

Level III

Honorable Finalist

Lauren Watts

(Grade 12: Westerville Central High School, Westerville. Sponsor: James Grannis)

Letter to author Paula Danziger concerning her novel *P.S. Longer Letter Later*

Dear Paula Danziger,

The day my best friend moved away was the most devastating day of my life. Lily and I had been inseparable from kindergarten to 4th grade. We had planned to go to middle school together then high school. Heck, we even planned to room together in college. I know that was a longshot considering we were only in the 4th grade at the time. The first time she moved, she was only 20 minutes away. We made sure we saw each other every single weekend. The second time she moved, she was two hours away. At that time we were in the 6th grade. We only saw each other once or twice a month.

Since neither of us had cell phones to communicate, we wrote good old fashioned letters just like Elizabeth and Tara*Starr. Your book cut into me like a knife and gave me all the right feelings, good and bad. Elizabeth was just like me: quiet, sweet, and lost without her best friend. She easily makes friends, unlike me. Her mother had a baby almost right after she moved the first time. Her parents are very easy going and acted like teenagers. My parents are very cautious about everything I do—just like Elizabeth's parents. Lily and I wrote each other about everything. Crushes, school, friends, and problems we were having. There was never a dull moment in our letters. Every single detail about our lives were included in every letter.

Lily and I had never exactly fought through our letters. We were the type to wait until we were together to start up an argument. At least when we argued in person it was easier to talk things out and make up. Elizabeth and Tara*Starr had no way of talking things out except through letters that only came every couple of days. They were also states away whereas Lily and I were at least still in the same state. There's no way to avoid fighting with your best friend: even when you are states away. They will always be there for you no matter what the dilemma is.

As time went on, I felt as if Lily was moving on and forgetting I was her best friend. She made many other friends—some of which she called her best friends. That hurt terribly. I knew I needed her more than she needed me. She was my crutch and held me up. I was quiet, while she was outgoing. She was usually the one making friends for us while I tagged along like a little puppy. Today, I realize how stupid it was for me to only stick with her and not branch out to make other friends. I knew things were falling apart between us as her life was getting better and mine was falling apart without her. I couldn't seem to make friends. I was too shy and was scared that I would get shut down if I tried. I cried knowing she was out there making friends while I was in a painful mess. She was all I knew from kindergarten to 4th grade. I missed her and couldn't seem to let that pain go. We grew up together playing dolls and house. No one could ever replace her. Thinking back now, I'm pretty sure Lily played a huge part in making me who I am today. My personality revolved around her for so long. She helped shape my personality and the decisions I made. You never realize how important friends are in your life until they move away. It is sad Lily moved away, but I eventually found ways to love myself and be happy with my life.

Elizabeth and Tara*Starr showed me that best friends are there for you no matter what. Best friends have their bad moments, but in the end no one could replace them. To this day, Lily and I still keep in touch. Maybe not as much as we used to, but we still make sure we are there for each other. Maybe we can go to college together and fulfill at least one of our childhood dreams. Eventually I grew up, and realized that I can make friends, too. But no one can ever compare to Lily. I fill my life with books, ideas, and writing along with the few close friends I have. All the others can leave when they want, but Lily won't. We will love each other forever.

Sincerely,

Lauren Watts, age 17