Johnston Community Schools
Johnston, Iowa

Dear Joyce Maynard,

Change. A word that can hit many people like a wooden bat to a baseball. Sometimes it hits so hard the bat can shatter into millions of pieces, sometimes the bat stands strong and blasts that ball out of the park, sometimes that bat connects with the ball over and over again until a conclusion is made, and many times that bat and ball never connect. These types of change have all affected me and definitely stood out to me in the book The Usual Rules.

The book The Usual Rules is one book which has made me stop and think in y run around life's bases. Death, is the ball that not only was pitched to me in this book, but spun out of control about a week ago while I was at bat. In my fourteen years at the plate it was the first time that your book, The Usual Rules, finally made since to me. As I read about Wendy and the loss of her mother I thought about how horrible it would be to lose someone so close to me that meant so much, but never did I believe that the game would become real to me. As I stood at the plate of the game of life the ball was hurled at me all too fast. I did not know what to do. Was I to back away and forget it ever was thrown my direction, or was I to swing that bat and connect with it? So I did. That phone call hit me at three o'clock in the morning. On the other end was one of my friends. she w crying and was trying to explain to me that one of my good friends that I had grown up with, played soccer with, and had many fun times with was gone. His time at the plate was up. Alex had been in a severe car accident and was killed instantly. Never at fourteen did I believe that I would be faced with this horrifying life lesson, a lesson that I thought at fourteen I would only read about in a book like yours.

As I sand and read your book I never imagined it would later help me in my struggle to hit the ball. I learned that change comes quickly, whether it be separation of parents, a move a move across the country, a weight loss, a sudden death, or a complete life change. I also leaned that those at the plate deal with changes many different ways. Wendy hit each ball that was thrown at her in different ways but soon leaned that change was going to continue being hurled her way. Therefore, Wendy decided to swing away and continue on around life's different bases. Through the understanding of Wendy's struggles with change, I was able to understand how get through a fast moving change in my direction. It helped me learn that change will always happen, and it matters how the person at the plate reacts to the change that is thrown their direction. It also makes me realize that if one doesn't take a step back and look at what may confront them or what they have, they may never know how to handle that change. Through your book and my sudden change I have learned that life is short and could change every so quickly. But perhaps the most important thing I have learned is that for those individual in my life, time at the plate may be over a bit sooner than I was ever hoping to imagine.

So as the ball is hurled in your direction, how will you react? How will I continue to react? It's hard to say….change can come in many different forms; it just depends on how the person at the plate will swing away.

Sincerely,

Katelyn Sunde