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Competition Level II
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Dear Ms. Atwater Rhodes,

As I read your book *Hawksong*, I thought it was fascinating that people were able to transform into different animals. I loved how half could transform into snakes, and another half could transform into hawks. But then, it made me wonder why the war was started. Was it because they were different? Then I realized that the only real difference between the snakes and the hawks was that they looked and maybe acted different. After thinking about it, I realized that's what could have possibly started the war. One day, a hawk probably just turned around and said, "I don't ever want to talk to you again, you're weird," and that's when people started to keep to themselves. They started with the fact that they looked different, then it went on to the "I don't like you" stage, then it built into so much hatred that they started the war. The war between the snakes and the hawks made me want to help the people around me. So I thought about all the things in life that I thought were in need of some help. I thought about my friends, and I thought about school. My friends were fine on most occasions, as long as no one got them mad on purpose, but school.... now there's something that needs a little help.

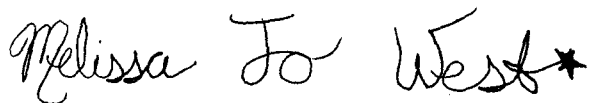
In my school, people had separated themselves, maybe not intentionally, but I could see where separations were. There were three major groups, the popular people, the average people, and misfits. Within the popular category, people separated themselves by rich or pretty. The average people were separated by their decision to want popularity, or being happy with who they were. Then the misfits were separated by whatever videos games they like. All of these people were fine with their groups and friends, but they were never willing to get to know anyone from outside of their group.

As I read the book *Hawksong*, I was able to very easily relate it to school. In the book there were the hawks and the snakes. Both groups were afraid of each other because they never really got the chance to get to know each other. After such a long time, none

of the characters in the book *wanted* to get to know the other and would more than likely kill anyone that tried. Each group also thought of themselves and the people like them, found nothing wrong, and wondered why they were so disliked. Just like the war in *Hawksong*, the war of popularity was started so long ago that no one knows how it started. Occasionally there will be battles, people will pick a side or stay neutral, and this will form new groups altogether. If somehow the students could all just try to understand the people around them, or try to walk in their shoes, school might be more enjoyable.

Maybe someday, there will be a popular person who has a crush on one of the misfits. If they both convince their friends to get along, then this war will have at least a chance of ending. Until then, we will never know. What I **do** know is that I wouldn't have understood the people at my school as well as I do now if I hadn't read this book. This book inspired me and made me realize that people aren't what they always seem to be or what their friends make them look like. We will never know what people are like on the inside unless we at least **try** to make peace.

Sincerely,



Melissa West