

MARIN LITERACY PROGRAM

# Writer to Writer 2010



Letters of Student Readers  
to Favorite Authors

### Acknowledgements

To our dedicated and inspiring volunteer tutors, whose effective instruction and support is evidenced in the writing by their students throughout this book — we couldn't have done it without you! Thank you.

Thank you to the staff, Glenda Logie and Kaaron Carver who worked on our first MLP Writer to Writer publication and to Jane Curtis for her help with layout and editing.

A special thank you to photographer John Greenleigh of FlipSide Studios for his photos on the front cover and pages 1 and 31.



Joan Hopper, who passed away this year, was one of our program's first tutors. She volunteered with MLP for close to 21 years! We miss you, Joan.

Cover photo:

Naomi Terasawa, Sarah Chen, Beatriz Garcia

Title Page photo:

Harriet Marriner, Beatriz Garcia, Sarah Chen, Glenda Logie



Diane & Maria



Deysi & Brooke



Mirabel & Jacquie



Veronica & Julie



Arcelia & Nancy



Harriet & Naomi



Harriet, Beatriz & Sarah

## Student / Tutor Pairs

- Maria Alvarez / Diane Bright
- Victoria Alvarez / Patricia Theiss-Nyland
- Glenda Signor / Sandy Truex
- Maribel Camacho / Jaqueline Ford
- Yaneth Alvarado / Carla Thomas
- Suichi Fung / Edith Freeman
- Deysi Rodas / Brooke Jackson
- Veronica Signor / Julie Carlson
- Arcelia Ruvalcaba / Nancy Parker
- Naomi Terasawa / Harriet Marriner
- Sarah Chen / Harriet Marriner
- Beatriz Garcia / Harriet Marriner

Congratulations to the students who took on this reading and writing challenge, and thank you to the tutors who have encouraged their students to participate in this experience.

*Open a book, open our minds and  
open our worlds through reading!*

## MARIN LITERACY'S Writer to Writer 2010

This booklet is a publication of students' letters to the author of a book they read with their tutor. The letters express how students were able to relate to and be inspired by the authors' words.

The Writer to Writer Challenge, introduced in 2001 as a joint project of California Center for the Book and the State Library, promoted adult literacy students throughout the State to write letters to favorite authors of books they had read. However, due to budget constraints, neither the State nor our regional BALit organization could afford to sponsor the Challenge this year.

We feel that Writer to Writer is a valuable tool to develop reading and writing skills, so Marin Literacy Program decided to sponsor it on our own. We will continue to do so in upcoming years and make it the featured element of our annual book of student writings.

The Marin Literacy Program is grateful to those tutors and students who decided to participate in Writer to Writer 2010 and whose hard work is shared with you in the following pages. Enjoy!

*Glenda Logie, Tutor-Student Coordinator*

## Table of Contents

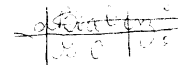
Student/Author/Book Title	Page
<b>Beginning Writers</b>	
Maria Alvarez Terry Barber, <i>Jane Goodall Biography</i>	6
Victoria Alvarez Janet Dailey, <i>Riding High</i>	8
Glenda Signor Wendell Berry, <i>Selected Poems -</i> "The Peace of the Wild Things"	10
<b>Intermediate Writers</b>	
Maribel Camacho Laura Esquivel, <i>Like Water for Chocolate</i>	12
Yaneth Alvarado Simone Liebster, <i>Facing the Lion</i>	13
Suichi Fung Greg Mortensen, <i>Three Cups of Tea</i>	14

Another thing I learned from your mom is how important is to raise a "healthy and happy" child and to have more tolerance when my son does something wrong. One example is the jingle "Lawn Time No See" where she concluded it is hard to raise grass and kids at the same time because

It's clear (alas!) — One cannot grow —  
Both kids and grass!

It is clear that she preferred to have happy kids than beautiful grass. Thanks Ms. Ryan for sharing your mom's experience.

Sincerely,



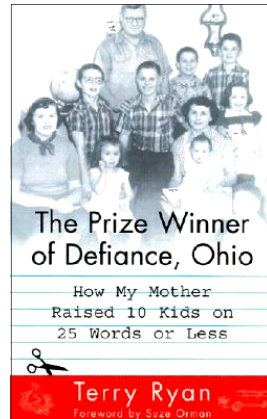
Beatriz Garcia De Garcia

*Dear Terry Ryan,*

People who think women are the weak sex in the world need to read your book, *The Prize Winner of Defiance, Ohio* where you described your mom, Evelyn Ryan, as the best symbol of toughness, perseverance, and intelligence. When I read your book Evelyn Ryan was my inspiration to be a good friend and example for my son, at the same time to be a “breadwinner.” Also, she taught me to confront my hardship with optimism, and work hard to find the resolution of my problems, not just to cross my arms and be trapped by poverty or desolation.

Once, I was trapped in my cave where I couldn’t find exit, but with your book you helped me to understand that women play an important role in the family. First of all, I climbed out of my cave and started working, started college to learn more English, and learned how to drive, because I had to be independent and tough enough to keep going.

Now, I feel free, no more cave, because I can help my husband to support our home, help my son with his homework, and manage my time among house work, school, and job.

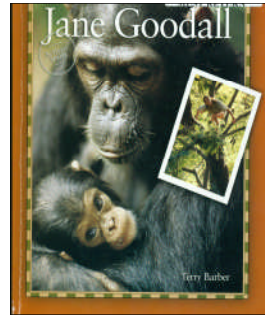


## Table of Contents

Student/Author/Book Title	Page
<b>Advanced Writers</b>	
Deysi Rodas Carmen Garza, <i>In My Family</i>	16
Veronica Signor Dave Pelzer, <i>The Lost Boy</i>	18
Arcelia Ruvalcaba Sandra Cisneros, <i>The House on Mango Street</i>	21
Naomi Terasawa Terry Ryan, <i>The Prize Winner of Defiance</i>	24
Sarah Chen Tom Brokaw, <i>The Greatest Generation</i>	26
Beatriz Garcia Terry Ryan, <i>The Prize Winner of Defiance</i>	28
List of Tutors & their Students	30

*Dear Terry Barber,*

My name is Maria Alvarez. I want to tell you about me and why I liked your book about Jane Goodall.



I am twenty-eight years old. I have a son. His name is Ignacio, and he is twelve years old. He goes to a school called Davidson. He is very happy at school.

I take care of Ignacio every day. I make his breakfast. He eats lunch at school. He has only cereal for dinner. We speak English at home together.

We came to America in 2004. First we lived in San Rafael. We lived in an apartment. In 2008, we moved to Fairfax. My tutor lives in Fairfax, too. Her name is Diane. She used to be a teacher.

I clean houses and offices. The houses pay me \$75.00 for three hours of work. The offices only pay me \$8.00 an hour. Money is always a problem even if I work hard.

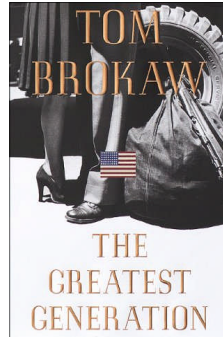
I liked Jane Goodall because she worked hard too. I liked the names she gave to animals. She worked hard to get grants to do her fieldwork in Africa. I hope that if I work hard like Jane Goodall, I can make a better life for

Now, I am joining the Adult Learner Leadership Institute to improve my leadership skills. I especially want to thank you for your book that helped me find my good side and recognized myself better. By noticing my efforts, I get positive sense of who I am, which is a big motivation.

Sincerely,

*Sarah Chen*

Dear Tom Brokaw,



It's a great coincidence that I started reading your book *The Greatest Generation* while I was learning the word "leadership." First, I misunderstood that leadership only related to powerful people. I could never be involved in leadership because I thought I was not capable enough. But your book opened up my mind to define this word correctly. From the examples you gave, I can see a clear picture that the main ideas of leadership are about advocacy, enthusiasm, and duty; it is not about how high the positions that people are in. In your book, people who had leadership skills were not only the big people, such as generals, captains, pilots, but also ordinary men and women. For instance, Peggy Assenzio took all the responsibilities for her family during the war and aided her husband after he returned from the army. All of these people played in their own roles to support others and to contribute to society.

Some examples about ordinary women reflect in me that I find my values by seeing I also have leadership skills which I never realized before. For example, I have been gaining knowledge, supporting my family, helping other people, and being a good citizen. Leadership involves in our daily performances, and I want to learn more about it.

Ignacio and me. I like your book about Jane. She was nice to chimps. She said it was not good to put chimps in zoos or circuses.

She liked animals when she was young. She wanted to go to Africa. She met Dr. Leakey there. He was a famous scientist.

Diane read *Africa In My Blood* by Jane Goodall. She learned that Jane's father was a race car driver. Other things she learned are that Jane had a dog named Chase. Chase was killed. Jane cried and cried. She loved animals. Jane had her own horse. She was a very good rider. She went to private school. She learned typing, shorthand, and bookkeeping. She wanted to go to Africa. She worked for a film company. She was able to bring her hamster to work. She named him "Hamlet." She saved her money to go to Africa. She said, "I don't mind how hard I work." So Jane went to study chimps. Jane took notes about the chimps. She worked hard. Jane taught me that if I work hard, I can make a better life for Ignacio and me.

Thank you, Mr. Barber for writing your book. I learned about how hard work pays off.

Yours truly,

*Maria Alvarez*

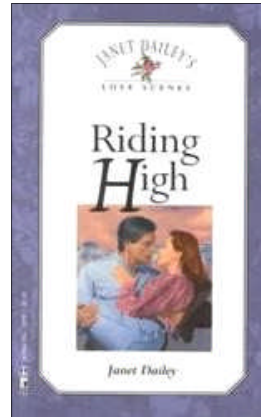
*Dear Janet Dailey,*

I liked this book because it's about love. I would recommend this book to people who believe in love.

Deke was a good man, but I dislike when he was being bad to Victoria. They were both good actors. The chapter I like best is when Victoria poured red liquid and pretended she was bleeding. The chapter I like more is when Deke carried Victoria. But, I like it best when, after they kissed, he licked his lower lip and he discovered Victoria was not really hurt.

I think Victoria never imagined that she could be in love with a cowboy on this ranch with horses.

The ending of this book left me with questions. What happens to Deke and Victoria? Deke moves to Hollywood? Victoria lives on the ranch?



because we have time to spend with family more than media, following our education method. We play card or board games in the evening, or discuss about the theme, like nature or human being, at the dinner time. Now we started playing music together. On my husband's birthday, my daughters and I gave him a song, "Happy Birthday" with violin, recorder, and piano. Then my husband joined us with guitar. It was a wonderful time. I hope to continue this family habit even if they "fly away."

Evelyn Ryan's policies in 1960s: being strong in hard life, protecting family with love, choosing good education for children's future, or giving children good advices are basic and important as mom and have never changed since then. I enjoyed the humorous story about your mom, and I agreed with her a lot.

Sincerely,

Naomi Terasawa



Dear Terry Ryan,

Your book, *The Prize Winner of Defiance, Ohio*, reminds me the importance of children education, nurture, and family love. As your mom, Evelyn Ryan, told “children will fly away soon,” I thought how important to take care of children as parent responsibility and to spend time with them. Like your mom, my husband and I chose a private school for my daughters. Before we decided on the school, I cried a lot because I received negative comments from moms who often met and got together. But I didn’t think investment in children’s education is high risk. I became strong with my belief that this education is good for them. Now, it is hard to spend money on tuition for us, but our daughters are growing up honestly and happily.



From your mom’s nurtures, I learned the importance of family communication. My daughters are going to be in difficult ages. I have to understand what they think, and protect them as mom if they need. I think we have a lot of communication like Ryan family

I don’t know. Is it possible for two people, so different, to live together?

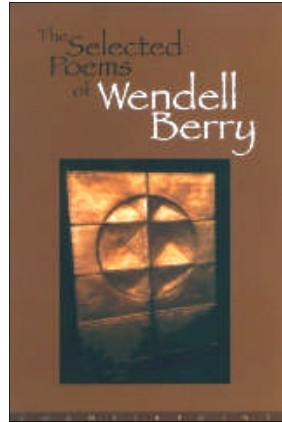
Sincerely,

Victoria Alvarez

Victoria Alvarez

*Dear Wendell Berry,*

When I read the poems, I want to have the reality of peace, love to nature, to have peace this moment. It is something good, because I don't have words in my heart to say. In the poems, have example words about my imagination!



When I wake up in 12 o'clock in the night when everybody sleeping, I see all around. I see my kids, and I'm very comforted, because I see my boys is very good and healing.

I'm at peace, relaxed and comfortable. The other thing is when wake up, I see around, everything is quiet, silence.

I'm close my eyes. I have imagination of the ocean respiration is clear. I have peace, because I'm free like a bird.

I don't want to open my eyes, because it is clear, peace, nothing too bad.

the bear — very strong , shrewd, loving —and my hair is short, straight and black.

“Hairs” is my best memory. Esperanza’s mom’s hair caused a great feeling in me; when Esperanza touched, smelled and saw her mom’s hair, she had fantastic emotions like feeling sheltered, safe, protected, and loved. I like the phrase “when she was holding you, holding you and you feel safe.” I remember my mom’s hair was easy to comb, long and black. I liked to play with and caress her hair. That made me feel safe, protected, sheltered and loved.

It was magnificent to read your book because I learned new vocabulary and many good memories came to my mind. I can share my stories of when I was a child with my friend Nancy and my daughter who love to listen to them.

Affectionately,

*Arceia Ruvalcaba*

feelings that were forgotten. Many memories came to my mind. I went back many years ago. I was a teenager when my mom gave me responsibilities to do in the house. I remembered when I sprayed with water the dirt floor, which smelled so great like sweet chocolate and fresh air in hot weather.

Since I am living here in the U.S. I feel like Esperanza when I go out for a walk in the streets and in the park. Once when I was walking down the street, I thought my mom was cooking because I smelled mole with pork and cactus or a delicious chicken mole for tamales. But my mom wasn't there. People in the house used the same condiments as my mom. I miss my mom, my sisters, and my neighborhood.

In "Cathy Queen of Cats," Esperanza described her neighborhood. I remembered when I was in Mexico; my neighborhood had many good, kind, hard workers and nice neighbors. We shared happiness, sadness, drought, and abundance of harvest, and the best part was to sharing love and respect for each other.

Esperanza's name is more than the simple name; it is hope. It's to believe in something or someone that you want with all your heart. Although Esperanza did not like her name, in my case I like very much my name, "Arcelia" because it means a

Only, I want to open to my eyes, to take my kids and together, fly. I don't want to think about the danger. For accident or even death.

I want to enjoy this moment, the peace for me!

Love and Peace,



Glenda Signor

Dear Laura Esquivel,

Thanks very much for writing *Like Water For Chocolate*. This book has many things I am interested in like recipes because I like to cook too.

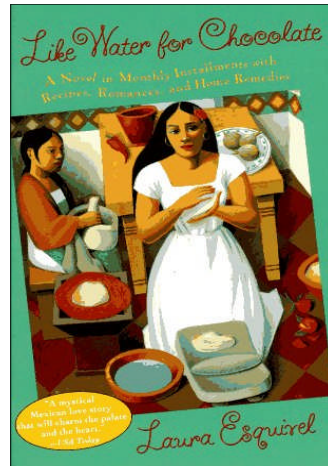
But what I like better is the love Tita and Pedro feel for each other. I think if everybody gets married feeling the same love, that love makes you always be together with your partner. Maybe if in this world so much divorce didn't exist like it is now, less children would live without parents.

I think we need to feel the same love because love is everything we need to live and be a better person. Without love we are nothing.

Tita and Pedro are a good example of that love. That's why I enjoyed very much this book and inspired me to write this letter. Thank you again for the magic story.

Sincerely,

Maribel Camacho

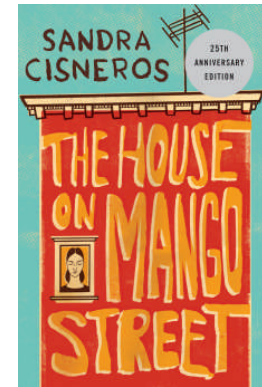


Dear Sandra Cisneros,

*The House on Mango Street* is the second book that I read in English and I feel very proud of myself because I can read and help my daughter with her homework. Even though it is very difficult to learn, write and read English when it isn't your first language, it isn't impossible when you have the courage and necessity to learn a new language. Thank you, Sandra, for sharing your book with me. I am going to share and write my own experiences and feelings about the book.

In the chapter, "The House on Mango Street" it is important how you mention your dream, and my dreams are very similar. One of my dreams is to buy a house and be stable in this country, like my parents have their own house in Mexico. I identify with the character in the book, because we hope in the future to obtain our own house or apartment, where my daughter and I can enjoy playing basketball with our dog. Also we love to plant all kinds of flowers, fruit trees and vegetables.

In your story "Memo Ortiz" touched my



I love your book because I saw how a little boy could survive in different situations through his way. When I read this book I felt many emotions and sadness because each chapter had different an interesting stage. This book showed me a story of survival that gave me the inspiration to write this letter.

Thank you for writing this book and to share it with us. Thank you for giving the information about your life. I really loved this book.

Sincerely,



Veronica Signor

*Dear Sister Simone Liebster,*

My name is Yaneth. It was a pleasure to read your book, *Facing the Lion, Memories of a Young Girl In Nazi Europe*.

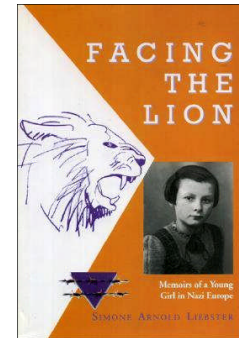
Thanks for writing the things that happened. I liked the example of your faith in God. I learned that it is important to trust in Jehova the way you did.

This book was excellent to read in my family. I have a girl that is 13 years old. It encouraged me to see her enjoy the book a lot. Thank you.

I hope Jehova continues to help you.

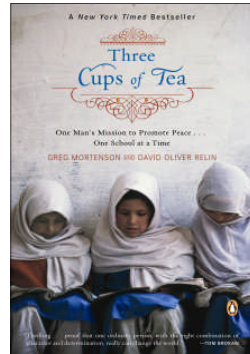
With love, your sister —

*Yaneth Alvarado*



*Dear Greg Mortensen,*

I am glad that my tutor Edith gave me *Three Cups of Tea*. When I looked at the title I did not understand what was its meaning. After I read the story then I knew it was the Pakistan people's custom. We had a similar idea in our country; I was surprised. How marvelous it was!



In 1993 you tried to climb K2 in honor of your younger sister who died. Then a miracle happened. Someone in your group got sick and you got lost in the mountains of Pakistan. A poor village chief and his people's kindness to you saved your life. So you promised to return and build school for them. In the way that happened the children and girls got opportunity to study in school. Now you have built more than sixty schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan. You are appreciated and respected everywhere.

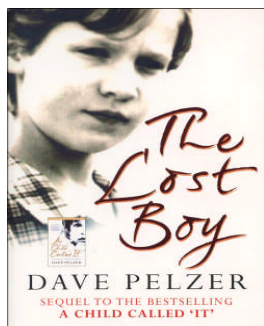
The story reminds me that many years ago in my country China the economy was better, but for the people who lived in poor villages in the mountains it was very difficult for the children to study because there was no school nearby. They had to walk mountain paths two

You were a brave boy and you didn't have fear when you were in the courtroom and you had to tell the judge the truth about your mom and you had to take a decision when the judge told you, "You may become a permanent ward of the court, or you may return and reside with your mom at your home residence." But before you told the answer to the judge you thought about your life in your mom's home and another hand you thought too if I live in another home, I will be a normal kid, play with other children, play basketball I will be free. But your answer was: "Yes, sir! I want to live with you!" The judge said: "It is the recommendation of this court that the minor, David James Pelzer, shall become a ward of the court and remain so until his 18th birthday." And that decision was very important to your life. When I was reading this chapter many thoughts came to my mind because I remember when I was in the courtroom too and I had to tell the judge about my ex-husband but I didn't do anything. I always was scared because he was a bad man, but that stage in my life is over. I could escape from him.

I like your book, because it was my challenge, I learned many words. I felt how somebody can be very bad with her children. But I know in the world there are people that mistreat their family and they don't care.

Dear Mr. Pelzer,

I am from Guatemala. In the 2005, I came to this country and I have been living in California for almost 5 years. I am an adult learner in the San Rafael Literacy Program. I have a tutor, her name is Julie Carlson. One day I went to the San Rafael's Library and I saw a book, but the book was in Spanish. The name was "El Nitio Perdido" and I thought that sound interesting. I read this book in both languages (English and Spanish). I read your book *The Lost Boy*. This book was the first book I ever read about child abuse; it was very touching.



You were very brave to write this book because you were continually abused, mistreated and beaten by your mom. I'm very surprised how a little boy could get out from his mom. I like your book because I saw many situations that happened in your life and how you survive in each one.

It's difficult to think how a little boy has a family, but the boy is searching for the love of a family, and he is looking for a perfect family. I don't understand and I don't know why mothers have children and they mistreat them every day.

hours to school; some kids just six years old walked alone while the parents worked in the fields. The schools had poor equipment, were simple and ugly. A teacher taught several levels of students in such terrible condition, but it didn't stop their study. The parents realized they must educate their children, then they could improve and change their future. Because the government did not do what was needed, the people in Hong Kong and overseas Chinese organized to donate the money to build the schools. Some successful merchants donated to build schools to help poor places. The village children finally had a chance to study in school. After many years passed the government gradually improved their strategy so that poor children from the villages could be educated. I think our country China will be better and better in the future.

I hope your work continues to be successful.

Wishing you good health,

Suichi Fung

Dear Carmen Lomas  
Garza,



I read your book *In My Family* in 2009. It touched my heart because I recalled part of my childhood, and some of your stories in this book are myths of my culture. Especially those that are medicinal, according to the myths.

One of the stories about the healer in your book reminded me of how my mother used to cleanse us after we were at the cemetery for the Day of the Dead. We were there all day long and when we return to the house, she mixed some ruda and other plants and brush us with it because she worried we got bad spirits. That was when I was ten years old and she thought that will help us sleep well and we won't have any nightmares or behave bad. But it was really uncomfortable, especially the smell.

The other story that touched me is of the weeping woman. It is a story of a woman who had drowned her children in a river and she was looking for them. This is another superstition and my parents told us that if we didn't listen or behave, the weeping woman will come get us. She have a cart and it make lots of noise and when you heard the noise, that was a signal that she leave to look for her children. We never saw her but we were

very afraid because we thought we heard the creaking cart. We knew they were only superstitions but they still scared us.

The last story that remind me of my childhood is of the Easter eggs. It reminds me of when my brother made us cry when he broke the cascarones on our heads. They were filled with flour and confetti. He very rude to me and my little sister.

This book reminded me of many things of my childhood because I was only ten and I was not happy with some of these superstitions but I have to obey them because it was part of our culture and beliefs in my family.

The first one about the healer reminded me how uncomfortable the cleansing was. The second one made me remember how afraid we were but my parents threatened us with the weeping woman story when we didn't behave or do what they told us to do. The last one was fun but my brother was too mean and I think that was because he was the only boy in my family and he couldn't play with us. He forget to be gentle to us and made us cry. It wasn't fun.

So thank you Carmen Lomas for this book. By reading this book my childhood was part of your stories.

Sincerely,

*Deysi Rodas*  
Deysi Rodas