

John Slater (5th Grade: Chillicothe, Ohio)

Level I Semi-finalist

Letter to Wilson Rawls concerning his book, *Where the Red Fern Grows*

Dear Mr. Rawls:

Thank you for writing *Where the Red Fern Grows*. I thought that no one could ever possibly mess up as bad as I could, but when I read about Billy I learned that if I even made someone not want to go to any school again by telling them something I said out of anger, I'm sure I could reason it out with them and explain that I was an accident and I didn't mean it.

Billy and I both have strengths and being kind hearted and try to other people feel good. We both though can be tough enough to kill animals for money or just for the fun of it. That not all we do with our strengths, though—we also use it for good things like good deeds.

Both of us make accidents though like getting into fights with friends or relatives, but we both can get out of them just as quick as we get into them. We both have made flaws that can worry our parents by going somewhere without telling them. Also we both lie to a lot of people and get ourselves into a lot of trouble.

Billy mirrors my life by doing what he thinks is right like helping his younger sisters with chores. We also make up for our mistakes because we know that would be the proper thing to do. Like, if we broke something symbolizing our Christianity, we could try to make a wooden cross or something.

Billy has changed my view of the world by letting me know that dogs can save your life and be the best friend when you need one. He also makes me feel special by his acts and knowledge. I always thought dogs were for pleasure, but they're not: they're for a friend.

I was surprised by the bond with his dogs and his encouragement to them. I was also surprised by all of his enthusiasm. Also, that he raised the money to move to the city.

Once again, I just wanted to say thank you for making me feel so special.

Sincerely yours,

John Slater