

Dear Jodi Picoult,

After reading your novel *Nineteen Minutes*, I found myself thinking more deeply about the impact I can have on others. The idea that something as devastating as a school shooting can happen in just nineteen short minutes made me think about everything I have and how quickly it could all disappear. Every day of my life I have a family who loves me, friends who are there for me, and a boyfriend who would do anything for me. Your book made me realize I could lose all of that in the blink of an eye, so I should appreciate everything while I still have the chance.

Ever since I read *Nineteen Minutes* I try not to let a day go by where I do not tell everyone important in my life how much they mean to me. While *Nineteen Minutes* made me realize exactly how good my life is, it also made me grateful for what my life isn't. Sometimes I find myself thinking of the Peters of the world, like those at the Columbine and Virginia Tech shootings. Maybe if someone took the time to act friendly towards those who society views as outcasts then these acts of violence would have been prevented. If the parents and peers of everyone like Peter just took the time to pay a little extra attention to them, more violence could be prevented. If Josie had chosen her friendship with Peter over popularity, she could have prevented Peter's terrible choice. Whenever I think about Peter, I also think about the people in my school that might he like him. Though I like to think that no one in my school would go to extremes to get back at everyone like Peter did, there are definitely people who would be happier if they were treated better.

Recently there was a boy in my school who was arrested for the murder of his uncle, though he has yet to go to trial for it. The day I heard about this I immediately thought of *Nineteen Minutes*. What would have happened if he had chosen to take his problems out on his peers instead of his family? Would my school be the next Columbine? Maybe that time he asked to borrow a quarter I shouldn't have just given it to him, but also asked him about his day.

Something as simple as "Hello, how are you?" could have changed his life. In one of my classes there is a boy who definitely reminds me of Peter. He is quiet and fairly awkward, and some people make fun of him, so I try to act as benevolently towards him as possible. I thank him whenever he hands a paper back to me, and I try to make conversation with him. Maybe if someone had done this for Peter he would have chosen a different path in life. Sometimes I am amazed that not everyone thinks the same way I do when, while everyone has not read *Nineteen Minutes*, they still hear of numerous terrible acts of violence. It is astonishing to me that anyone could hear of Columbine yet still find a reason to tease and taunt others. Maybe *Nineteen Minutes* should be required reading for every high school to make people think twice about the impact of their actions and to make people appreciate everything they have. If everyone read your book, they would learn to appreciate the possible power of a simple act of kindness.

Sincerely,

*Alex Cammarata*