

**Honorable Finalist, Level I**

**Madison Petty**

**Letter to author Lynda Mullaly Hunt concerning her book *Fish in a Tree***

Dear Lynda Mullaly Hunt:

When I heard about this contest I was so excited and eager to express my thoughts and feelings about your book, *Fish in a Tree*, because it is relatable to my life.

The novel showed me that although life is complicated it is important to never give up, try to stay positive when life is hard, and overcome life obstacles. It also makes me think about my own life and the hard work, struggles, and obstacles I have had to overcome in my life.

School was hard for me. I struggled in reading because I didn't have glasses and I couldn't see the board before Kindergarten. This caused me to get behind in reading and writing. I also was very behind on my math skills. A lot of people in my class already knew how to read, write, and do math well, except me. My mother found me a tutor to help me with my school work and I've been tutored since First grade. Now, I am in Sixth grade and still have a tutor helping me to stay caught up. I am also at the level I should be reading and writing. I did that by staying positive and working hard.

I related to Ally Nickerson because I was like her in a way: I was in the lower reading group in school and struggled with math. Like her, I had a substitute teacher (and a mom) who saw my struggles, and found my tutor who helped me with my school work. I'm also like you because you were in the lower reading group, too.

School is still hard for me even though I have a tutor. But I'm not giving up! I just keep working hard and doing my best even though it's tough. My hard work is paying off because now I'm getting A's in math, reading, and writing. Because of my perseverance, I know that anything I put my mind to I can overcome and accomplish anything.

In Third grade, I was bullied. I didn't tell anyone about it other than my mom and she could only do so much about it. She taught me skills to deal with the bully and also worked with the school to get it stopped. I learned you can work through obstacles with help from the right people.

I know everyone is different, just like I'm different from everyone because I have a tutor. Ally is different because she has dyslexia. But the kids made fun of her because they didn't know that's OK to be different. They have to learn to overcome that obstacle in their lives.

I have had many obstacles to overcome, too, like my mom and dad getting divorced, moving when my mom remarried, going to a new school, and blending into a family with my step-brother and sister. The message I got from this novel was that there's always going to be obstacles in your life and that you just have to work hard to overcome them.

Some of the messages that I got from this novel is to never give up, try to stay positive, never give up in the tough times, and to persevere against obstacles in the way of doing what I love.

Thank you Lynda Mullaly Hunt for writing *Fish in a Tree*. It showed me that others have similar experiences, life obstacles, struggles and differences. I really enjoyed reading your book and hope to read more of them.

Madison Petty