

12/12/2022

Dear Raina Telgemeier,

Your book, *Smile*, is what changed my point of view towards myself, it made me a different me. Before reading your book, I thought having dental issues and body image issues was weird and embarrassing. I thought I looked like someone I wasn't. I thought I looked like a weirdo.

I remember buying *Smile* at my school's Scholastic Book Fair during elementary school. Most of my friends had already read it and kept insisting I try it out for myself—so I did. At first I didn't think much of the book and just thought it was any typical book about a middle school girl who had problems and toxic friendships. After reading the book over and over again, I realized that it had a deeper meaning and message that I hadn't noticed before. It really touched me and helped me understand that I was unique.

In 4th grade I almost never showed my teeth when smiling. I was afraid of being weird just for having some simple dental issues. I made them much worse and more embarrassing than they actually were. Since I didn't show my teeth when smiling it caused me to think I looked even worse than I did while smiling. Now, over time, I realize that the problems weren't even that bad. I was just shaming myself for being me. I was unique in my own way just like you and everyone else in the world.

Luckily for me I had friends that were supportive and told me that I looked good if I smiled or didn't, unlike Raina in the beginning of the book. Not only did the book help me love myself more, but my friends also helped, just like you towards the end of the book. Like you said, "I had been letting the way I looked on the outside affect how I felt on the inside. But the more I focused on my interests, the more it brought out the things I liked about myself. And that affected the way other people saw me!" I stopped worrying about how others saw me, and focused on how I saw myself. How I see myself is more important than how others see me.

If my friends didn't recommend your book to me and I didn't buy *Smile* at my book fair, I would most likely never have read it. I would probably still hide my smile and feel embarrassed over nothing. That's how *Smile* helped me understand the importance of being yourself and not feeling embarrassed over a tiny thing. You, me and everyone has their problems, but it makes us cool and unique, not weird. So what if you are the center of gossip, you should embrace your special features not hide them.

Sincerely,

Amber