

2013 Letters About Literature Level 2 Honorable Mention

Korina Kempthorn's letter to Shel Silverstein, author of *Falling Up*

Dear Shel Silverstein,

Books have a way of captivating a young child's mind and transforming the imagination. They have a secret power I suppose. The power to turn what may scare a kid like dragons or thieves and turn them into something humorous. That's what your book, *Falling Up*, did for me. It gave me my memories I have today and then some lessons I will have for tomorrow going on forever.

Your poems acted like glasses you see. They took the everyday things and turned them into the hilariously, spectacular. You taught me to look left, right, and up when crossing the street. You taught me how to giggle at everything, to see the unexpected, and to imagine without limits. You taught me that the world is a thing that's precious. It's a thing that you do have to "dive" into and explore in order to live a life worth living, and man did we ever.

Whether it be on a swing set or tree house or butterfly carpet you were there in hand. You were there for the good times mostly. You came through the soothing words of my father back when my parents would read to all of us kids at night. In that moment I would feel untouchable with all the belly laughs and delightful teasing your words gave us. Between it all you even decided you stick around for the times when I desperately needed a good laugh. Like when my dog had run away, it was you that had told me a story about your run away pet, the snowball. It was even you that stood by my side all those times when I scraped up my knee when I was five, reminding me that it could have been worse. I could have fallen up.

That's when the unspeakable had happened Mr. Silverstein! It was the tragic, the terrible, the absolutely flabbergasting. I grew up! The silly poems that had taught me how to steal time slowly drifted away into the readings of more serious novels. Along with it life had become a more serious place. I still made time for fiction, but none like yours. No longer were the tree house adventures or nighttime stories. Years upon years had gone by when I finally met you again.

You were in the bottom of a bin, your last couple of pages was missing but your book had never looked more loved. It was just this past year we were reunited. Sometime during my parents separation I had been packing books and you, like so many melancholy times before, decided to show up when I needed you the most. Once again you made me laugh. All the memories flowed throughout the air in the form of words that I knew all too well.

After all those days of asking for a reason to explain the why of life you gave me one. It was so I, and my family, could get back to the laughs and smiles. In this moment you taught me the most important lesson of all. You taught me something about myself I never could understand. You're never too old for childhood. My life had been like a puppet show, going through the motions for so long. It was the healing power of a couple of old poems that made me stronger through a hard time, so for that I thank you.

When you wrote your poems, I knew it was because you wanted to make me smile and kids all around the world. What you didn't know was that your words turned on my night lights as if to illuminate a world forgotten. You made me realize that as a child, your essence never grows old, even if you do. For there are so many questions and the world, almost twice as many as there are reasons. To every problem there is an upside; it just occasionally takes you looking at it upside down to notice it.

Sincerely,

Korina Kempthorn