

**Christopher Haddad (5<sup>th</sup> Grade: Cleveland, Ohio)**

**Level I Third Place Winner**

**Letter to Bette Bao Lord on her book, *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson***

Dear Better Boa Lord:

Thank you for writing the book, *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*. Since reading it, I have come to realize that in life there are many choices that a person must make. Every choice takes that person along a different path, impacting not only that person's life, but also his family's destiny.

Shirley's dad chose to leave China and come to America for a better job. Similarly, my dad decided to leave Syria and come to America to make a better life for himself and his family. This decision was not easy; he did not know the language, he was unfamiliar with the culture, and he did not even know how to drive a car—at 28-years-old! When he arrived, he was like a person walking through a maze, not knowing which way to go. My dad, who already knew medicine, had to relearn it again in English in order to be able to practice in the United States—often studying for fourteen hours a day.

Just like my dad, Shirley had to adjust to new surroundings and learn an unfamiliar language and culture. Because she did not want to lose the Chinese culture, she had to learn to merge the two together. Like Shirley's parents, my mom and dad wanted to keep our Arabic culture. We even go to an Arabic-speaking church, and, when I was little, I spoke two languages. My dad had to relearn medicine from Arabic to English. He often studied for fourteen hours a day! Shirley also struggled to learn English and all the other information that she had to master at school.

Your book showed me the choices we make in life affect people around us. These changes can be frightening but positive for us. If my dad had not faced his fears and come to America, our family would not have the life that we have now. A war is raging now in Syria, so we would be living a very dangerous and uncertain life. Just as Shirley came to realize, I can see that it does not matter that my family is different country because America is truly the land of opportunity. People of all races can be successful here. Shirley adjusted to a new life in America because she began to see that she could do anything that she wanted to. Her example has inspired me to realize that even though I come from an immigrant family, I will be successful, too!

Sincerely,

**Christopher Haddad**