

Lesson 1: FOCUS. Reading Worksheet A

Recommended Level: I

Books Give Us Wings

Books have wings. You can't see them, but they are there just the same. For some readers, books give them wings to understand the world that surrounds you. For others, a book's characters can help you rise above bullying and peer pressure to discover pride and happiness in just being yourself. For still others, a book's wings can help you cope with difficult situations—an illness, the disappointment of not making the team, or even the death of a loved one.

Below are the first two paragraphs from a letter written by a Hollywood, Florida, fifth grader. What kind of wings did Gut Opdyke's book give her?



Dear Mrs. Gut Opdyke,

Your book is titled *In My Hands*, but I know that you found your courage "in your heart." Like the twelve people you saved, my grandmother was also 'hidden' as a child during the war. If her Polish heroes had done nothing, I would not be here today. Your book has inspired me, because it has shown me how to become a more sensitive and compassionate person. It has also shown me how to take the first step to stand up for what I know is

right.

Recently I thought of you when I saw my friends taunting another girl. My friends asked me to join them. I refused. I befriended her and told my friends they were being cruel. They turned against me instead. I felt alone but doing the right thing meant more to me. After reading your book, I understand that it is "in my hands" to make a difference in this world. . . .

ACTIVITY

Read the Level I national winning letter from LAL 2003 below. Then answer the questions that follow.

Dear Natalie Babbitt,

If given three wishes, I always thought that my last one would be to live forever. That way I would have enough time to everything I wanted to do and see everything I wanted to see. Living forever seemed like such a good idea, especially when death seems so scary. Reading your book *Tuck Everlasting* changed the way I think about living forever *versus* death.

While reading the book, I started wondering. At what point in my life would I want to drink from the spring—when would I want to freeze myself? If I drank the water now, at ten years old, I would never get to drive, never vote, and never become a father. All my friends and family would grow old

and die and leave me here all alone. If I waited to drink from the spring at twenty-five years old, I would never have wrinkles or bad hips, but I would also never get to go fishing with my grandchildren.

No matter at what age I drank from the spring, eventually I would have to move away or hide so that no one would discover my secret. That would be pretty much like dying. I wouldn't want to leave but I would have to leave.

I'm think that maybe living forever wouldn't be such a good idea after all. God's plan includes a time for everything and an end to life at the right time. I guess I'll rethink the last of my three wishes.

Harry Maddox, Grade 5

1. Harry's letter explains how *Tuck Everlasting* gave him wings of understanding something important about life and death. What new understanding did Harry get from reading the book?
2. What book did you read recently that gave you "wings"—of courage, of understanding, or hope?