

## AJ Salerno 2025 LAL Winner Level 1 (grades 4-6)

January 23, 2025

Dear Ms. Rundell

Hello, Salutations, Aloha! I hope this letter finds you in good health, but before you dismiss this as junk mail, I'd like to provide some context. You see, I was given the task of writing a letter to an author whose book inspired me, or changed me in some way, which your's did. Impossible Creatures helped me realize not everything and everyone had to be normal.

Intentionally or not, your works defied the tropes that make fantasy, without eliminating the whimsical feel of the genre. For example, there is no grand mentoring figure looming over the characters, no all- seeing old man with magical powers. In a way, I feel that reflects life, as in the fact that sometimes, you will not always have a guide or teacher to help you along your way. The most eye opening part of the tale was that one of the main characters, Mal, perishes in the final battle by sacrificing herself for the good of the glimourie. I was so shocked and astounded, it took a moment for my developing brain to compute. But then again no one lives forever, and somehow that made the ending all the more beautiful.

Before I delved into Impossible Creatures, my mind had defined tropes as the rules and guidelines of a book, but I quickly learned that they were quite the opposite. They are the ideas, stereotypes, and boring patterns that make up many novels. By now, you may have gotten the idea that I utterly despise tropes, and that they are the bane of my existence, but that is not necessarily true. I believe that in moderation, tropes can add to the vibe and feeling of books, but too much can degenerate the entire meaning and beauty of novels. The point of a book is to enthrall the reader, and draw them into a world of joy and sadness, to let them befriend the characters, rejoice in triumphs, and mourn losses. That's often hard to do when there are handsome princes prancing around on their bums and bearded wizards with long oak staffs. Books are so much more interesting when you find a timid boy with an interconnection to beasts of all kinds and a boisterous girl with a griffin and a flying cloak. All and all, I really enjoyed your book and hope to see more of your works soon.

Recently, I have been tasked with writing my own fantasy novel for a town wide project, and I took great inspiration from you. In my book, there will be no helpless damsel in distress, nor chosen one destined to rise up and defeat all evil. My characters will represent us. Not the miniscule percent of humans living on this earth that detail every whimsical fiction novel known to man, the real us. All of us. Your tale has also given me a new outlook on reading, and whenever I spot something out of the ordinary within my many literary quests, I ponder and delve into it, exploring its meaning and purpose, instead of ignoring it and simply focusing on the main plot.

As this letter comes to a close, I'd like to thank you for the incredible journey you've given me the privilege to take part in, the creatures and innovations that I've met. I'd like to thank you for pouring your mind and body into your books, and molding letters and words into a true piece of art. Goodbye, and thank you for being an author.

Sincerely,

AJ Salerno