

Dana Erickson
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Dear Suzanne Collins –

I turned my head slightly, looking at the flaming trees as they tumbled to the ground. I kept running; jumping over flaming branches, thoughts running through in my head where completely jumbled. I was terrified. I continued to run, the flames licking at my skin. I saw water up ahead and just before I could dive into it and save myself I felt my arm being shaken. I looked around and noticed that I wasn't in a flaming arena in Panem but instead in my Contemporary Literature class, with your book, The Hunger Games, sitting in my lap.

I've always been the type of person who would read anything and everything. I'd been thrown into adventures and trips, I'd fallen in love with characters, I'd laughed and cried from books many times, but never the way I did in The Hunger Games. I was not only transferred into Panem while reading, but also in countless dreams and daydreams. I found myself inspired by the fierce determination and loyalty of the characters. I found myself interested in things I'd never even looked twice at before. I found myself never taking a day for granted, and most importantly, I found part of me I never knew existed.

The first time I realized how much your book impacted me was at summer camp. I was realized that I had a whole new interest on survival activities. I learned how to build a one-match fire; even how to build one after it's rained. I learned how to cook on a fire. I learned how to tie knots and even passed the challenge course. Best of all I learned how to shoot a bow and arrow, an activity I'd always opted out of before. Much to my surprise I found that I truly enjoyed archery, something I would never have known about myself without your book.

When I arrived back at school there, was Hunger Games frenzy; kids talked about it in the hallway, in class, at lunch, any place you can think of. I began finding that none of them had actually been impacted the way I had. I began to realize how lucky I was to have parents who could take care of my two brothers and me. I began to realize how lucky I was to live in a place where I was free, where nobody would tell me I had to fight for their entertainment. Lots of kids just took it as just being fiction, yet I applied it to my life.

As I continued to read the series, I began to see similarities between the story and my life. My little cousin was Prim in every way possible. I began to realize that like Katniss, I was great at hiding my feelings and weaknesses. I was also way more determined than I had been before I read your book. I couldn't stop finding people who looked like how I pictured each character, although I still haven't found an Effie. My whole view of the world was changing, and I had no way of stopping it.

Your book changed my life in so many ways, I have a new appreciation for what I have, and more determination than I ever thought possible. The book is still impacting me now, almost two years after I read it. Most importantly, I had a whole new outlook on my life and the world.

Sincerely,
Dana Erickson