

**Alexandra Wilkin (8th Grade: Worthington, Ohio)**  
**Level II Second Place Winner**  
**Letter to Laurie Halse Anderson concerning her book, *Winter Girls***

Dear Laurie Halse Anderson:

Your book *Winter Girls* blew my mind and completely changed my view of Anorexia Nervosa. I used to think that it wasn't that bad (unless the person was near death or dead) and that they recovered sort of easily. I also thought that other than starving themselves, they functioned like normal people. Your book really opened my eyes to the disturbing, harsh reality that is anorexia. It made it so sad, so horrifying and definitely real.

One way that I really relate to Lia is how much I love my three little sisters I would try to quit anything that ever made me a disappointment or a bad role model in their eyes. But the youngest looks up to me so much that I'm never a disappointment to her. Little things like when I always used to throw my coat on the floor or wearing make-up at school, she would want to copy because "Alex = good" in her mind. I would never want my sisters to think that being anorexic was O. K. or even good. I want my sisters to be confident about their bodies. The youngest really lifts me up. She is my own personal cheerleader and she has helped me whenever I've felt insecure. I would never want to hear her like that.

So, I guess what I'm trying to say is that I thank you for the book that opened my eyes and hopefully those of many others to the horrors of Anorexia. I truly appreciate my body after having read your book. Your book is what always makes me compliment people (in a non-superficial way) that I know are insecure and why, whenever a conversation turns to the subject or weight, I steer it away. I now understand that people DIE from Anorexia every day.

Society needs to stop promoting thinness, diets, and visible ribs as attractive. We need to focus on smart, kind and charitable women that are a healthy size. We young ladies need to stop caring so much about hair, makeup and clothes. We need to focus on being kind to everyone, being successful and LOVING WHO WE ARE. I believe that we girls are the future and that we can fix it if we start now. We can save lives!

Sincerely,

**Alexandra Wilkin**