

January 4, 2021

Dear Kimberly Brubaker Bradley,

My name is Joy Hayashida-Ludington. I am 10 years old, but I was nine when I read *Fighting Words* earlier this year during the pandemic. Your book, *Fighting Words*, has changed my life and how I look at things.

I first learned about your book at my book club with one of the best authors I know, Nanci Turner Steveson. She recommended that the grown-ups read it first. After my mom read it, she was literally crying and told me that I *had* to read it. I know that when she cries about books they must be really, really good. I immediately started reading it and got so absorbed, that I read it in a day!

Your book taught me that you can't just assume that people are terrible on the inside when they act terrible on the outside. If someone walks up to me and starts saying or doing hurtful things, I go back and think about your book. Maybe that person's parents treated them poorly, maybe they were abused, or maybe they were being threatened. Treating people badly might help them get their anger and emotions out. Della has to deal with things that others don't. She may not be the friendliest on the outside, but she has a lot on her plate.

When I finished the book, I suddenly thought about everyone right now in the pandemic who is going through the same thing as Della and Suki. Since I haven't been sexually abused, I can't exactly say what it's like, but I think abuse is happening in my town. Abuse is probably more common right now than it was before the pandemic. A lot of kids are at home instead of going to school and that may cause a problem. Abuse of these kids may or may not have been happening before the pandemic, but I bet abuse has been increasing over this past year.

Another problem during the pandemic is suicide. When Suki tries to kill herself, Della has no idea what to do. Many kids are going through the same thing right now. While some people think that can't be true, it's probably going on right before their eyes, but they don't notice.

Your other book, *The War That Saved My Life*, made it almost sound as if you were telling Ada's story, but *Fighting Words* is your own story. At first, I felt like *Fighting Words* was similar to *The War That Saved My Life*: not a true story, but very realistic. Then, I read the author's note in *Fighting Words*. My mind was blown! It was a true story! Yours! When I knew it was your story, I felt like I was learning more about you. You added exact feelings and actions.

This past year has been so difficult for everyone around the world. You showed how differently people live. You taught that not everyone has a perfect house with perfect parents, guardians, or siblings. You pointed out that even though someone takes care of you, that person may not have someone taking care of them. Some people have been lucky; others have been falling through the cracks.

In the past year, I have been getting angry because I am cooped up with my parents. I am lucky if I even get to see friends outside. Your book helps me take control of my temper. When I start to get angry, I use Della to help calm myself down. It feels like I have spoken with Della before. Like I can always look up to her. Like she will always be there to comfort me. It makes me feel like she is a neighbor, a friend, or a sister. She will always be deep inside me. Della has now grown to be a part of me. I will never forget her. Sometimes I feel really sad and want to close the world on myself, like Suki. Other times I feel strong and powerful, like Francine. Sometimes I feel just myself, like Della.

I'm an only child. I get lonely. When I get lonely, I love to read. That's how I read your book in a day! Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joy Hayashida-Ludington". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joy Hayashida-Ludington

P.S. One of my favorite parts of your book is how Della says, SNOW, SNOWFLAKES, and SNOWMEN instead of bad words.