

Franklin Middle School  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Dear Jeanne DuPrau,

Many people think that because I am thirteen, and because I am a teenager that I take most of my everyday rights and privileges for granted. I really do not appreciate these stereotypical, derogatory like comments. But, the truth is that I used to be like that, caring only about myself and not others. I thought similar to this until last year when I came across your novels, The City of Ember and The People of Sparks. I thought that freedom would always be there and that we could keep on madly consuming our resources because things would never change. Now I know differently. I know that we have to make wise decisions now if we want our prosperity to grow into a comparable world, or, perhaps one better than the one in which we dwell in today.

While reading The City of Ember I instantly gained a strong connection to the character Lina, a simple schoolgirl who focused on the present, instead of the future. I believe that I used to be like this; just wanted what was best for me instead of what was best for everyone, people of the present, and future. This is a mistake that a large amount of people seem to be making in the world today. For example, President Bush insists on drilling for oil in Alaska. If we would drill for oil there then, we would be destroying homes, plant life, animal life, and a fragile ecosystem, all of this to create a temporary solution. I mean, what would we do twenty years down the road when we find that there is no more oil to drill? Would we just keep moving from one location to the next until there is no natural beauty left in the world? I certainly hope not, because creating a temporary solution just leads to a permanent problem. We need to focus on the big picture, not just ten or twenty years down the road, but lifetimes down the road. While reading the book I could almost feel myself molding, my thoughts, my ideas, my aspects on life were all changing, much like Lina's. I suppose we just don't realize how bad something really is until it happens to us personally.

I think that I learned this lesson after learning about Europe's involvement in Africa during the 1990s. European nations, such as England stepped into Africa, took control and changed the way that the native people lived their everyday lives. The Europeans thought that they would be "heroes" by forcing the Africans to grow cash crops, which completely altered their economy. Doing so, made matters worse, because the people were so occupied making these useless cash crops that they ended up lacking in basic supplies needed to live. So, in retrospect the Europeans intended to help and actually made matters worse, by not thinking of the later effects of their actions.

But, I think that my personal turning point occurred recently when I was faced with the news of my grandmother passing away. She had been sick and all, but I never thought much of it, since she had been a part of my life for so long. I just figured that she was immortal, and that she would live forever. I didn't focus on the big picture, which was what would I do if something would really happen. This made matters worse, and my difficult. After this tough experience I feel as if I understand the concept implied in your novels even better than before. I feel as if I have obtained enough knowledge to transform the world and others around me. Those stories changed my life; I will never forget them.

Sincerely

Andrea Nemecek