

Natalie Keyes (Columbus, Ohio: 7th Grade)

Level II First Place Winner

Letter to Isaac Asimov concerning his short story, “Eyes Do More Than See,” found in the anthology, *Robot Dreams*

Dear Issac Asimov,

Being endowed with a strong curiosity about the future, I have always been drawn by science fiction novels. I read your book of short stories, *Robot Dreams*, this past fall, and was enchanted by its predictions. The moment I picked it up, I knew it was something different, much stranger and much more majestic than anything I had ever read before. On the bus during a school trip to Lake Erie, I couldn't tear myself away from it, something that, though I love reading, is pretty rare event. I have read all of this book's tales many times, but one in particular drew my attention. “Eyes Do More Than See”, printed in 1965, still packs as much of a punch as it did when it was published. Like many readers before me, I've discovered this now, too.

“Eyes Do More Than See” could be viewed as an old short story. I didn't choose to view it this way. That's the beauty of literature, it made me realize. Writing doesn't change, once it is published; it's solid, constant, like your favorite stuffed animal, yet it can be whatever you want it to be.

I thought of this story as, not exactly a morality tale, but one that impresses the value of something, namely, material beauty. Not superstar, runway model pseudo-beauty, which I've been trying to avoid all my life, but clarity, uniqueness, fragility, depth, and true value. As I watched the emotions and actions of your main characters, Ames and Brock, play across the empty Universe, it became clear just how fragile we all are. Being too concentrated on the outer appearance of things, as opposed to their true value, is something that I've never liked, and this story helped me put my finger on exactly what that was. This work of literature has given me a different way to view my opinion. It's not the outside of a thing that matters, but the meaning behind it.

The story taught me that it's important to find time in our busy lives to appreciate the delightful, ephemeral world we live in. Play cards with your family instead of Solitaire-ing solitarily on an iPad, go out for a walk! It taught me to never give up something as valuable as what I've been given for something that seem better or more advanced, because Nature, or God, or the Universe, whatever you believe, has given us an irreplaceably priceless existence, worth more than the powerful energy-bodies described in your story. I've started to do that now; for a moment, really look, and breathe. This opened a new dimension in the way I think about the world.

Something that really stood out to me was how Ames, in trying to remember something that he gave up, was remarkably brave. It takes courage to recall something that hurts and is gone from you. I think I am like Ames in that I am brave, or at least I try to be. I've walked down steep mountain ridges terrifyingly high and covered in giant boulders, and have been trapped in awkward social situations, but I hope I can use that same strength when I need to conquer something indomitable. However, I'm also like Brock in that there are many experiences I wish to put behind me. “Eyes Do More Than See” made me understand that it's not easy to be strong, but we shouldn't forget the past or where we came from, like Brock, or give it up.

It's true; books can fly. Though you never see one do that in "real life," within their own pages and the minds of those who read them they do. "Eyes Do More Than See" is up there. Though old, it isn't outworn. I know now that I have strength, that we all do, if we find the courage to use it. I've gained humility and maybe some wisdom through this story's three short pages, along with appreciation for my breakable, wonderful world.

After reading this story, I almost cried a little, and thought a lot. That's what books are for.

Sincerely,

Natalie Keyes