

November 30, 2022

Dear Jerry Spinelli,

I am a sixteen-year-old junior in high school in Pawnee, Oklahoma. Pawnee is a small town, but through reading and literature, I have been able to travel through space and time. Literature has the power to connect people and ideas and open people's minds to the experiences of others. I can only live in the time and place that I am now, but thanks to your books, I have been able to see the world through a wider lens.

I have many of your books, but the one I would like to discuss in particular is *Milkweed*. I was given *Milkweed* as a Christmas gift when I was nine years old. At first, I thought it looked boring, but in fact, I have read it many times over. It was the very first book of young adult historical fiction I read.

*Milkweed* was my first piece of Holocaust literature. In elementary school, we were not yet taught of the Holocaust. The only knowledge I had of the subject came from my parents, who are both historians. However, my knowledge was limited. I became aware of the horrible living conditions of those living in the slums of Warsaw. I became more aware of the atrocities that the Nazi regime is responsible for. Throughout the entirety of the book, I was watching the events unfold before my very eyes, and it inspired something inside of me.

From the very second of finishing *Milkweed*, I became extremely interested in history. The book inspired me to seek more knowledge on all spans of history. I was curious about everything, and I wanted to learn not just more about the second World War, but about everything I could. Through the words on the page, history came alive for me. History is not just dates and events that are far removed from us; history is our story.

One of the things that struck me about *Milkweed* was that it was written from the perspective of a boy who had an extremely difficult life and managed to see beauty in the midst of horror. Misha has to live in the Warsaw ghetto and loses people that he cares about. He calls milkweed the angel plant. It is a testament to the fact that all people should look for the good in all things.

This book made history real and showed how the events of the past affected people. That is why books like yours are so powerful and important. Many people can sit in history classes and not take in the words they hear or read; however, history written through books like *Milkweed* evoke emotion and make people care. The Holocaust was heartbreaking and horrifying. I do not think young people understand enough about it. *Milkweed* invites characters into ones heart and shows how the events of the past changed them. This is the power of literature, and I thank you for changing my life through your writing.

In appreciation,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Quinn Brown". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.

Quinn Brown