

Washington state Letters About Literature 2005-2006 Winning Letter Level III

Carly Houser
Camano Island, Washington

Mrs. Sylvia Plath Hughes:

In my own imagination, I now know how a bowl is shaped. It isn't a round, painted mound, Sylvia. It's intricately beautiful. It's deep, in the way that it could contain anything. The roundness of it is an invitation. It can never be chipped; whenever you drag your pointer finger around the rim it's smooth. And sometimes, if a bowl has just been cleaned, you can look to the bottom and see yourself reflected back; a bowl will mirror you, outlining only magnificence. When I see a bowl sitting on a counter, whether it is lonesome or undeserving or anything else, I see where it caves one thing. There, as if an angel wrote it, is a trail of words; words that for me, Sylvia, were put together by you.

I can see everything for what it truly is: colorful, independent, shapely, gorgeous and, above all, dripping poetry. Before I read *Ariel* everything was kind of fuzzy and nonexistent. Nothing used to make sense to me; not people, the future, nature. I like to think that now I know what life is. To me it's poetry; or rather: the beauty in everything ordinary. Sylvia, the heart and images of your mind that made *Ariel* possible have put the world into perspective for me. It's as if you were a window washer who scraped away all the dirt and grime that concealed life and left only something so clear and so wonderful. What was left is not merely poetry, but everything that comes along with it; including the emotions of life that so few people are even able to see.

If right now I walked into a room, I would view everything in color. And not the bland color all these ordinary eyes see, but rich and pure color. It doesn't seem possible that ninety-five pages gave this to me. But when I think back, the change wasn't so fast. It took time. You stood behind me and followed there until you knew I was ready for you to lead. Then, when the time was perfect, you stealthily slipped right back; parting with a dent no one else could have made.

You're able to exceed the fact that your husband modified the order and selections of the *Ariel* poems after you had left, because either way, they're genius. Every time I read "A Birthday Present" I get the same jolt at the end, when it finally becomes clear what this present is. The bee poems always give me a great story and sense of being. I can enjoy myself reading your poems; it doesn't always have to be serious. Though more often than not, it pleasingly is. That's why I love your poems so much, and feel like I have a relationship with them. They don't depress me, like some people think; what they give me is emotions. They make me feel things I never before thought possible from words. Without literature I have no idea where I would be right now; lost somewhere in this infinite world for sure. Reading and language and ideas have quickly become everything I value in life, a big part thanks to you.

When I look at bowls or the color of rooms I'm able to see them as I now believe we're intended to; I can make anything my own, or not. Thinking back, it's hard for me to remember a time or a place or a mind without these words. They reached into my soul

and connected the intricate parts, reimbursing my senses and entirely shifting my future. The force of your words, Sylvia, changed everything; I couldn't look at a book of poems seriously before. Now there's nothing I love more than just that. Dreaming about words and thoughts and what's to come is now even a pastime. It's inexpressible how much I've changed for the better from reading *Ariel* and your other works. My life isn't completed -- it's not even close -- but well on the way now that you've helped me find mine.

When I imagine you walking in your heaven, Sylvia, I think of how you gave this to me.

I ponder how it might've happened. Did you look for who needed you the most and then point to me?

I imagine you must've.

So I thank you for it.

Sincerely,

Carly Houser