Meghan Razzini (8th Grade: Upper Arlington, Ohio)
Level II Semifinalist
Letter to Shannon Hale concerning her book. *Forest Born*

Dear Mrs. Hale:

       There are a lot of books out there about feminine power—stories about girls and women alike finding their strengths and using them to overcome the struggles that they encounter. But your books, especially *Forest Born*, stick out to me from the book shelf. When I read *Forest Born*, I found that I had a lot in common with the character Rin. We both are someone quiet (I might be a little more talkative, tough), we both like to be by ourselves when we are hurting, and we both have a way with words. Those connections helped me as I followed Rin through the creamy, white pages marching with black, enticing words.

       So why did this book impact me? It helped me see who I was through another person, and how I could use my gifts and talents in a way that would not hurt others like Selia's gift of people-speaking that corrupted minds and made others feel uncomfortable, hurt, and even worthless. Like Rin, I'm always worried that I'll say or do something wrong that I'll regret later on, especially words/actions that crush people's feelings. I also don't want to think about the things I did, but the gnarled feeling won't go away. It's good to reflect on your actions to see what you did and know what to do next time. I felt this while I read the parts when Rin used her tree-speaking gift to help her control her people-speaking.

       Fantasy can be very moving. Obviously, we don't have powers like people or tree-speaking in real life, but when a character has a magical gift, it makes the reader understand real life even more. I write fantasy stories myself (I'm hoping to be a novelist when I grow up), and doing that helps me in real life; not just escaping to another world to be rid of a real-life problem, but to help me grow in knowledge on how to handle life. That doesn't mean that you expect to see a jet of blue light shoot from your finger towards someone that's bugging you, but it does mean that you can learn from characters in a book to control yourself and be thoughtful in your actions. Now that's the power of fantasy!

       I have read many books about feminine power that are good or bad, but your way of writing about girls finding their strengths changed me. I now feel that I can be strong by being who I am and not being the image that someone wants to see. Thank you.

       Sincerely,

       Meghan Razzini