

2022 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Children's Category – Honorable Mention]

## **The Change to Confidence**

(Original)

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In fourth grade, Lily arrived in our class. She stood out in her white shirt amongst the sea of blue uniforms. But of course, she was a transfer student, and simply had not received her uniform yet. However, as the days went on, I realized that she was different, as if she came from another world.

Even with the uniform on, she continued to stand out. In our normally passive Chinese class, one hand started to regularly shoot up into the air and was met with long stares each time. If I had been in her shoes, I would have, with cheeks burning red, immediately put my hand down. Yet, Lily didn't care and kept raising her hands high. The same girl also kept the class in order by making everyone stay in line and unabashedly telling those who were trying to sneak out to get back in. Everybody was talking about the new girl. Our class, and I for sure, was not used to this kind of confidence, and my path may have never crossed hers if it were not for the book.

Lily enjoyed reading books and there was a certain book that she used to bring to every single class. As weeks went by, I began to grow interested in the book she was reading. However, I didn't dare to ask her because I didn't want to stand out among my classmates. Though I wanted to talk to Lily, I wasn't confident enough to approach her, and so the thought was simply left at the back of my mind.

One day, I found Lily sitting alone in an empty Chinese classroom, reading her book. Finally, I encouraged myself to borrow the book from her. She delightfully agreed and even eagerly introduced me to its characters. The series was about a modern teenage girl named Maine in a magical world and how she protected her family and her country. At first, Maine struggled to do anything because of her fragile health. However, during the time of great

danger, she had to learn to be confident and believe in her own powers to protect her family and at last even sacrificed her freedom for their sake. This love and faith Maine had for her family moved me deeply. By the end of the book, her character grew to be strong and sure of herself. Maine's confidence reminded me of Lily who also had faith in herself and was always full of brilliant ideas.

I enjoyed the book greatly; but it wasn't just about the book. By opening up to the new student and choosing to do what I wanted, I finally had the confidence to be myself; I was finally being me and only me. However, this wasn't always the case. Ever since I was in kindergarten, I had been shy and never had the confidence to believe people would accept me as I was. So, I got used to hiding my real thoughts to simply fit in with the group. Whether it was choosing games in kindergarten or raising hands in fourth grade, my lack of confidence made me go along with the flow instead of voicing my own thoughts.

Choosing to try the new book and to become friends with Lily was amazing, but best of all, I felt free to be myself, like a little bird that finally had the confidence to soar through the clear blue sky. Even though my friends were surprised to witness my sudden change, none of them left me because of it, and I found out that my growing confidence made our bond even stronger. I was able to open up to them instead of being overly self-conscious and realized that true friends accept you as and encourage you to be who you are. I realized that expressing my thoughts and feelings was not so scary after all.

Confidence will be with me as I travel through my life and will be the sword that clears the path in front of me. And so, I will confidently continue doing what I believe in and be my real and simple self regardless of anything or anyone.