

Level II alternate

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Dear Don L. Wulffson,

Have you ever read a book that inspires you to do great things and maybe even changes your life? I have. I think it's the best type of book you can ever read. They stick with you forever, and you may not remember the name of the author, and you may not remember the title of the book. You may not even remember what the book was about, but the lesson that you learned stays. You can't forget it.

The book that I read that is changing my life, and that I am inspired from is Soldier X. The lesson that I learned from the book has almost nothing to do with what the book is about. What I learned is that everyone in the world is different. We all grew up in different places, different houses, different states, or even different countries. We are also different in looks, culture, beliefs, hobbies, and state of mind. Some people have mental disabilities; some people only have one leg. But there are some things that we all have in common. We all want to be loved, cared for, safe, and we all want to live.

At school today I was carrying my bottle baby for school (it's a project that we have to do to learn about the responsibilities of teen parenthood) and a mentally challenged girl came up and said my baby was cute. I was going to just keep talking to my friend, (I had been talking to her at the time) but then a million thoughts raced through my mind. One thought was why was I going to do that? Another, she's a person too and there were more that pushed me to say two simple words "thank you". She grinned. It made me smile too. I laughed at myself in my head for thinking that I should just ignore her. I knew it was wrong, but I had wanted to do it anyway.

That was the beginning of something special, or so I thought. Just now typing this up I remember that last year I did something extraordinary. It was at my school's St. Patrick's Day dance. The "snowball" had just begun, so I had stepped out into the commons to have a restroom break, and have some quiet time with my friends out there where we could hear each other, instead of having the music blaring in our ears. We were just sitting down on a bench when I heard someone sobbing, and what sounded like a teacher trying to comfort them. When I walked around the corner I saw Ed, Ed is a mentally challenged boy in my grade. A teacher was standing over him trying to find out what was wrong. He wasn't telling her, and it looked like he wasn't ever going to. So the teacher just walked off. I walked over, hoping that I could help, and he told me that he was upset because he had no one to dance with. I laughed, because I knew I could help with that. I invited my friends over, and I said to Ed, "we'll dance with you." A couple of my friends looked up at me in surprise. "We will?" They asked. "Of course we will, look, if you don't want to, you don't have to, but I'm going to dance with Ed, and I'm going to have a great time in there." At that time, two girls walked off, wanting nothing to do with Ed. "Are you ready to go dance?" I asked Ed. He just smiled and walked off ahead of me. When we got back into the cafeteria, (that's where they were holding the dance) the "snowball" was still on. I shrugged my shoulders, and asked if Ed knew how to slow

dance. He did. We danced one dance, and then when the rest of my friends saw how much fun I was having, they wanted a turn too. Soon, I had people I wasn't even friends with coming up and asking if they could dance with Ed. The "snowball" ended, and the "dosey-do" came on. All of my friends joined in that one. We were laughing so hard that happy tears came to my eyes because I was laughing so hard. Ed was laughing too. When I got home that night, I was so exhausted that at my friends house we stayed up for about 15 minutes, then went right to bed.

Another thing that I did, I did without even knowing I was doing something special. I went to a day care from about 7:00 Am to 8:00 Pm every weekday. The day care took in foreign exchange students from all over the world, and I made friends with everyone of them. One girl from France stayed for one year, and another from China stayed for about 5. She was my best friend for those 5 years. I never even thought about how different we were from each other. We had different religions, and we talked about them freely between each other. I think we were both interested in involving ourselves in different cultures. I know that the girl from China moved back there, but I don't know where she is now, or how she is doing. I pray that she still remembers me, and that she thinks of me often, because I do that about her.

Now I have two friends from different cultures that are very unique. One girl, Kavya, is from India. Another, Lisa, is from China. We share our religions with each other, and we all love the fact that we do.

I think that Soldier X has tested me, and asked if I treated everyone the same. I realized that I didn't, and lately, I smile at everyone in the hallway that looks like they need a smile, and I say "hi" to everyone I know. This book has so many influences on me that it is hard to explain what it has done, but I think I just did. I want to thank you for taking your time to read this, and I hope it stands out from your everyday fan letter. I hope that maybe you realize that you did not only bring understanding of World War II, but you taught me a very important lesson.

Amber Hoffman