

Stephanie McMillan  
Independence IA West Elementary School

Dear Elizabeth Borton de Trevino,

Your book *I, Juan de Pareja* got me thinking thoughts I'd never thought about before. Now as I lay in bed at night, I often ponder upon the thought of what life would have been like if I had been born a different race, in a different period of time. I could have been born a slave in the 1800's, captured from my homeland and lugged aboard a strange ship with people speaking a strange language, pulled from family and friends, freedoms, privileges, and rights. I cannot imagine my life without freedoms, privileges, and rights, and most importantly friends and family.

I'll be honest with you. School is important to me, but in this day and age it's mandatory for everyone to go to school in the United States. Some kids hate school and even play hooky or try to fool their parents into thinking they're sick. But before our time, school was a privilege as I still believe it is now. Just think, if slaves got to go to school or learn their alphabet they would rejoice and say hallelujah!

But now we are slobs and lazy, greedy fools, we all are. But when I read this book my perspective of life rearranged. I learned we are lucky to live in a place like this where we get freedoms and rights handed to us. No tests, no examinations. Nothing. Not everyone is as lucky as we are. Not everyone gets to take that yoga class Wednesday morning or go to ski school Saturday evening.

This book made me grateful for little things like a smile, a warm hello, or even an encouraging word. I am extremely thankful for Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and Abraham Lincoln who stood up and said NO! Martin Luther King, Jr. was a very active African American activist in his time. Rosa Parks simply sat in a bus seat and made a difference. Abraham Lincoln held this country together not with his hands, but his heart. They all sent the same message...You cannot push me around.

*I, Juan de Pareja* made me understand that I am very, very lucky to be free.

Sincerely,  
Stephanie McMillan

Copyright © The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. Used by permission.