

December 1, 2017

Dear Mrs. Collins,

I know that your book *The Hunger Games* was fiction, but I feel as if it really changed the way that I think about reality. Before I read the book, I saw life as just routine: studying for tests, playing sports, spending time with friends, and playing video games. As I read your book, I saw characters my own age, in situations where they needed to think about what their family would eat, or whether or not they would be alive in the following moments. Of course, we all occasionally see events similar to this on the news, where children my age from around the world might have to learn to survive, but reading your book transported me into the characters world and their thoughts, and forced me to imagine what it might really be like to be faced with choices similar to these. Although I read the book through the cushion of knowing that it was purely a work of fiction, I started to become aware of the idea that someday I might be faced with difficult decisions myself. For example I probably won't ever have to choose between letting my younger sister die or taking her place in a fight to the death, but what if I had to choose whether or not to give a kidney to someone who was going to die? Or what if someone I loved became homeless and I had to give up many comforts to let that person's family have a place to stay for an extended period of time?

I always thought of myself as a good person, but I began to wonder: could I face hardship and still think about the wellbeing of others, without becoming absorbed in self-pity? Would I even choose to do it at all, or would I just distract myself and pretend that there was nothing I could do? These are real life situations, and it is uncomfortable to think about them.

What if all of the things that I had used before to judge whether I was a good person, were actually not the right requirements at all? I usually reason that if my peers think I am “cool,” nice or funny; if I play football well, or if I get good grades, then I must be a decent person. But what if these qualities are completely irrelevant? Maybe they are just supposed to be practice for what really is important? Even in my life, right now, I have many opportunities to help others, but I don’t always act upon them. For example, some kids in my school have trouble making friends, or get bullied. I usually try to converse with them and stand up for them to the best of my ability, but sometimes the peer pressure gets to me and I just avoid them due to the fear of not fitting in, or looking foolish. I strongly believe Katniss Everdeen would rise up and try to defend people who can’t defend themselves. She would think of all the other people in need before she would think about what everyone thought of her.

It may seem like common knowledge that caring for others is a very important quality, but many people do not do this enough. Reading your book made me think that maybe there is a connection between advice I have received in life about being caring toward other people, and its direct relationship to how we all interact and survive in life, emotionally as well as physically. Can I be someone who contributes to the lives of others, even as I am looking out for all of the things that I need to do in life? What changes do I need to make in my own thinking in order to begin to do that? We don’t live in the actual Hunger Games, but people hunger everywhere and every day for someone to see them and help them feel that they matter, even just a little bit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Daniel Con". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Daniel Con