

Level I

Honorable Finalist

Eliana Yang

(Grade 6: Birchwood School, Cleveland. Sponsor: Lorraine Tzeng)

Letter to author Jacqueline Kimball concerning her book, *Lindy on the Oregon Trail*

Dear Jacqueline Kimball,

A friend once asked me, “What are you most afraid of?” Shrugging off the question, I didn’t respond. She took it as a sign of fearlessness, but the reason I don’t admit to my fears is because I want to be perceived as bold and daring, one who was afraid of nothing. At home and at school, I cover my angst with joy and laughter, but that is not me. Always, I hide from the truth because of my inability to be honest.

In your book, *Lindy on the Oregon Trail*, Lindy’s family decides to move to Oregon with many other families. Her heart is broken, for she must leave her dear family members Paw Paw, Grandma, and Uncle Dan. Lindy must have been scared of change in leaving her safe home in search of a new life somewhere far away. But during the journey, Lindy becomes more positive and less afraid because she learned her family would always be there.

Reading your book made me ponder how I react in different situations. When I talk to my parents, I fear that whatever I say to them might change the way they feel about me, even though they always say, “No matter what you do or say, we’ll always love and forgive you.” In my mind I do not give them the benefit of a doubt. What if they began hating me because of how unappreciative I am towards them?

I might tell a white lie when I am in trouble, having done something that I was not supposed to do. But there are times I lose my cool and scream at them, and the words I say deeply wound them.

Once I was in real hot water when I came home from camp. During that long week, I never called my parents. Upon arriving home, my parents, instead of being happy to see me again, were extremely disappointed that I had not called them. They questioned me repeatedly. Annoyed and tired of their voices, I simply replied that the phone had run out of batteries on the first day! I couldn’t charge it because I had forgotten the charger. But that was not the real reason. The truth is, they are always yelling at me because they want to change me to someone I don’t want to be, and I just want to break away from them.

Possessing a strong mind and a stubborn personality, I hate to admit my faults; this makes it hard for me to talk to people about my feelings. Reading your book made me realize what type of person I should be. Lindy is so responsible, so loving toward her family, and so honest. She learns to love her family by talking and admitting her fears and faults, finding out that no matter what happens or what she says, her family forgives and loves. When I read this passage of the book, I was so touched because of how true this story was compared to my life. I wanted to be just like her because she was able to open up to her parents, overcome her stubbornness, and change. I wished to learn from her so that I could change, to be the best person I could be. The first step I took in becoming more like Lindy was conferring with my parents. It seems small and I still have a long way to go, but there is time; and if I continue believing and my parents keep on supporting me, someday I will be just like Lindy.

Your book inspired me to try and change, to become the best person I can be. I thank you for writing *Lindy on the Oregon Trail*, the most heart-warming story I have ever read because of how true it is. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Eliana Yang, age 12