

Paige Pinion  
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Dear Avi,

The first time I read your book was when I made the decision to check it out at the library. A small, yet important decision. Before reading your book, my life appeared to be planned out. I had to do this, then I had to do that, and if I made a bad decision it was always because I had no other choice. I started to become mad at myself when I made a bad decision, but I never changed. I just told myself it was the only option, and I moved on. Each decision's impact hit me, one after the other, like waves crashing ashore. Some decisions were good, but some were bad, and I always paid the price. Still, I never thought about how I could do something different. When you don't feel like you have a choice to make, the impact appears to be inevitable. The choices that I make and the impact of my decisions never occurred to me until I read your book, *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*.

From when I first picked it up to when I reluctantly set it down, I was completely immersed in your book. While I read, I would miss various dinner, school, and "family meeting" calls because when I was reading your book, all I could hear was the loud, persistent crashing of waves against the bottom of the *Seahawk*. When Charlotte first saw a mysterious man jump aboard the *Seahawk* in the beginning, I immediately wanted to know who he was, how he would come back up later in the story, and how Charlotte would react. I noticed and remembered every decision Charlotte made, and I was able to recall everything I had read so far in perfect detail to my parents. In the mornings I waited until five minutes before we were supposed to leave for school before I finally put my book down and got ready. At school, Charlotte's thoughts and decisions were in my head all day, like a persistent butterfly that won't leave you alone. Sometimes I could even hear her telling me what to do during certain points in the day. I noticed how easy it was to listen to what Charlotte was telling me to do, and how hard it had been to listen to myself.

When I read your book, my mind became Charlotte's, and Charlotte's mind became mine. When Charlotte told the captain all of the bad things the crew had said and done, I sighed and shook my head in frustration. When Charlotte decided to cut off her hair in order to climb faster, I egged her on. Sometimes I even found myself whispering to Charlotte, telling her what to do next, like she had done for me. Of course, she didn't always listen to me. Just after a few chapters into the book, I became aware of how each decision she made led to the next, and how that decision led to another. Even just a spur of the moment decision affected the rest of her time on the boat. Never did Charlotte find herself in situation where there was no decision, and she never had only one option. I started to think that maybe I do always have a choice, even if I don't realize it right away.

By the end of your book, I could clearly see how all of Charlotte's decisions affected the ending of the story, just like real life. Charlotte became a different person because of the impact her decisions had on her. Every decision Charlotte made counted, and where Charlotte found herself in the end was entirely her own making. Through the end, I could see Charlotte changing; she started to pick and choose her decisions more carefully, but also partly following her gut. All of this led to the happy ending I wanted her to get.

After reading, I realized that every decision has an impact, and that life always gives me decisions, even when I don't realize it. *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* taught me to look beyond the one or two choices in front of me, and create more options for myself. Now, instead of assuming that something is impossible to avoid, I go through my choices in my head. I remember reading about Charlotte, and I imagine that someone else is reading about my decisions. Would they be shaking their head in frustration? Or would they be cheering me on? I am starting to regret my decisions less and less, and I always do my best to improve my decision making when I make the wrong one. Instead of getting stressed and mad, I reflect and move forward. Thank you for this.

Sincerely,  
Paige Pinion