

Johnston Middle School
Johnston, Iowa

Dear Danielle Steel,

History has never been the sparkle in my eye. Books full of history weren't my thing, until my mom referred me to your book, Zoya. It didn't look appealing to me because I didn't see how history could relate to my life, but I decided to take a risk. I was blown away into a whirlwind of emotions I didn't think possible. These figures of history became actual people that I could connect my own past to. It turns out taking a leap of faith was worth it, but it came with painful memories that needed to be put to rest.

Evgenia brought my Grandpa Eddie back from the dead and into my life. The situations he and my family were put through were too agonizing to think of and so I guess I just pushed him out of my memory for good...so I thought. Just as Evgenia witnessed her family, her fellow Russians, fall apart, my grandfather witnessed my family fall to pieces. When I was about four years old my grandfather was diagnosed with Progressive Supranuclear Palsy, but it was like he didn't want to die with his children fighting; he had to hold on until we were at peace, just as Evgenia wanted to see Zoya find someone to care for her before she left her granddaughter. But unlike Zoya getting to find someone to care for her, my family is still broken up. That's why it's always been hard for me to remember the uplifting memories when the horrible ones were blocking my view.

Because of Zoya I was able to learn how to bandage one of my deepest wounds instead of covering it up with a band-aid. Now when I think of my grandfather I am filled with the joyful memories that we shared as well as the hard times we went through together. Thinking of how strong my grandfather was through the hardships we faced makes me proud to call him my grandpa. Thank you for helping me see with a new pair of eyes.

Yours truly,
Devyn Lenaghan