

SIHAM MOUSSA (5th Grade: Cleveland, Birchwood School)

Level I Second Place Winner

Letter to Pearl S. Buck concerning her book, *The Big Wave*

Dear Pearl S. Buck:

Thank you so much for writing *The Big Wave*. I could relate to Jiya because I, too, have experienced the suffering of losing family members. My uncle passed away at a very young age. My grandfather also died, and my other grandfather, sadly, had a stroke. My younger brother did not survive long enough to be born and died in my mother's stomach. This made it hard for my mom to stay alive. She is now very healthy, but that crisis will always be a life lesson. I can understand why Kiya just ate, wept and slept for months after his family died in the big wave. My grandpa who had the stroke five years ago has never gotten any better. He is safe in a very small country called Qatar. My whole family is from Syria, where war has been going on for three years, so Grandpa had to be moved to Qatar. Traveling was hard with a sick man in a wheelchair. Now I see how a disaster like a tsunami or war can change one's life forever.

Although my family has been in pain, not being able to understand, we thank God that we have a home, live in the safe state of Ohio, and have enough money to provide for our needs. If someone were to see me, I would seem to be just a normal American girl, but if you were to look a little deeper, you realize that I, like Jiya, have suffered some major losses. On the surface my life is certainly easier than Jiya's, but we both have had to learn to live without those we love. Jiya's bravery showed me how to keep living and striving to be useful. Even when Jiya felt he could not go on living without his relatives, he did not give up. He showed great courage and helped his adopted family by working hard at farming and cooking. Jiya's example has helped me to do the same. I have found that helping others by making scrapbooks to remember the ones we lost has gradually eased my pain. *The Big Wave* gave me a model of how to fight to enjoy life even when faced with agonizing circumstances. As Kino's father said, "Life is stronger than death."

Sincerely,

Siham Moussa