

Dear Mike Lupica,

I have two great parents. I have no mental or physical disabilities. Most of my family lives within two hours of driving, and we aren't very poor. In other words, my life is almost nothing like Michael's, except for the fact that I love baseball. When I work hard in school to get good grades, I try to think of what Michael would be thinking. I wish that I could read his mind, and how his thoughts would relate and differ from mine.

When I first picked up the book *Heat*, I didn't have high hopes that this would go on my top five books of all time list. To me, it was one of same old, same old, those long adult books that nobody could understand. When I read this book the first time, I lacked comprehension skills, and I now realize that it was too old for me. After all, I was only in second grade. So when I did read it, I didn't understand it. I still didn't like reading lengthy, "boring" books is what I called them.

Then, two years later, on the last day of school before Christmas break, my friend Jack came running up to me with a copy of *Heat*. He said I had to read the book: it was the best book he had ever read. He handed it to me and told me to read it. I wasn't interested, but I wanted to be a good friend. So I took it, thinking I would just keep it for a while and give it back after time. But there were no books to read at home, so reluctantly I opened to the first page and started reading. I sat on that couch for hours, the book pulling me into it like a black hole. I think the difference was that I felt more sympathy for him, and realized the situation he was stuck in, what he had to live through. No parents, no relative within 1,000 miles, and he works like a beaver trying to stay with his beloved brother, Carlos, for the rest of the week before the foster home found out about them. It's pretty amazing, how different the lives of people can be. On holidays, my family visits all our relatives and has a great time. It would be hard for me not to do that.

But Michael handles all of this really well. It's amazing. In the story, when he has to miss the playoff games because he can't find his birth certificate (he's so good at baseball that people question his age), he doesn't break down into tears and yell about how rotten his life is. Instead, he sits waiting and tries to make the best out of the moment. If you think about it, we complain that "my brother knocked down my blocks," and he doesn't even complain that he doesn't have any parents! Believe it or not, he probably enjoys every moment of his life more than I or most other kids do. He thinks, *as long as I can be with my brother for a while, then life is okay*. I wish that I could be as grateful for little things like Michael.

Another big thing that made me think is the friendship between Michael and Manny, the catcher on his baseball team. Manny is incredible to Michael, just as good friends should be. He cheers Michael up when he is down, jokes around with him, and almost acts as a second brother to Michael. And really, they don't fight like most friends do. They've known each other and the situation that they're in for so long and so well, that they both realize that there are more important things to be done than quarrel. That's what I would do for my friends, and I hope that's what my friends would do for me. Good friends should help each other as much as they would to themselves.

If I hadn't read the book *Heat*, I have no idea what level of reading I would be at now. Also, now that I've read your book, I feel more sympathy for people who are poorer than, or not as lucky as some people are. In all, this book made me not only hugely expand my reading but also look at life in a much different, truer way.

Sincerely,

*Jack Fair*