

JACK SCHNELZER (6th Grade: Wadsworth, Central Intermediate School)

Level I Third Place Winner

Letter to Jean Craighead George concerning her book, *My Side of the Mountain*

Dear Jean Craighead George:

You will face many different and difficult changes in your life. The challenges are not negative if you look at them from a different perspective. These obstacles can actually strengthen you and help you mature. Everyone can overcome their challenges because they are never alone in the battle. First, you can always pray to God and know that He will help you. You can find support from your closest parents and friends. And finally, you must always be honest in order to stand up for yourself. You need to have courage to fight these challenges. This is what takes place in *My Side of the Mountain*.

Thank you very much, Mrs. George, for writing this wonderful book. It started to change my way of thinking even after I read the back cover. I realize that my challenges are easy when compared to those of Sam's. When I come to think of it, I'm a pretty lucky kid. First, God has blessed me with a healthy body and mind. As a result, I am able to enjoy many activities, especially baseball. I have been blessed with a strong mind and great teachers who are willing to challenge it. Secondly, I have my loving family and relatives always at my side that will do anything to keep me safe. And sometimes, I can't even remember the last time that I said "thank you." Sam is always terribly unhappy and that made me think that is not how I want to live my life. Sam is lucky to have a roof over his head and a loving family. There are some kids that don't have any parents or even worse, they have parents but they don't even know who they are. Finally, I have learned the value of being honest. Honesty is very important in building character and true relationships with family and friends. This is one effect your book has had on me—I need to be thankful FOR EVERYTHING.

Even though I disagree with Sam on running away from your problems, I admire his ability to live on his own and his creative skills. I can't imagine having that much bravery and courage. Reading this book taught me that bravery is very significant in our lives today. It strengthens you and helps you overcome problematic obstacles. If no one had courage or bravery, new frontiers would never be explored and nobody could conquer essential and problematic challenges. Sam's experience actually helped me just this week. I have always been shy to present a report or project in front of the class. But I'm not a shy person when I'm with my friends, I'm always very talkative. So when, on Veteran's Day, I was asked to read a speech in front of the entire school, I was a bit nervous. Then I remembered the sacrifices the veterans made and the struggles Sam overcame and I thought giving a speech in front of the school is nothing compared to leaving your loved ones. So, when it came time to address the student body, I was very brave and proud.

The last personal change Sam has made in my life is learning how to solve problems. Like I said previously, you need to find a way to resolve your problems. I learned that you may need to step away from the problem and take time to think about it. I can't run away from them—they will only follow me. I've also learned that most problems in life are not as bad as they seem. Problems will always occur but that's what makes life interesting. Problems can happen any day and any time. I need to react to my problems patiently and correctly and only I can control that. My attitude shows how I will react to problems. Like Lou Holtz once said, "If

you have a poor attitude, you're going to solve your problems poorly." Also, if you have a poor attitude people won't want to be with you.

I have told you all the changes that have made me wonder "what kind of a person am I?" How will these three effects stay with me my whole life? These are the questions I asked myself when I read your book. I will work hard to commit these changes so my life will be great.

Sincerely,

Jack Schnelzer