order that they are good people.

This is what Annie Sullivan did for Helen to sow the seeds to know and to love, which she did to Helen a brilliant lady that we will remember and admire always her great will power, courage and humility. A great example of life that affects our hearts when you know her history.

Patricia Bentancourt



Dear Ms. Marjorie Haines,

Hi. My name is Monica Caballero and I'm a student with Solano county Library Adult Literacy Program. I have been improving my English reading and writing skills for the past three and a half years. Recently, I read your book *Rosa*. My tutor and I chose the book from the New Reader section at the library because it was the perfect reading level for me.

I liked the character, Rosa, because she's very strong and very smart. Rosa is a good helper for all her family. She loves learning and she loves her family. I liked the way you showed how these feelings fought each other inside of Rosa. You used good examples so I could really imagine how Rosa felt.

I like this quotation from the book:

Rosa sat next to Mother's bed. She wanted to scream, "It's not fair, it's not fair! I love school. Please let me go to school!" Rosa looked at Mother's pale face. She would not say anything about her real feelings.

One of my favorite parts is when Rosa's sister Sophie tells her, "You only think about yourself. How do you think I like going to a strange school without you? Nobody talks to me, and I hate it!" At this moment Rosa recognizes that she is not the only person with hurt and angry feelings.

Another part I like is when Rosa's father is very sick. She needs to help the doctor with an operation to save her father's life. At first Rosa is really afraid. But she knows that she is the only one who can help the doctor. "She had always wanted to be a nurse. So now she must act like one." Because Rosa is so brave her father survives the operation. Everyone is proud of her. I also felt proud of Rosa because she put into practice with her own family the things she wanted to do: to be a teacher and a nurse.

The story made me think about how it was so hard for women in the past, more than for me. It's easier now for women to go to school. I don't have to work as hard as Rosa did. I appreciate that my children are getting an education.

Thanks for writing this story in simple language for a new reader like me.  
*Rosa* is the first book in English I have ever read just for pleasure!

Sincerely,  
Monica Caballero

## Ernesto Ceja ~ Solano County Library

---



Dear Don Miguel Ruiz,

My name is Ernesto and it is a pleasure to write this letter to you. I've read your book, *The Four Agreements*, and I want to tell you that it is an extraordinary book since it helps me to understand better how I can transform my life to a new way of life.

Now my perspective on life is to be positive no matter how big or difficult my problems are. We always are worried about simple things and almost all those are created by ourselves. The book teaches us how to break that obstacle that doesn't allow us to be happy and confident.

I discovered that first of all I have to accept myself with my good things and my bad things and then to accept others how they are.

One of the four agreements says be impeccable with your words. Your words are the reflection of yourself; your words say everything about you.

The second agreement says don't take anything personally because when you take anything personally it begins to build problems even when somebody telling that you are doing well.

The third agreement says don't make assumptions. This is very important since when you do that you are creating some rumors without knowing if that is true.

And the fourth agreement to me is the most important and it is do your best every moment. I think that this agreement includes the other three because doing your best means never blame yourself and never judge yourself.

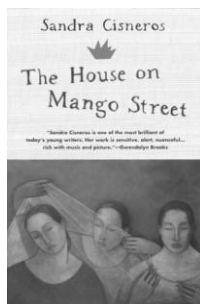
I've experienced these agreements in my life and I've seen changes that make me feel better and more positive.

I want to thank you Mr. Don Miguel Ruiz for writing this book, be sure that I am going to do my best effort to be happy.

Sincerely,  
Ernesto

## Maria Duran ~ *Solano County Library*

---



When she's writing she wrote exactly like she talk. She is not confused. I identify with this book because she writes about her culture.

I feel like she's writing something like what happen to me. Like the lady who don't want to go any place, because she don't speak English. When I came to California I felt like this lady. I was scared and don't want to go any place, I didn't feel comfortable.

I remember another chapter, about Gerardo who don't know nothing about that guy who is "brazero" and don't speak English and his home is in another country.

In my opinion I think this is a sad chapter but it's really real. Every day this happens with the people like me who immigrate to other countries to find a better life.

She writes very funny histories and very realistic. I really love this book. It is a Latino American book.

Maria Duran

## **Felix Gomez ~ *Solano County Library***

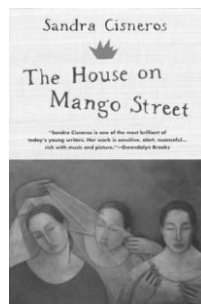
---

I like this story because she was writing about all the things she was doing.

My favorite story was when she was riding a bicycle when she was riding the bicycle on the street everybody was looking at the children on the bicycle.

Another story I like was Bums in the Attic because she was very nice to everybody and she thinks "when I will become an adult, I will work hard and help all the people"

Felix Gomez



## Amelia Jimenez ~ Solano County Library

---



Dear Ms. Alvarez,

I like the book *How Tia Lola Came to Stay*. When I read the book, I learned more words and added to my vocabulary. Your book helped my reading and writing a lot. Tia Lola is my favorite person in this book. Tia Lola tells good stories to Miguel and Juanita. I remember when my kids Francisco and Paloma were little, I read stories to them at night before they went to sleep. They liked it a lot.

Tia Lola got lost in New York. That reminded me of the time that I got lost in California. I went to the mall to go shopping. When it was time to come back, I did not know where to find the bus stop. I called my brother and he picked me up and took me home.

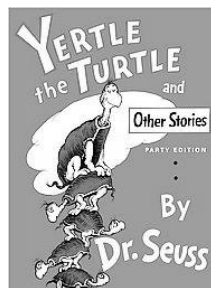
In this book, Tia Lola collected money to buy material for the baseball uniforms. When my daughter was little, I made cute dresses for her to wear. When she started school, I made her uniforms and dresses for the dance.

Tia Lola, she has secrets for the party for her sister's birthday. I have secrets too for the birthday of my son this month. My daughter, she helped me buy his present on the internet.

Tia Lola went to New York. Six years ago, I went to Irvine, California to see my son at college. My daughter, Paloma, and I drove to Irvine from Vallejo. We left the house at three o'clock in the morning. We took coffee with us for the drive. We played word games on our way there. We did this to stay awake. We drove for six or seven hours. I was excited!

For all of these reasons, Tia Lola and I are very similar. This was the first book I read in English. *How Tia Lola came to stay* is a very special book to me. I think it is a good story. I would like to read another book of yours.

Thank you very much.  
Amelia Jimenez



Dear Dr. Seuss,

I read your book, *Yertle the Turtle and Other Stories*. I found it interesting because it taught me about greedy, selfish people.

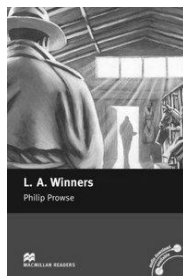
In this story, the Yertle was turtle who wanted to be a king of everything. When he lived in the pond, he could not see anything outside. So he ordered nine turtles to swim to his stone and using these turtles, he built a new throne. He made each turtle stand on another one's back and he piled them all up in a nine-turtle stack, and then he climbed up. He could see almost a mile. After he saw everything like a cow, a mule, a house, a blueberry bush and a cat, he wanted to be a king all of them.

Anyway, Yertle never thought about anyone's feelings. He used his own power to order other turtles to make a throne for him. The turtles were in a lot of pain. They did not have rights to complain. They did not have food. This story is very important to my family and me because it tells us what a greedy, selfish turtle did. Especially, I have a lot of ideas to teach my children not to be greedy people. I want all my children to be good and always help poor people. I want them to think about other people's feelings.

This story reminds me what I read about Abraham Lincoln. He helped to stop slavery in this country. People should have freedom to lead a happy life. The turtles remind me of the slaves with no freedom. At the end of the story Yertle lost everything. Other turtles had freedom in their lives.

Thank you again for writing a good story for the children.

Sincerely  
Eng Kor



Dear Mr. Prowse.

I have just finished *L.A. Winner* and want to tell you about what I thought of your book.

Thank you for writing as easy to understand. Because I had never read a book in English is the first time I read a story like this *L.A. Winner*. Lenny is a private detective who leads the whole story, Sandy Bonner owns the horse named The Chief.

The words used in the story are real easy to understand. When I started to read her story I thought Lenny was a very loose fellow that a concept of the best private detective in L.A. but keep reading I see that it really was not the best but but it was very good at his job. Sandy Bonner hired him to work for her, the most important of this was that in contrast to The Chief, but except for Lou Weaver and Sandy Bonner saved their lives by continuing with the investigation.

Well Ventanas and Dick were the criminals that stole the story to The Chief to commit fraud rather than changing Golden Dragon and The Chief making that the horses were very similar with the difference that Golden Dragon was a horse that had never won a race and The Chief was a horse that had been a winner when he ran because he is now retired from the races so did fraud with horses that never happened with Golden Dragon. But I want to know what happened with Golden Dragon and of the story.

Lou Weaver was a longtime employee of the Bonner family was someone very important in this story because he knew everything was going to happen to The Chief and Sandy Bonner. He told her everything was going with Ventanas and Dick, Lenny and Lou to protect his life of Sandy Bonner.

Best of the story was that Ventanas and Dick were caught by police in L.A.

Slim Peters and Herman were the characters who contributed equally to this story because Slim gave information on racehorses and police worked together in L.A. Herman will lend money to Lenny so I could go on vacation to Hawaii. Lenny took the job of finding The Chief Herman to pay \$1000 borrowed for your vacation in Hawaii.

The story is very good because it has very simple words to understand very well the first time that I understand everything I'm reading and it's very nice to understand the whole story, with the CD helped me to pronounce a little better. The stories are very good academic standards because we made the book more suitable and we can build further on how are you writing stories for people like me do not understand any English because reading stories motivate us if we can understand thank you very much for your stories.

Sincerely,  
Claudia Lopez

## Rosario Losoya ~ *Solano County Library*

---



Dear Beverly Cleary:

I read your book (Ellen Tebbits), I liked the drama, When Otis pulled Ellen sash and Ellen thought it was Austine and she slapped her! I would like to ask if the book is about your own experience, imagination or other people's experiences.

I felt like Ellen because any moment in our life, we are embarrassed with clothes or one part of our body, and all had a good friend like Austine. I remember when my parents bought me a pair of shoes and I didn't like them because they were an ugly color, but I didn't have another option so I wore the shoes.

This Book is interesting because it's about the life of smart girls with happy moments and problems, but the good is they can solve their problems, like Otis, this boy is trouble, He enjoyed teasing the girls, but finally the girls didn't pay attention to him.

I'm happy to have read this book and I want to read more books by you because they are easy to understand.

Sincerely,  
Rosario Losoya

## Santos Lozano ~ *Solano County Library*

---

Dear Mr. Martin Meyer,

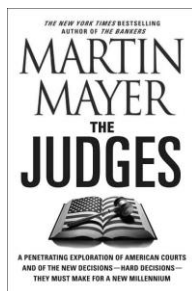
My name is Santos Lozano and I'm an adult learner in the Solano County Adult Literacy Program here in Vacaville, California. I recently read your book, *The Judges* and I picked up this book after reading an article. The article was about Abraham Lincoln, and it inspired me because he had limited education like me. He was a strong person and became a lawyer. So I wanted to learn more about law.

I found your story on page 19 interesting. You said "fifty-some years ago, a friend who was already a rising star at a big Wall Street law firm who would make more than fifty million dollars over his career as a lawyer. And he knew he would, and cared about money-said that if somebody offered to make him a federal judge, he would jump for it: Everybody wants to be a judge". I'm surprised at the facts you were able to recall, like this one. It's very unique information from long ago, and most people wouldn't know about it. This was a learning experience for me because I learned the respect Judges get.

I also liked what you wrote on page 177, "in fairness, it is also true that congress must sometimes hit the court between the eyes with a sledge hammer to get changes in judicial decision that congressmen had expected from a piece of legislation". I thought this quote was funny, and I like how you put humor on topics that are serious. This makes the content much more readable and enjoyable while I do read.

As I continued to read your book I was impressed with how well-written it is. As you presented case after case I was amazed by the depth of knowledge you were able to show. I'm curious as to how you were able to learn about all these cases. You presented the cases in a respectful manner, and it almost reads like you were actually there, and you know the cases were taking place.

I got this impression strongly when you discussed the Rosenberg case on page 10. You said, "Irvine R. Kaufman who sentenced Julius and Ethel Rosenberg to death for helping the Russians penetrate our atom bomb development had a policeman at the entrance to his apartment house day and night for all the fifty years of his life after that decision". This case is something I never knew about and this knowledge impressed me.



Overall I really enjoyed the book and I want to thank you for writing it. It taught me about events, cases, and parts of the Judicial Branch that I wouldn't have ever learned had I not read the book.

Sincerely,

Santos V. Lozano

Dear Frommer,

My name is Julia Mora. I am a student of English in the Adult Literacy Program in Solano County. I read your book, *Moving South*, and it is a wonderful book. I thought it was an easy book to understand. Her strength and good example towards her family made me happy. She never said any bad words in the situations that she found herself. She always kept trying, and never lost her hope. She had a nice brother, because he helped her to have a better life. This reminded me of the times when my younger brother helped me in my first day in the United States. It wasn't easy, since I didn't spoke any English and I wouldn't understand what the people asked me.

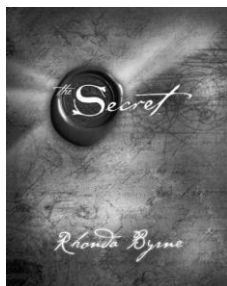
Your book taught me that the American people have the same problems that everyone else has. My favorite thing of the book was that it explains that when the family works together, they have more opportunities.

Thanks for writing this book, I truly enjoyed reading it.

Sincerely:  
Julia Mora

## Maribel Padron ~ Solano County Library

---



Dear Rhonda Byrne:

My name is Maribel Padron:

After I read your book *The Secret* it made me realize that whatever I want I can receive. Everything you think can happen,

In the book you say when you think in the positive, you are attracting positive things to your life. It's attracted to you by virtue of images you are holding in your mind. Whatever is going on in your mind you are attracting it to you.

My life before moving to Vacaville was not so easy. I moved from L.A. with my son to start a new life. I left a lot of negative energy behind.

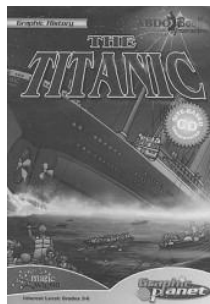
I never worked in L.A., so it was difficult when I got my first job in Vacaville. I spoke very little English, but I believed in my heart that I could do better, so I set a goal to learn English. Now my son is an adult and I have an 8 year old daughter. Because of positive beliefs, I can now speak better English, use a computer, translate for non-English speakers in my community, help my daughter with homework and read to her.

Now I am independent and my life is fuller. The book made me understand that I am who I am because of the laws of attraction.

Sincerely,  
Maribel Padron

## Amelia Ramirez ~ Solano County Library

---



Dear Mr. Dunn:

Thank you for writing about the *Titanic*. It was such a beautiful ship, and it was so sad that it didn't even complete its first voyage. It was hard to believe that such a big ship could sink so easily and so many people could die in such a tragic way.

I enjoyed reading about how pretty all of the rooms in the ship were. Even the people traveling in second and third class had nice rooms. It was too bad that the lookout did not see the iceberg soon enough so that the ship could have avoided it. How sad that there were not enough lifeboats for all the people on board, and that the lifeboats that left the ship were not even full. It was terrible that so many people were left on board and fell into the icy water when the ship sank. It was also tragic that the ship that came to rescue them was too late to save those who were in the water.

The friends and relatives who were waiting in New York must have been very sad when they were told that the *Titanic* sank, and that some of them would never see their loved ones again. It was good that ships were made safer and carried enough lifeboats for all passengers after the sinking of the *Titanic*. At least some good came out of the tragedy.

Thank you again for writing a very interesting story about this great ship.

Sincerely,  
Amelia Ramirez

Dear Anne,

Your book, *The Beach*, made me think about speaking English in public. Julie was shy about her body. But when she went to the beach and everyone was nude she changed her mind. I am shy about speaking English to a large group. Maybe if I try it I will change my mind too.

Sincerely,  
Maria Reyes

## **Terry Robinson ~ *Solano County Library***

---

Dear Ms. Ribaudó,

Did you know me in some past life? This is my life in this book! This book is so me! It is unbelievable someone wrote a story about my life, and didn't know me. It mimicked my life like a fly on the wall looking at me.

*Going Back to School* touches me; her name is Tasha - my daughter's name is Natasha, and my brother's name is Billy Ray. I feel you know me personally.

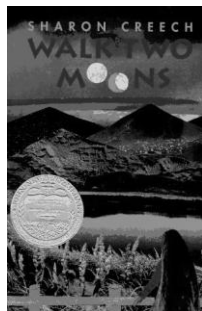
When I was in jail my cellmate, Billy, asked me why I was living a lie. He helped me to enter a literacy program. This is the first book I could pick up and read and understand. I suffered in waiting a long time to read and write, and now my time is here.

You, Ms. Ribaudó, have made it possible for me to know that I can do this; everything is worth the time and energy. Your book has made a positive impact on my heart, and I feel like pushing on to a better life.

With sincere thanks,  
Terry Robinson

## Eufrosina Ruiz ~ *Solano County Library*

---



Dear Sharon Creech,

Hello. My name is Eufrosina. I am 44 years old and the mother of six wonderful children. Throughout my life I lived through various experiences of which I learned many life lessons. While raising my children I have shared with them my life experiences with the hopes that they may take away some wisdom and inspiration.

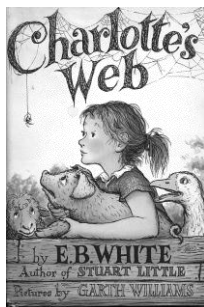
I recently read your novel *Walk Two Moons* and I felt your novel was very touching. This novel takes us along with a young girl, Salamanca, to retrace her mother's last trip. Throughout this trip she is basically living her mother's experiences and gains insight into what her mother lived on her last trip. Throughout this trip, Salamanca too gains various experiences of her own of which some are very difficult to live, such as the loss of her grandmother. This novel has funny stories, sad parts about life and it was emotionally moving page by page. I enjoyed reading this novel and felt the story is one many of us mothers can relate to. It inspires us with hope, love and the desire to see our loved ones again.

I enjoyed reading every chapter in the novel, it was very interesting. Thank you for writing stories which are interesting and moving to our emotions.

Sincerely,  
Eufrosina Ruiz

## Cynthia Segura ~ Solano County Library

---



Dear E.B. White,

I really enjoyed reading your book *Charlotte's Web*. The book reminds me of how we learned important life lessons when we were kids. I especially enjoyed the friendships between Fern, Wilbur, and Charlotte.

Reading *Charlotte's Web* makes you think how wonderful it is to be a child and how at such a young age we discover new sentiments that we often might forget when we grow up.

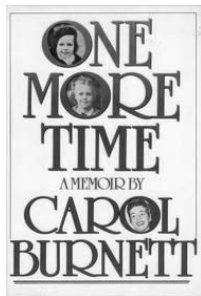
Fern's decision to keep Wilbur teaches him to trust, just as when we were children we learned to trust our friends. Also, Charlotte reminds me of my own mother. When she had a problem with one of her children, she always looked for a solution with perseverance. As a result, she taught us to have hope and patience. I liked, too, the way Charlotte always talked to Wilbur. It was just like a mother giving her best advice to her child.

I look forward to reading your other books, *Stuart Little* and *The Trumpet of the Swan* with my children.

Sincerely,  
Cynthia Segura

## Victoria Toe ~ *Solano County Library*

---



Dear Carol,

I read your book *One More Time* and thought it was wonderful. I learned a lot from your story. My name is Victoria Toe and I am a student in Vallejo Ca. I have lived here for 2 years. I come from Liberia, Africa. I am 24 years old and I have one son his name is Morris, he just turned three years old in September. When I was in Africa I use to have fun with my friend's brothers and sisters. We danced every New Year's Eve and Christmas Eve. I think I am funny too and I use to play soccer too in Ivory Coast. I also have had some hard times like you when you were young. For example we ran away from the war in Liberia when I was little. We lived in the forest for many years. We became refugees in Ivory Coast. And the American government came and rescued us from there. I came to America by airplane.

When I came here I could not read and write at all but now I just read your book "One more time" I use to come to library and look at all the books on the shelf and I saw your book and read it. Your story interested me. I found your story to be happy and sad when you were little because your father and mother were drinking. I know you were close to your father. It was hard to read about your story. The good part of your story was how close you were to Nanny. I was so happy to read in your story about how you got fifty dollars from somebody that you didn't know it was a blessing to you. My dream is to finish high school and go to college too. I hope I finish in two to three years from now.

I watched your DVD and laughed a lot. You were so funny and you and your friends were funny too. Some things I learned from your story like Murphy bed is the first time I have heard about it ha ha. I love the way you acted in your show and I like your life story. I was happy to read your book and I hope to hear back from you one of these days. I am sorry for what you went through and now have become a stronger person because of it.

I have some questions for you after thinking about the book. Here they are below.

- What made you want to be a comedienne?
- Where do you live now Carol?
- How difficult was your childhood in Hollywood and have you had a better life after becoming famous?

- What made you love Nanny so much?
- What made you leave Texas to move to California?
- Do you ever go back to San Antonio Texas to visit?
- Do you still keep in touch with Ilomay?
- How did you come up with your funny characters for your show?
- Do you still have fun and are you still writing books?

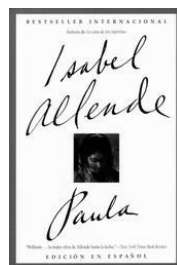
If you can answer my questions sometime in a letter it would be cool.

God Bless you

Sincerely,  
Victoria Toe

## Veronica Vargas ~ Solano County Library

---



Dear Ms. Allende,

I liked reading your book, *Paula*, because it is full of many different emotions. It is amazing how you described the places and the unusual people with whom you grew up. It permitted me to imagine like I was there.

At the same time it is sad when you were in the hospital with your daughter. I imagine the pain that you felt worrying if she would recover. Personally I can feel your suffering because I am a mother too.

Fortunately you always were with people who loved you. You could hear and see your family who had died who were there to help you during the pain of seeing your daughter dying. You always believed your grandmother was with you and your daughter and that when we die we will be with the people that we love.

Sincerely,  
Veronica Vargas

## **Norma Villanueva ~ *Solano County Library***

---

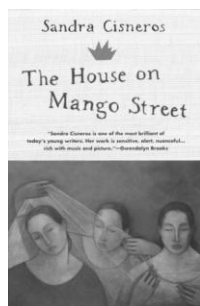
I like this story, because Sandra wrote about her memories, sometimes funny things.

I remember the part, I read about Sandra's grandfather who died in Mexico. When she said she never forgot her father's face. And she was him cry and she had to tell her sister and brother about the grandfather passing away.

I like it too when she used high heels and go to the store. It was funny. They walked on the street in those shoes.

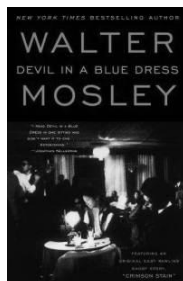
I really enjoyed this book and will read it again.

Norma Villanueva



## Anonymous ~ Solano County Library

---



Dear Mr. Mosley,

I really enjoyed reading *Devil in the Blue Dress*. This book reminds me now life could have been for people of color in the 50's.

As a college student, I lived in Venice, California in the late 80's. My family and I came to Los Angeles from St. Louis, Missouri during the Watts riot when I was a child.

The characters remind me of my family and friends of family. Your character, Easy Rollins, reminds me of my father who always seemed to get into trouble. However, he always had friends to help him out.

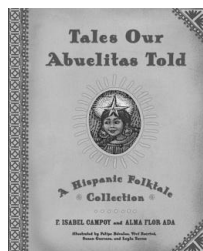
In reference to your character Mouse, my father had a best friend name Jesse who always carried a gun and/or a knife. Jesse and my father could drink anybody under the table. I can clearly imagine my father and Jesse having similar adventures like Easy and Mouse.

One Who Enjoys Your Stories,

~Anonymous

## Anonymous ~ *Sonoma County Library*

---



Dear Ms. Alma Flor Ada,

I heard this story, “The Bird of One Thousand Colors” from your book, *Tales Our Abuelitas Told*, when I was five years old in Veracruz.

It is a fascinating story where it takes us to the world of imagination. We can imagine the beautiful world of butterflies, the flowers and the leaves asking each other about how beautiful the feathers are of the bird of a thousand colors.

This story is important because it uses nature to demonstrate honesty, kindness and friendship. We learn about honesty when the bird of a thousand colors loans its feathers to the turkey without knowing if evil exists in the turkey or not. Because the bird of a thousand colors is honest, he would never imagine not returning his bright, splendid, beautifully colored feathers. But the turkey is insecure and does not return the feathers.

The wild birds teach us about kindness and friendship. They criticize the injustice that the turkey has committed against the bird of a thousand colors. They see the desperation the bird feels when he asks for his feathers back and the turkey will not return them. So the birds get together to give one feather each to help the bird of a thousand colors. Because they are generous and kind, they choose the most beautiful feather they have to help their friend.

In short, this story teaches us how to live every day and to live together with honesty, kindness, friendship and respect.

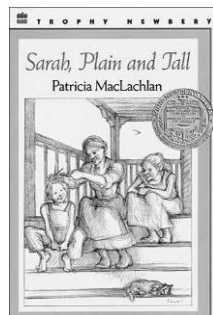
~Anonymous

## Ana Tah ~ *Sonoma County Library*

---

Dear Patricia McLaughlin,

When I was little, I thought if I had new toys and clothes my life would be happy. My friends had material things like nice houses when we lived in a house made of sticks with a dirt floor. I thought of how hard we worked cleaning, washing clothes in a wooden tub, picking fruit, feeding the chickens, pigs, pigeons and working in the garden.



As I read *Sarah Plain and Tall* I thought about my childhood in a new way.

I did chores, not because I would get into trouble if I didn't, but because when my mom came home, she would be happy with us. I fed the animals and put them into their cages, guarding them from the foxes because I like doing this for my mom. Sarah was a worker, strong and good-tempered just like my mom. My mom liked to make my dresses and braid my hair, as Sara did for Anna. It was so sweet.

When Caleb and Anna remembered their mother singing about birds and flowers and how much joy it brought them, I thought of how my mother whistled all day as she worked and made tortillas. We had parrots because when my dad went hunting, he would find a parrot's nest, take the eggs and bring them home. My mother put the eggs in the chicken's nest and the chickens raised them. As they grew, my mother always had one on her shoulder; I remember Bella, whistling away with my mom as loud as she could. My mom loved animals, as Sarah loved the chickens and her cat. My mom would feed the calves and deer from a bottle. She was happy!

I felt sad and lonely when I moved from Mexico because I missed my family, my friends, my culture, my country and even my house with dirt floors. I missed my mom bringing me bread for my birthday and making me dresses. When I read about the horses, I missed how my dad would ride our horse to open the gate for the cows. Sarah also needed to leave her home and move a long way away to a place she didn't know. Maggie asked whether she was lonely, and Sarah said that she missed her home. Maggie replied, "There are always things to miss no matter where you are."

Another memory that the book recalled was Maggie bringing Sarah seeds for her garden, I remembered my mom's garden with roses, dahlias,

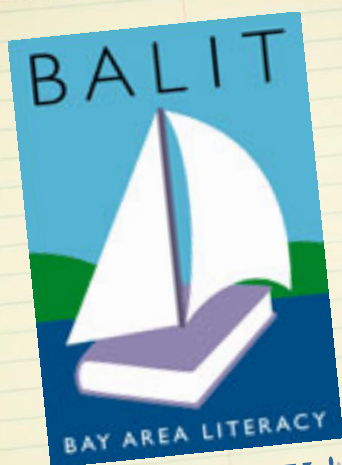
daisies, tulips and gardenias. My mom would cut the flowers; we would water, weed and pick up the garbage. We made bouquets and I sold them to our neighbors for 25 cents. Some days I would sell 12 a day including corn, oranges and mangoes. I was so happy- we were rich!

My life was similar to their lives in that the most important things to Jacob and Sarah were the children. My dad and mom never said how hard their jobs were or how hot or rainy. My dad went to work because he loved us. My mom never complained. She liked doing things to make us happy like making jam or candy, even though she didn't have the money to buy them. This memory makes me more grateful for what they did for us. My mom and dad said "Go to school and study hard so your life will be easier than ours." And I did.

Thank you, Patricia, for bringing back all those loving memories and helping to feel so grateful.

Sincerely,  
Ana Tah





2011 Writer to Writer

