

January 7, 2019

Dear Malala Yousafzai,

About four years ago, I was searching through the Top Picks for Young Readers on Google. While scrolling through the numerous book titles and descriptions, I found *I Am Malala* to be most intriguing. At the time, I wasn't very excited about school. My feelings reflected what many students in America sense. As a 12 year old, the assumption that school was a waste of time or an obstacle that was holding me back from more important activities were reoccurring thoughts that went through my head. By choosing this book, I hoped that reflecting on another person's perspective regarding school would help me on a personal level.

As I read through the book, I took to heart the struggles and traumatic events that many girls, including yourself, have faced in order to simply attend school. One of the aspects I found in your book to be most compelling was how you demonstrated that education gave you a voice, and that kind of influence allowed you to speak out to the world. In addition, while obtaining a voice of your own, you made it your duty to speak for those that did not have one. This book has also taught me what kind of power comes to a person who wields education and knowledge as a weapon. Little can stand in the way of someone who is persistent, hardworking, and willing to fight to the end for what they believe in.

Not only did I find that my thoughts on school changed while reading the book, but also about the capabilities of girls and women. You had to fight for your place in a society that was accustomed to catering to men. Through your actions, an example was set for girls all over the world which illustrates that strength and power can be found in women young and old. "If one man can destroy everything, why can't one girl change it?" As a young girl myself, I felt great pride in reading those words as I still do today.

For every student in my home town and across the globe who view school as a jail cell or have other negative thoughts concerning school, I would implore them to look more closely at those who have no access to education or those who have to fight for it continuously. Being gifted with the ability to attend school freely is something that young adults should not dread but be truly grateful for.

Since my first time reading *I Am Malala* a few years ago, I have revisited and reanalyzed the book over and over again. Each time I take more out of the book than I did the last time. Today, I now find myself enjoying school, and I hunger for knowledge. In addition, my interests in the world have greatly expanded, and I am learning to develop a voice of my own as I continue to grow.

Very Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maria Farnum". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Maria Farnum