

# LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE

MASSACHUSETTS LEVEL II HONORABLE MENTION 2009

Dear Cynthia Lord,

Like the main character in *Rules*, I have a special needs brother. He isn't autistic like David, just learning disabled. Still, I'm constantly reminding him of things that are common sense for me. Before this book, it was hard for me not to be embarrassed of having a brother who is three years older than me but is mentally younger. Watching Catherine learn to understand David helped me to accept my brother for who he is. Of course I have always loved him, but I learned from you that just because he learns differently doesn't mean he really is different in the long run.

Before reading this book, I was always getting uncomfortable in social situations with my brother. When I would have friends over, they would look at the toy trucks and pictures of them covering his room, and they would wonder if I had a younger brother. Or they would make fun of the older brother they knew I had. I would always have to publically remind him to do or not do things that are like breathing for me, like the list of rules in your book. *Rules* showed me that it's okay to learn at different rates; there isn't a wrong or right way. Also, I have to help my brother as much as possible. Most importantly, it taught me that people that are mean to him aren't real friends to me.

Naturally, I used to feel jealous of my brother. He gets a lot of special attention that I have never gotten. That's another big thing that I have in common with Catherine. People pay more attention to my brother because they feel he needs the extra kindness. Also, my parents let him off the hook much quicker than they do me because they know he can't help it. After reading this book and learning to understand my brother better, I figured that I should be grateful for the people who try and give him the most attention possible. After all, who knows how many people are mean to him from ignorance?

Before reading *Rules*, I used to feel like I was missing out on having a "normal" life. I would think about the future when my friends' siblings would be going to prom, getting their driver's licenses, going to college, getting married, and I would wonder if I would ever be able to experience that with my brother. Now I know how lucky I am to have a brother like mine and like David. I realized that he gives me patience, forgiveness, and makes me a more open-minded person so I can accept everyone, no matter who they are.

Sincerely,

*Austen*

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