Dear ████

    I always look forward to receiving your letters! It always is exciting to hear about what you are learning about in class. I have lived in the Midwest the longest, but I spent some time in the South and am now in the Northeast. I think my favorite place is the Midwest, but I love living and working here in the Northeast too. I love all of the seasons (even winter!) and I love the forests in the northern regions of the country. Do you have a favorite region? How about a favorite region of the world?

    You mentioned you were excited about moving soon. Are you moving to a new city? A new school? Or are you just moving to a new house around where you live now? Sometimes changes can be scary, but I'm so happy to hear you are excited. I have moved A LOT around the country to work and gain experience before I started graduate school. It is always hard to meet new people at first, even when I am excited and the people are really nice! I used to be very shy when I was your age. As I got older, I realized that new people liked me a lot when I was me and not trying to act like someone else. Meeting new people and finding a sense of belonging can feel scary even now, but I learned to be confident and believe in myself, and that helps me meet new people and find friends that appreciate me. I found out during all of my moving around, that most people are really cool. It may seem like there are

a lot of differences - between people in different cities, states, or countries - but everywhere I go, people are really interesting and amazing. Most people want the same things underneath their differences - they want to be friends, be happy, and have fun. You told me you have been lucky enough to travel a few times. I really hope you get the opportunity to travel more in your life!

If you are willing to move around and travel, you will have a lot of really cool job options, especially if you want to work with wildlife. Since starting graduate school, I haven't traveled as much since I have a lot of work and not as much time. Once I graduate, I want to travel with my husband to a country with rainforests and coral reefs. Even though my favorite animals to work with are in the northern U.S., I still love traveling to see other species in other countries. I decided to major in biology because I think animals are so awesome. And I decided to research food webs because I am facinated by all of the little things that cause an animal to eat one food instead of another. Maybe it's because I love food so much myself! I am planning to finish my research and graduate this December. Since my last letter, I found out that most small mammals like eating the seeds of white pine, even small mammals that eat mostly insects! Have you ever seen or heard of a shrew? They eat a lot of insects, but they sometimes eat my seeds since they have a lot of fat in them.
↳ (oil and energy)

My research is a lot of hard work and I have to work instead of doing fun things sometimes. It sounds like your mom has to do that too sometimes. It seems like she is a hard worker, and that is a really good skill to have to be successful in the future. Even when work is hard and when you feel tired or stuck, keep going, ask for help, and don't give up. It feels amazing when you finish, and people notice hard work. It also makes fun things feel more fun when you accomplish your goals and finish the work you have to do. Maybe when I finish graduate school, I'll be able to study marten and fox because they are my favorite species (but only after bungee jumping!). Although, swimming with nurse sharks sounds like something I would love to do! Plus, then I could have a trained squirrel that could reach high things for me, and pick fruits from the top of a tree for me, and be a fluffy scarf in winter, and maybe play little pranks on my friends ☺

What animal would you study? Opossums? What trained animal would you want?

I can't wait to hear from you again!

Sincerely,
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P.S. I included some postcards with some of Maine's iconic wildlife! Feel free to ask me questions about them. My university's mascot is a black bear!