

Level II

Honorable Finalist

Mary Elizabeth (“M.E.”) Hargett

(Grade 7: Lee Burneson Middle School, Westlake. Sponsor: Sara Latkowski)

Letter to author Chris Grabenstein concerning her book, *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello’s Library*

Dear Chris Grabenstein,

“The game is never over till it’s over.” In my life, if something wasn’t going the way I planned I would want to give up. If someone was beating me in a race, I would think, “it’s fine they can beat me,” and then stop trying. The kids I was playing with would make fun of me and call me a quitter. They assumed that I didn’t care when they talked about me because I didn’t have the guts to stand up for myself. Then, I read your book. *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello’s Library* showed me that life is going to be challenging and things may not go the way I want them to, but that I should never give up.

At first I was very aggravated with Kyle’s attitude towards the extra credit assignment. The fact that Kyle only wrote the essay to get something out of it annoyed me. Then I realized that I had this very same attitude to some things in my life. If I was in a race I wouldn’t want to try my best unless there was a good chance I could win. I needed to get something I wanted—the satisfaction of being able to beat someone. I started to think about what would happen in my life if I always acted like Kyle did towards the extra credit. I would miss many opportunities and chances to try new things. I learned that you can’t always live your life scared. You should always go for it, even if you aren’t going to win or have the best outcome. I admired how Kyle had the guts to keep trying and doing what was best for him. You taught me, that it is so much better to put yourself out into the world and take a risk than stay at home and settle for being good. I want to have the guts to say “no” to things I don’t want to do and be able to stand up for myself and my decisions.

In World Studies class, my teacher thought that it would be fun to have a contest between my friend and I to see who wrote the best answer for our homework. We both read our answers and hers were obviously better. The teacher, however, thought it would be cool to have the students vote on which one they liked better. The class voted, and of course my friend won, but only one person voted for me. I was upset and wanted to give up. Then, I remembered your book. You inspired me. I went home and we had a similar question for homework. Instead of writing an O.K. answer because I didn’t want to do it, I put all of my effort into the extended response and wrote it with as many details as I could. During class the next day, I turned in my homework and everything was the same but I showed myself and my teacher that I have the ability to be great and never give up.

I started to take it all in and realize the quote, “The game is never over till it’s over,” really impacted my life. I have learned that in life you should never give up and always strive for your best. As a reader, I know that you need to be able to stand up for yourself. In the classroom, on the soccer field, at home, you have the ability to be the best person you can be and you should always strive to be that person. Your book taught me just how important that proverb really is.

Sincerely,

M. E. Hargett, age 12