

**MARIA TRUSTY (8<sup>th</sup> Grade: Van Buren, Van Bruen Middle School )**  
**Level II Semifinalist**  
***Letter to J.K. Rowling concerning her Harry Potter series***

Dear J.K. Rowling:

When I was a baby, my parents got divorced. My mom and I moved in with my grandparents until I was five. Then, my mom got remarried. My dad kept in contact and visited often. I remember being so excited when he arrived. We drove to the playground in Findlay and played all day. Afterward, we went out to eat; I always got to choose the place. He always sent me a birthday card and a Christmas card...until I turned nine. My dad stopped calling and never tried to contact me. I didn't hear from him for a few weeks. One day, I got his email address and emailed him and, surprisingly, he emailed back. We talked a few times. We talked about hanging out again, until he suddenly moved. I lost contact with him—again. The last time I talked to him was when I was eleven. Not knowing why he would ask for us to be together again only to pack up and leave without an explanation made me feel that I was responsible: I blamed myself for his leaving.

Soon after, I started reading a lot more. I was getting to the age where I could read harder books. I started reading your books and saw how strong your characters were, no matter what happened to them. I saw the strength inside of the characters and reading the *Harry Potter* series helped me to become stronger. I realized that it wasn't my fault that my dad stopped talking to me—it was his decision. I stopped letting his choice define my actions and stated taking things into my own hands.

“Besides, the world isn't going to split into good people and Death Eaters. We'll all got both light and dark inside us. What matters is the part we choose to act on. That's who we really are” (Sirius Black). This is one of my favorite quotes from the books because it explains how the world is. Sometimes, society says that some people are bad and vice versa, but in reality we all have good and bad qualities in us. We just need to learn how to focus on the good. Hermione took it hard at first, but in the end her being called “Mudblood” was what made her strong. Luna didn't listen to what other people said; she still lived her life the way she wanted to.

My dad sent me a card for my 14<sup>th</sup> birthday this year. He told me that he wanted to try and make-up for all the years he was gone. I stared at that letter for ten minutes before I realized that it was time for me to decide whether or not I should let him back into my life. I still haven't been able to decide how I am going to act towards him this time. Should I say yes and leave myself open to being hurt again? Another thing that I have learned from your books is that no matter how hard you try to plan something, it never goes as planned—especially when you have to deal with dementors, giants and wizards.

Throughout our lives we all have Lord Voldemort(s) that we have to conquer. But it's how we choose to conquer them that defines who we are.

Sincerely,

**Maria Trusty**