



Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Division

About the Book of the Month: This collection of featured books is from Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, encourage social action and reinforce themes addressed in education programs of [A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute](#), ADL's international anti-bias education and diversity training provider. For educators, adult family members and other caregivers of children, reading the books listed on this site with your children and incorporating them into instruction are excellent ways to talk about these important concepts at home and in the classroom.

Out of My Mind

Sharon M. Draper (Author)

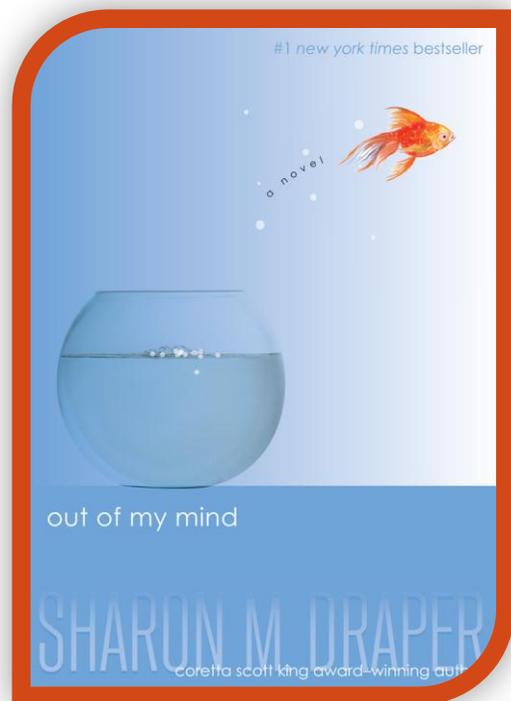
Eleven-year old Melody has a photographic memory. She's the smartest kid in her whole school but no one knows it. Most people don't think she's capable of learning and up until recently, her school days consisted of listening to the same preschool-level alphabet lessons again and again. If only she could speak up, but she can't because Melody can't talk. She can't walk. She can't write. Being stuck inside her head is making Melody go out of her mind—that is, until she discovers something that will allow her to speak for the first time ever.

ISBN: 978-1416971719

Publisher: Atheneum Books for Young Readers

Year Published: 2012

Age Range: 10 and up



Book Themes

People with disabilities, Ableism, Bias, Bullying

Key Words

Discuss and define these words with students prior to reading the book and remind them of the meanings as they come up in the book. See ADL's [Glossary of Education Terms](#).

- absorb
- analyze
- curiosity
- dialogue
- agenda
- competition
- diagnosis
- dignity

- documentary
- disabilities
- embarrassing
- frustrating
- genius
- inclusion
- limitations
- moderator
- nervous
- nervous
- photographic memory
- potential
- preliminary
- reasonable
- special needs
- specialist

Discussion Questions

If the students read the book in small groups or as a whole class, ask discussion questions throughout their reading in order to check comprehension and engage them on a deeper level. Some of these questions can also be used as writing prompts. When students have finished the book, choose from these questions to guide a group discussion:

- What is the book about?
- When you first meet Melody, what is your first impression of her? How does that change throughout your reading of the book?
- Have you ever heard of someone having a “photographic memory?” Did that surprise you about Melody?
- How do you think Melody feels knowing all that she does but being unable to express it? How do you think you might feel in that situation?
- Why do you think Melody’s Mom gets so angry with Dr. Hugely and why do you think she decides to enroll Melody in school after that appointment with him?
- What is Melody’s perspective and experience when she attends school? What are her impressions and insights about the “regular” kids (as she calls them) and her special needs classmates?
- What does Melody use to communicate in the beginning of the book and how does that change when she gets a new communication device?
- How do things change for Melody when she starts to spend time with her next door neighbor, Mrs. V (Violet Valencia)?
- What happens with Melody’s goldfish Ollie and how is that experience significant to Melody? When Melody says about Ollie, “Maybe he was sick and tired of that bowl and that log and that circle. Maybe he just couldn’t take it anymore. I feel like that sometimes,” what does Melody mean?
- How do you think Melody knows her mother is pregnant even before she does? What does this suggest about Melody’s personality?
- What is it like for Melody and her other classmates when they are in the fifth grade “inclusion” classes? How does the music teacher include them in the lesson with the other students?
- What are some of the positive and negative things that happen in the inclusion class?
- When Melody says, “Never in my life have I had a teacher tell me to be quiet because I was talking to somebody in class. It was the best feeling in the world,” what do you think she means? Why is it the “best feeling?”
- What is Rose and Melody’s friendship like?

- What happens when Rose goes to the aquarium with Melody and her family? How does Melody feel about the trip and why?
- How do things change for Melody when she gets her Medi-Talker, the communication device?
- When Melody gets her Medi-Talker, they have to input words she will use. What words would be important for you to input right away?
- What bullying behavior and what ally behavior do you see in the book?
- What is it like for Melody to participate in the Whiz Kids quiz team competition?
- At one point, Melody and Mrs. V have a conversation about freedom. What does freedom mean to Melody? What does freedom mean to you?
- Why doesn't Mr. Dimming want Melody to try out for the team? How does Melody respond to his saying he doesn't think it is appropriate? How does Mr. Dimming's perspective change over time?
- What happens at the dinner to celebrate the team's win? What does Melody learn about the other students and herself?
- How does Melody feel about going to Washington D.C.? How does she feel when she learns that the team went ahead without her?
- Describe the scene in which Melody confronts her teammates about leaving without her. How do you think Melody feels? How do the other students feel?
- How did you feel while reading the scene where Melody's sister Penny is behind the car?
- At the end of the book, Melody describes herself this way: "It's like somebody gave me a puzzle, but I don't have the box with the picture on it." What does this mean? Do you ever feel like this?
- How did you feel when the book ended?
- Look carefully at the cover of the book. What do you think it means?
- Why do you think the author chose to write the book in the first person?
- What is the overall theme and message of the book?

Extension Activities

Below are activities that can be done with students in order to extend the learning from the book.

1. Learn More about People with Disabilities

Engage students in a discussion about people with disabilities. Be sensitive and thoughtful about whether you have students with disabilities in your class, especially "invisible" ones. First ask: *What does it mean to be disabled?* Elicit and define **disability** as a mental or physical condition that affects a person's movements, senses or activities. Introduce them to some of the [suggested language for people with disabilities](#) and ask them what kind of disabilities they learned about from the book through the characters of Melody and some of her classmates, exploring the ways each were treated throughout the book. Remind students that Melody has cerebral palsy which is a disease that prevents a person from being able to walk, talk and sometimes control one's body movements. Expand students' understanding of disabilities to include learning, mental and cognitive disabilities as well as physical disabilities. Ask students to share examples of disabilities, including hearing impairments/deaf, visual impairments/blind, learning disabilities such as dyslexia, spinal

cord injuries and having to be in a wheelchair, loss of limbs (arms and legs) or the ability to use them, etc. Discuss the extent to which their school and community are accessible and welcoming for people with physical, mental and cognitive disabilities and what can be done in the classroom and school to make it more inclusive and accessible.

2. Reading Response Writing Activities

Write the next chapter of the book: Have students discuss what might happen next in the book and write an additional chapter. Remind students how the book ends and ask the following questions: *What do you think happens when Melody goes back to school after having the confrontation with her classmates about missing the contest? How do you think Melody's relationships with her classmates change after that? What do you think happens when Penny comes home from the hospital?* Have students write the next chapter of the book, either beginning when Melody goes to school the next day or when Penny comes home from the hospital.

Diary Entry of Character: Have students write a letter or email to Sharon M. Draper, the author of the book. Students should first consider what they most want to say to the author, who may include their own personal reflections about the book—how they felt about the book and characters, what they learned, what more they wanted to know. They could also include what they wish had been included and ways in which the book did not meet their expectations. In addition, students can also raise questions with the author such as how she got the idea for the book, how long it took her to write it, what the student wish they had included but didn't, etc. Have students engage in conferencing with each other to write several drafts of their letters or emails, share them aloud with the rest of the class and finally mail or [email them to the author](#). If they receive responses from the author, those can be shared as well.

Email the Author: Have students write a letter or email to Sharon M. Draper, the author of the book. Students should first consider what they most want to say to the author, which may include their own personal reflections about the book—how they felt about the book and characters, what they learned, what more they wanted to know. They could also include what they wish had been included and ways in which the book did not meet their expectations. In addition, students can also raise questions with the author such as how she got the idea for the book, how long it took her to write it, what the student wish they had included but didn't, etc. Have students engage in conferencing with each other to write several drafts of their letters or emails, share them aloud with the rest of the class and finally mail or [email them to the author](#). If they receive responses from the author, those can be shared as well.

3. Assistive Technology Research Project

Start a discussion by asking: *How is Melody able to move around? How does she communicate in the beginning of the book and how does she communicate more effectively later on?* Explain that Melody is using assistive technology. Ask students: *Does anyone know what assistive technology is?* Help them come to the meaning by breaking down the two words: assistive (provide help) and technology (a method or machine for doing something). Again, be sensitive and thoughtful if you have students in your classroom who have a disability and/or who use adaptive technology. Explain that [assistive technology](#) helps people who are disabled perform tasks they were previously unable to do in order to gain more independence; assistive technology provides tools or devices to help perform that task. Ask: *Can you think of any examples of adaptive technology (i.e. wheelchair, hearing aid, braille)?* Remind students that Melody received a Medi-Talker (that she later named Elvira), a communication device that was designed just for her with spaces large enough for her thumb. Elvira allowed her to “speak” using the machine. Have students think about people they

know or read about with disabilities and brainstorm the ways in which they use assistive technology. Have students then consider other challenges people who are disabled have in performing certain tasks and brainstorm ideas they may have for assisting them. As a research assignment, have students investigate assistive technology websites and resources and learn more about one in particular that they want to research further. Have students conduct more research and present that particular aspect of assistive technology through a research report, Power Point presentation, drawing or model. Share with the rest of the class.

ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on ability, disability and bullying.

Curriculum Resources

"Dolls Are Us," *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/dolls-are-us.html.

"Equal Treatment, Equal Access: Raising Awareness about People with Disabilities and Their Struggle for Equal Rights," *Curriculum Connections*, www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/equal-treatment-equal-access.html.

"Identity-Based Bullying," *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/identity-based-bullying.html.

"The Sound of Silence in Football: Derrick Coleman," *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/sound-of-silence-in-football.html.

Websites

Bullying and Cyberbullying Prevention Strategies and Resources

www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education

Provides a collection of ADL resources on bullying and cyberbullying for educators, administrators, students and families and caregivers.

Communication Guidelines Relating to Ability

www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/communication-guidelines-relating-to-ability.pdf

Tips and guidelines for communicating with persons with disabilities and using appropriate terminology.

Creating an Anti-Bias Learning Environment

www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/creating-an-anti-bias-learning-environment.html

Suggested practices are provided to help prepare for successfully raising issues of diversity and bias in the classroom.

Suggested Language for People with Disabilities

www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/suggested-language-for-people-with-disabilities.pdf

A list of suggested language to use for people with disabilities.

Children's Books

Below are links to lists of recommended anti-bias and multicultural books for the indicated category.

Ability, Disability and Ableism, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/ability-disability.html

Bullying Awareness and Prevention, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/bullying.html