

Honorable Finalist, Level II

Laura Flaker

Letter to author Lauren Oliver concerning her book *Before I Fall*

Dear Lauren Oliver:

Your book, *Before I Fall*, has taught me how important it is to be kind. It has also taught me that popularity doesn't matter, but my reputation does. Your book showed me how far bullies can go and how bullying affects someone. *Before I Fall* has truly made an impact on my life. Here is more on kindness and its importance.

When I think of kindness, two things come to my mind. Those two things are actions and words. The reason I think of these two things is because they work together as one. You might say something nice but not actually mean it. Or, you could do something nice but just be doing it to look good. In conclusion, I feel as though you have to mean what you are doing for it to be a true act of kindness. So, in your book, Sam starts off not showing either of these traits. She was so caught up in being a perfect little high schooler that she was turning into a monster. Then as the book went on, she started to do small things just to basically "clear her conscience." She still didn't actually mean what she was doing. Finally, Sam realized how to actually be kind and try to save Juliet. I was so proud of her. She figured out that kindness really is important. That is what I think about kindness.

Next, *Before I Fall* taught me that my "popularity status" doesn't matter, but my reputation does. Sam was very focused on being popular. Her reputation was slowly becoming worse and worse because she wasn't thinking about her actions. She was just thinking about her popularity. Your book taught me about the limits of popularity. I learned that you can be popular without pushing it, but there are a lot of ways to go over the edge. In *Before I Fall*, Sam and her friends go way past the limits. They went so far that Juliet decided that she didn't want to be in this world anymore. There are also many ways to be popular without pushing it. You might just have more friends than some people or be better known. Those aren't bad things. In addition, your book taught me about the importance of reputation. I learned that I need to set a good example and try my hardest to be kind in order to have a good reputation. I am very glad that in your book Sam loses her good reputation from when she was younger. I thought that this was important because it showed me a real life situation on the importance of a good reputation. Those are my thoughts on popularity and reputations.

Finally, *Before I Fall* taught me more about bullying and why it is wrong. I have always known that bullying is wrong, but your book showed me so much more than that, it showed me how bullying actually affects someone. I learned how Juliet really felt and how it was destroying her life. I was in so much shock when I read that the person who Lindsey hit was Juliet. Reading why Lindsay hated Juliet demonstrated to me why bullies are bullies: most of the time they are usually weak, insecure about themselves, or have a problem at home that is driving them to act out as they do.

Thank you, Lauren Oliver, for teaching me these things and showing me real life situations.

Sincerely,
Laura Flaker