



## TILLAMOOK HIGH SCHOOL

SCHOOL DISTRICT 9

2605 12<sup>th</sup> Street  
Tillamook, OR 97141  
Tel: 503.842.2566

"Developing a sense of academic integrity and fellowship through pride, ownership, work ethic, embracing community, and respect."

May 13, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Cassie Thiemens and I am a teacher in Oregon. Having lived most of my life in Flint, Michigan, a depressed city with crime rates among the worst in the country, I tend to gravitate towards stories of those who succeed despite their circumstances. Upon hearing of *An Invisible Thread*, I promptly added it to my summer reading list. The book, which I finished in a matter of hours, left me overwhelmed in a daze of heartache and awe. I spent much time reflecting on the story and making connections to my own life. I also knew how much the story of Laura and Maurice would resonate with my students at school and couldn't wait to return to the classroom in the fall to share it with them.

I teach English Language Development in a rural high school on the Oregon Coast. My students, who are mostly immigrants from Mexico, have their own awe-inspiring stories to tell of their crossings into the United States. In their family's pursuit of a better life, they have experienced such significant hardships, yet are motivated to keep moving forward. In most cases, my students represent hope for their families and are responsible for proving that sacrifices were not in vain. While I suspected that my students would be able to connect with elements in both Laura's and Maurice's story, I did not anticipate that for many, the book would become a motivating factor in their decision to attend school each day. As students entered my class, I was met not with hellos, but with questions about the day's read aloud, whether there would be one, how long it would be, and what more would be discovered about Laura and Maurice. As if I would reveal! I, myself, looked forward not only to the spirited class discussions about love, friendship, adversity, and invisible threads, but also to the silence of reflection, the quiet processing of the events and emotions exposed by Laura and Maurice, and even the sharing of tears at times.

As an English teacher, I am happy to report that this book has changed my students' attitudes about reading. It certainly tops their list of favorites. As a teacher in general, however, I am most impressed with how my students' attitudes have changed about others and how they should be treated. They have learned the importance of considering that people we encounter may have vastly different realities from our own. They have taken comfort in knowing there are others in similar or worse situations who have risen above their obstacles. They have realized the significance of empathy, advocating for others, and appreciating those who come into our lives. Most of all, my students have recognized that we never know how deeply we can impact someone else's life with just a simple act of kindness. Having seen how well this book was received in my own classroom, I am confident that it could make a difference in the lives of other young people. A book as powerful as *An Invisible Thread*, or even just its powerful message, is something that should be shared in *all* classrooms.

Sincerely,

Cassie Thiemens