

**Honorable Finalist, Level I**  
**Justice Duerk**

**Letter to author and playwright Joanne Rowling concerning her book *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire***

Dear J. K. Rowling:

I was very touched by your book *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* in the sense that I know what it feels like to be alone even though I still am with my mom. I really connect with this book because I have always tried to do things that I thought were impossible. For instance, I try to do crazy things like learn flips or learn a hard skateboarding trick that frightens me. That stuff doesn't seem hard, but in my mind it felt like I was doing the impossible.

My parents are divorced, so I know what it feels like to feel like you are alone. My dad was very mean when I was little to my mom and me. When I was little, my dad would always yell at me and my mom really loud; this reminded me of Harry's abusive aunt and uncle. One day, I went upstairs and my dad was cutting up my mom's wedding dress with a knife, and I was scared. I had that empty pit feeling in my stomach. Even though he is better now, every man on my dad's side of the family was (or is) a drunk who has abused alcohol. Growing up in a house with a broken family has fueled my anger when I see others being mistreated by close friends and family. In your book, when Harry is picked on because he is a champion, that really angered me. Even though he didn't want the responsibility of being a champion the rules stated that if you were chosen you had to compete. It was Marty Crouch Junior's (aka the fake Mad-Eye Moody) fault that Harry was in the tournament. Harry had to be so courageous to do what he did. Whether I'm inside school or with my friends, when I am challenged to do something sketchy I either make myself give my best effort or just ignore it and move on. For me, when I ignore it and move on I typically always regret it because I realize I could've done that.

One of my connections with Harry is that I have always wanted a family that doesn't always argue. I also have noticed connections between Malfoy and things that I have seen in the world. For instance, I recently went to the movie *Wonder* based off the book by Raquel J. Palacio. I noticed that when Julian was being mean to August it reminded me of Malfoy because (spoiler) when Julian and his parents are in the principal's office I realized that Julian got a lot of his smugness from his parents (specifically, his mom)—just like Malfoy! Malfoy's parents are very stubborn and like to rub their riches and fortune in other less fortunate people's faces.

My opinion is that everyone in the world wants to make a difference or leave their mark. Each and every one of those people had the potential to do it, but they didn't give it enough effort to do so, and when they failed (due to their lack of effort) they took it out on others.

It is truly amazing how something as simple as a book can impact and connect you so deeply. This book you wrote really personally connects to me through my early childhood and my life today.

Sincerely,  
Justice Duerk