

Dear Wendy Mass,

I used to think that my passion for sports, singing, and instruments were all things that made me stand out from everyone else. I used to think that without these activities I would be ordinary and plain. I used to think that without these differences I would feel empty inside. Of course, that was before I read your book *A Mango Shaped Space*.

When I read your novel, I realized that people often feel like their one different trait is the single aspect that sets them aside from everyone else. But, it is instead how you act to the people around you that really makes you special. This is what I learned while I read your story and reflected upon my life. I could connect to the main character especially at the end of the book when she feels lost without her synesthesia. While I was reading the novel I could understand how she felt and could see how much people depend on their special talent for their self-identity. This is what many people believe, but after reading your book I was able to understand that it isn't the special talent that makes you different, it is your personality and the way you look at things that truly sets the way that other people see you.

Because of this story I was able to change the way I think about myself along with the people I meet. Now, every time I do something that I love, while I enjoy that part of my personality, I realize that I can look deeper to find the real me in my interactions with other people. Without this novel, I would still see myself as different because of the activities I am involved in. The way that I was able to connect to the characters in the story changed the outlook that I had on both myself and others.

Your book taught me many important things that I will remember forever. I could relate to almost each of the characters in some way. Though I have read many books throughout my lifetime, the relation that I had with your characters will always

stay in my mind. Through reading this novel I learned that: sometimes, when people have something special about them, they feel like they are nothing if they lose it, but it is not the difference that is your identity, it is how you act and how you feel inside that really makes the difference. This book changed the way I think about things in my everyday life and the way that I listen to others every second of the day.

Sincerely,

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Dear Ali Benjamin,

I have never witnessed a close friend's death. Nor have I had to experience the emotions children may feel about having their parents divorce. Yet, through your book, *The Thing About Jellyfish*, I have had the ability to see and appreciate a different life that will forever change my perspective on the world and what I take for granted on a daily basis.

Suzy did not know that her friend would die after the incident. Suzy did not know that the devastated look on her friend, Franny's face would be the last look she would give to her. But Franny did die, and Suzy could never have felt any worse. When reading the book, I expected a lesson or moral that would come out of the plot, just like any other book I had read. Just like Suzy did not expect her friend's death, I did not expect to be so moved by the unspoken morals that I had gathered from this reading. Suzy's life was so far from mine, but I had continued to realize that we shared more similarities than what I previously had thought. Just like Suzy, I felt that my life had been switched upside down too, and that it had changed, but for me, it was for the better.

Every day, time goes by, and before reading your book, I had never thought much about it. I thought that time was just a few numbers written on the clock, something that would forever keep going. There were so many other things that I thought should be valued, but I had not yet realized that time could be the greatest value of all. From your book, I was able to conclude that each second, each day, and every year that goes by is a year that I will never be able to get back again. Each decision made within that time period, is one that is forever written in stone which cannot be changed.

Suzy wished that she would have more time with Franny to make things right, and felt so much regret over her mean actions. Unfortunately, Suzy would never get to undo the things she did, or change the past. I did not want to share this problem that Suzy struggled with. Now, I am able to recognize that the time I have should be valued, and that people would do anything to have more time. Whether it is more time for an assignment, more time with a person, or more time for one's self, the time that we have had for something or someone has been taken for granted.

Knowing that each second I am given, will be just another opportunity that I am so lucky to have, I see so much that I have simply overlooked before. I now know to place each moment I have had on the same pedestal, and can even hold them in greater regards since I have learned the value of opportunity and time that I have been given even in the bad moments.

From reading your book, *The Thing About Jellyfish* I had the opportunity to learn to value each moment in my life more, for it is the only opportunity I will have to live it. I've learned to value time better, for time is the greatest gift that we are given. I have also concluded that I should spend each moment wisely, and that since I only have one chance, my time is too important to overlook the little things that I have and take for granted. Thank you for teaching me a different perspective, one that I would not have learned otherwise.

Sincerely,



Dear Alan Gratz,

*Prisoner B-3087* has deeply changed my life. Before I read your book I thought that surviving was easy. I always took for granted the amazing life I have. I now realize how people all around the world struggle to survive. Some people go great lengths to obtain daily needs such as food and water. Your book completely changed the way I thought about the world and the people that live in it.

With the help of your story I am able to get a clear picture of what hope really is. For instance, no matter how dark the time is you have to persevere and never give up hope that things will get better. Even if times are dark for many weeks, months, or even years you should never give up hope. When you give up hope you will fall into the darkness and live in it every day. If you keep hope though, you will always find a way to be happy and everything will turn out just fine. I realized this when Yanek worked very hard to survive and never gave up. This made me feel very determined when I read about Yanek. For example, when I thought that I would never memorize my lines for the school play I almost gave up. However, I remembered your book and persevered through the tough times. I then memorized my lines and proved to myself by my hard work I was able to succeed. Yanek helped me realize that you should persevere and never give up hope.

Also, another thing that your book made me realize was that family is the most important thing. Before your book I took my family for granted. I thought that they would always be there for me and everything would be fine. After I read your book though, I realized that your family may not always be there for you and

you have to cherish them. I also understand now that family is the only thing you need to be happy. I learned this when although Yanek had nothing he still had family which made him happy. This filled me with love and appreciation. Yanek taught me to always love my family no matter what happens. For instance, when my mom left work to come to my basketball game I never realized how much this meant until I read your book. She sacrificed work time just to see me have fun. I learned many things through the book of *Prisoner B-3087* and one of them is that family is all you need.

After reading your book it changed the way I thought. I have learned and realized so many different lessons from your book and I will forever remember them. I guess that even if times are tough for very long, things will always get better if you have faith and hope. You also helped me to realize that you should never take family for granted. Your messages through Yanek have inspired me and have changed me to be a better person.

Sincerely,

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Dear R.J. Palacio,

I never thought about the way people feel inside every day. Sometimes people keep their problems all to themselves and hide who they are. When I read the book *Wonder*, I started thinking about the people in the background, who I never really notice. I began to wonder if people may be feeling sad, depressed, or lonely. *Wonder* did not only change my perspective, but it changed my feelings toward others in my world.

When I finished the book, it wasn't just like any other book I read, where I picked up another book and forget about it. I began thinking about how others felt more frequently, and how people like Auggie need a chance to be like everyone else. People have unique qualities and everyone needs respect. When reading how Auggie was being bullied because of his differences, it made me cry. I felt the need to help all of the people who are bullied for their unique appearances or special needs. I began to wonder what I would do if I were in any situation like Auggie has been in. I would always stick up for myself, but would it be hard? After I read how Auggie felt after the incidents at school, I could not begin to think of how I would react.

But I saw how Auggie got stronger from the bullies, and how he found people who truly cared about him. His situations showed me how to be proud of who I am. Everyone is beautiful in his or her own way, and no one should ever judge them for that. No one should ever feel ashamed of themselves, and if they do, I would be the one to help them. Just how Summer made friends with Auggie when she saw that he was alone. I realized that small actions, like sitting with someone who is alone, saying hello to people that you may not pay attention to, or a simple smile, can change a whole day. When I finished this book, I felt like a new person, a better person.

I would like to thank you, R.J. Palacio, for writing this book. It has made me a person who really "sees" people. It has made me realize that and others are beautiful in unique and individual ways. Auggie made me recognize to respect everyone, including myself, and to never tolerate bullying. No one, in any way, should feel insecure or ashamed of themselves. From *Wonder*, I learned the value of being nice to others who are different. I wish that everyone could read this book and feel impacted the same way as I did. Everyone should understand what this book teaches, because everyone wants to be treated with kindness, and so do I.

Sincerely,



Dear Neil and Jeremy Dahlstrom,

For a number of years now, I have dreamed of becoming a farm owner and agricultural engineer when I grow up. It is a career choice that not many kids often think about however, it has fascinated me for some time. When I think of farming, it is not only growing crops and providing food to people but I also think about advances in technology and how farming can be improved in the future. Reading your book, *The John Deere Story*, helped me gain a better understanding of how the equipment was used to modernize farming, and also gave me thoughts about how I could help to improve upon farming in the future.

When I read your book, I began to think about what significant contributions I could make that would revolutionize the farming world. The Deere brothers set the stage for the type of farming that we see today. They invented the steel plow which allowed the farmers to cut through tough land to till the soil. In addition to owning a working farm, perhaps I could invent a machine such as a heated steel land roller that would help to warm the soil allowing farmers to plant when the air temperature is cooler. There is a lot of talk about different types of farming like underwater, vertical, etc., however, I want to work the land with different types of equipment and see the fruits of my labor.

Farming is a risky business and may not result in the kind of financial success that I hope to achieve. The location of my farm, weather patterns, and types of crops that are grown can impact my success. My parents worry about this longtime dream of mine, but I am determined to find a way to create a future for myself.

I have wanted to become involved in the farming world since I was seven years old. Even before that, when I was around four, I was deeply interested in heavy construction equipment. Most of this equipment was the John Deere construction series of equipment. If I ever get to live on and run a fully operational farm, I would love to use the John Deere R series of apparatus.

Owning a farm and becoming an agricultural engineer is a goal that not many kids would seriously consider pursuing. Your book has inspired me to keep dreaming about this goal and reaching for success. I will continue to think of innovative ways to change the farming world to help create a better future.

Sincerely,

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