

Thanks for Not Killing My Son

Rita Schindler

Elements of the Essay

This powerful letter appeared in *The Toronto Star* newspaper on December 30, 1990, and came to the attention of a student, who brought it to class to share with his classmates. It was written by a mother to the "strangers" who attacked her son and left him for dead. Though written as a letter, it has the elements of an essay, forceful in its ironic tone and eloquent in its point of view.

About the Writer

At the time she wrote this letter, Rita Schindler was a mother living in Scarborough, Ontario.

1 HOPE YOU WILL PRINT my letter of gratitude to the strangers who have affected our lives.

2 Sometime between 1:30 P.M., Dec. 8, and 1 A.M., Dec. 9, a young man was viciously attacked—beaten and kicked unconscious for no apparent reason other than walking by you on a public sidewalk.

3 He was left lying in a pool of blood from an open head wound—in the Victoria Park-Terraview area. He was found around 1 A.M. and taken to Scarborough General Hospital where ironically his mother spent 48 hours in labor before giving him birth, 23 years earlier.

4 His mother is angry of course, but thankful for the following reasons.

5 First of all—his eye socket was shattered and hemorrhaging but his eyesight will not be affected. Thank you.

6 His ear canal was lacerated internally from a tremendous blow to the side of his head. The cut could not be stitched and the bleeding was difficult to stop. But his eardrum seems to be undamaged—thank you.

7 He required numerous stitches to his forehead, temple and face but your boots didn't knock one tooth out—thank you. His head was

swollen almost twice its size—but Mom knew that his brain was intact—for he held her hand for six hours as he lay on a gurney, by the nurses station, I.V. in his arm—his head covered and crusted with dried blood—waiting for x-ray results and the surgeon to stitch him up.

8 So, thank you for his eyesight, his hearing and his hands which you could have easily crushed.

9 His hands—human hands—the most intricately beautiful and complex instruments of incredible mechanism—the result of billions of years of evolution—and you people used yours to beat another human being. Five guys and two girls to beat one person. Who do I thank? Did you know he was a talented young musician with a budding career—and that playing his keyboards and piano mean more to him than any words can say.

10 And when his friends were talking about revenge, I heard him say, "No, I don't want someone else's mother to go through what mine has." That's who you were kicking in the head. And so—I thank you for not causing the most horrible and devastating thing that can happen to any parent—that is—the untimely tragic loss of a child—at any age.

11 You could have kicked him to death but you only left him to die, thank you. A person found him and called for help.

12 I am his mother—and I have been given a second chance—thanks to you.

13 I hope that someday you'll have children and love them as much as I love mine—but I wouldn't wish on your child what you did to mine.

Rita Schindler
Scarborough

After-Reading Activities

Analyzing the Content

1. Why would a mother whose son has been beaten write a letter to a newspaper?

Structure and Style

2. At the beginning of this letter, the writer talks about herself in the third person ("His mother is ..."). At the end she says, "I am his mother." State the effect of this conceit on the reader.