

**KAYE MOYER (11<sup>th</sup> Grade: Boardman, Boardman High School)**  
**Level III Semifinalist**  
**Letter to Elizabeth Gilbert concerning her book, *Eat, Pray, Love***

Dear Ms. Gilbert:

It is my junior year of high school. The transition from teenager to young adult is beginning all too rapidly; with the start of the fall season came the opening of floodgates and release of a relentless tidal wave of preparation for that infamous “F” word: The Future. Yes, the future; or should I say My Future, my personal path and destination I must now anxiously begin pigeon-holing. In actuality, the preparation is less than personalized; almost every one of us is forced to stress over the same question: What college is going to get me the best career to give me the best income to...pay off the loans from the college? Never mind asking what career am I passionate about; as an “Honors student” why in the world would that matter? Since the beginning of my schooling I have been groomed to be dedicated to my grades, to follow the rigid criteria of the “gifted”; to push the limits of my mind to the breaking point in order to outdo my peers and prove myself intellectually superior. Personally, my mind is the type that would rather expand its boundaries through the truly enriching curriculum of the world; music, art, and literature; creations with real meaning, not the watered-down trivialities so often spoon-fed to students. It seems society finds value in different places than I; nowadays, success is measured in monetary units rather than happiness. The result is a generation wildly clamoring towards a predetermined finish line, on that promises bountiful rewards for the winner.

Your book *Eat, Pray, Love* helped me realize that for some of the people desperately chasing that goal, the prize is not suitable. Also, it made me consider the possibility that, even though it goes against the nature of all I have been taught, I may be one of those individuals who needs to find happiness elsewhere. You had to learn this lesson after committing to a lifestyle that honestly was not meant for you; however, your decision to pursue a new way of life and leave your one behind showed me that it is okay to live my life in the way that is best for me; the way that will allow me to reap benefits of joy, of love, of self-awareness and satisfaction. I admire your bravery in taking the plunge, not having logical certainty to back you, but knowing that remaining married and having children was not the real finish line for you. Of course, to some of my peers, an existence of strenuous schoolwork will prove satisfying, just as some of your peers being a housewife is the ideal choice. Reading about your divergence from this path helped me feel less alone in my desire to break away from the expected. Now, I have the courage to move away from home for college and pursue a career in Environmental, Safety and Occupational Health Management, an industrial, male-dominated field. My parents always tell me I'm not cut out for this line of work; my mother always dreamed of me becoming a doctor or a lawyer. However, with you serving as my inspiration, I know this is a decision I must ultimately make on my own because I am the one who has to live with it. Of course spending the next eight years furthering my education and the rest of the years afterward in a court of law would probably result in me owning a beautiful house; however there is no guarantee that those years would be worth living. I see you as the strong, independent woman I wish to be; one who strides with unabashed confidence in exactly which direction she pleases. By setting this example, *Eat, Pray, Love* has permanently altered the course of my future, and I whole-heartedly thank you for that.

With appreciation,

**Kaye Moyer**