

## Analysis Worksheet 1 Ryan's Letter to the Author

Analyze Ryan's letter to the author in detail and fill in the chart.

In groups of three, read and analyze the letter you have been given. First: work alone: Highlight **linguistic devices** in the text (Which functional language does the writer use; chunks and phrases that can generally be used to write a LAL), and fill in the columns **content**, **purpose**, and **personal response**. Then: Share your results with the other team members. Discuss your findings.

Part of the text	Content What is the paragraph about?	Purpose How does the passage contribute to developing the thesis?	Personal response/critical evaluation To what extent do you like/dislike what you are reading? Why?
<p><b>1 Letters About Literature National Winners 2008</b></p> <p><b>Honorable Mentions, Level 3: Ryan Heffrin</b></p> <p>Dear Jodi Picoult,</p> <p>It was an ordinary December afternoon. Then my mom made me watch the news. The Channel 6 newscaster shouted over the blaring noise of sirens and traffic behind him. I started to cry, because even though it was just the news, it was not just ordinary news. A reckless, terribly irresponsible teenager had driven down the wrong side of the main Connecticut highway for 4 exits. Nine cars off the road. Possible injuries. The kid, only 19 years old, would surely go to jail. But, it is so painful for me to think of him as a killer, or a horrible person. I don't think of him as the intoxicated mess that the newscaster spoke of. I can't.</p>			

<p>2 He is my cousin.</p> <p>My aunt was no longer an ordinary person who could grocery shop, read a book, and get a cup of coffee without being noticed. She had helplessly lost her name as a skilled artisan, a good mother, and a respectable townspeople: she became the mother of that horrible kid, that drug addict, that person one hopes never to become. But to her, my cousin Matthew is her little boy. He is her son. In nineteen minutes, Peter Houghton changed the life of his family forever. In nineteen minutes, my cousin did the same. Nineteen minutes is all it took.</p>			
<p>3 While reading <i>Nineteen Minutes</i> oddly enough I did not make the connection between my family and the Houghton family. I identified Lacy Houghton as the "mother of the school shooter" I was amazed how she stepped outside every day with such prodigious strength and composure. She thought of nothing but Peter, and visited him at every opportunity. Her son--a murderer. And I thought. "Well, it's only fiction."</p>			
<p>4 But I later realized that Lacy and my aunt, and my cousin and Peter Houghton, are fairly similar. The situations are different, but not all that different. Both my aunt and Lacy may not have liked their sons when they were sent to jail, but they always loved them. Both Peter and Matthew were good kids from good families. Both were kids who were taunted, kids who were "different." As a kid, when Matthew faced an</p>			

<p>obstacle- in sports, classes, or really anything, my aunt would run to the rescue, letting him quit whatever it was that was too challenging for him. He never learned to stand up for himself, and consequently, he was often made fun of. He turned to drugs. Peter Houghton turned to revenge.</p>			
<p>5 Sometimes, people who do bad things are bad people. But what about the good kids who do bad things? Are they bad people too? When a school shooting happens, or a bombing, or a drunken car accident, one immediately thinks, "Who would ever do that?" To the public eye, they are murderers, idiots, really horrible people. Such a person deserves the punishment he gets for his actions. But, while one always thinks of the suffering victims after a tragedy, there is a family whose child has just done something horrific. There is a grandmother who prays for that child, a mother who loves him, and siblings who know him as lone] ' and misguided, but not a bad kid. They are suffering too. There is no excuse for any premeditated tragedy, but <i>Nineteen Minutes</i> brought to light the other side of the story. Thank you for showing me that my family is not alone in suffering. Thank you for showing the other side, and that the "bad `guy" is still a mother's child.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p><a href="http://www.read.gov/letters/contests/winners/2008/letters/levelthree-ryan.htm">http://www.read.gov/letters/contests/winners/2008/letters/levelthree-ryan.htm</a>ryan Heffrin</p>			