**From:** Elana Cohn-Rozansky  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 18, 2014 10:08 PM  
**To:** Betsy Bailey  
**Subject:** RE: Conversation Sandwich #1

Thanks for your speedy reply!  I hadn't thought that in depth about Theo's voice but now that you've brought it up I realize that he is a wonderful combination of real live boy and wise old soul.  There are points when I wish I could meet him, and others when I was glad he was just a fictional character.  Your point about the part the mother plays is also thought-provoking. I really admired her relationship with Theo.  In his mind, she's a lovely mix of practical, accessible mom and divine spirit.  This rubs off on the reader!  
  
Perhaps in our next conversation we can examine the plot turns, particularly those that you felt were somewhat less believable.  I often approach my reading of literature with the eye of an editor (or, more likely, a writing teacher) which means I am constantly assessing what could be eliminated in order to tighten up the story line, especially with a book as long as this one.  I obviously trust the author, but I also am intrigued by the possibilities.  
  
We'll be in touch,  
Elana

**From:** Betsy Bailey  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 18, 2014 3:25 PM  
**To:** Elana Cohn-Rozansky  
**Subject:** RE: Conversation Sandwich #1

Hi Elana:

 I am so glad you are enjoying *The Goldfinch* as much as I did!  I think Theo’s voice is what captivated me from the very first pages of the novel and held me even through some plot turns that felt less than completely believable.  The voice is what made Theo so real to me from the very beginning and let me feel I knew him even before the plot takes off.  Getting to know Theo’s mother, through his voice, made her – despite her almost complete absence from the narrative – also so real.  Although Theo speaks less of her as the novel unfolds, I felt her presence throughout and consistently believed that his love for her and memories of their shared experiences would let him survive the tragedies and heartbreak. Perhaps it is that underlying story of the love between mother and son that speaks so powerfully to both you and me – both mothers of sons!

 I look forward to continuing our conversation about *The Goldfinch*!

 ~Betsy

**From:** Elana Cohn-Rozansky   
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 18, 2014 12:55 PM  
**To:** Betsy Bailey  
**Subject:** Conversation Sandwich #1

Hi Betsy,  
  
Thank you so much for recommending *The Goldfinch* to me.  I'm a little more than half way through and enjoying it immensely.  Since I began the book two weeks ago I have run into six or seven people who have happily reported, "I loved that book," or "My mom said she couldn't put it down; I can't wait to read it!"  There's this song in their voice that suggests I've come upon something truly irresistible.    
When you said it was a fast 700-page-plus read (771 to be exact), I wasn't sure what to expect.  It caught my attention from the very start and it has yet to let up.  But, strangely, I can't say for certain why it is so incredibly satisfying.  Sure, the writing style is engaging--poetic interpretations of emotions mixed with some absolutely hilarious observations and self-deprecating humor.  And then there is the plot which is a captivating combination of tragedy (death upon death upon death), heartbreak (Pippa), triumphs (too many to mention, small as they are), and suspense (how is Theo's possession of this painting going to play out? You're killing me here!)  In addition, who can forget some of the most memorable characters?  Boris for one, and Hobie, and Mrs. Barbour. But I have to say, there are lots of books that share lots of these same qualities, yet they don't compel me to race home from school to read or cause me to neglect more than a couple of household obligations (Honey, were you planning on going to the grocery any time soon?  Should I just get my own dinner?)  Even last night when I was struggling to stay awake to board a plane at 11:30 (yes I schlepped the book along and yes that was far later than my normal bedtime), I found myself plowing through another 50 pages or so in one sitting.  
  
So I'm wondering if you can identify, without spoiling anything, why *The Goldfinch* is so consuming.  I can feel how it draws me in, but I don't think I can truly name it.  I'd love to hear what you think about its appeal and how you felt when you were just starting it and then about at the midpoint.  
  
As a reminder, I will be sharing this "Conversation Sandwich" (my comments are the bread and yours will be the filling) with my students as an example of this assignment and, hopefully, to give them a sneak peek into what adult readers do with a book when they don't have to report on it for school!!!  
  
Looking forward to hearing from you soon,  
Elana