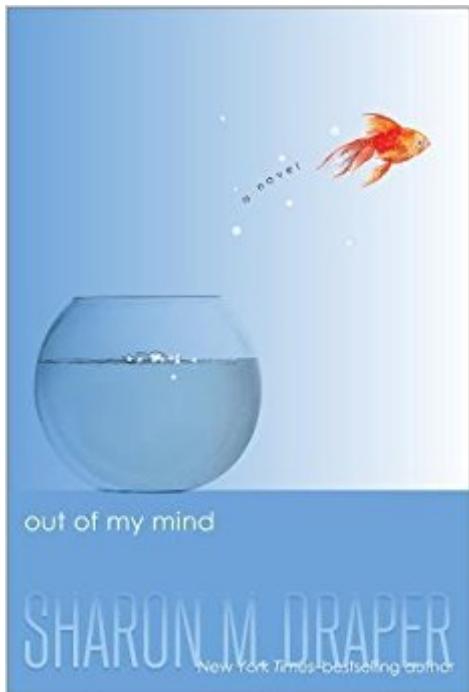


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Out Of My Mind



Synopsis

From award-winning author Sharon Draper comes *Out of My Mind*, the story of a brilliant girl who cannot speak or write. "If there is one book teens and parents (and everyone else) should read this year, *Out of My Mind* should be it" (Denver Post). Melody is not like most people. She cannot walk or talk, but she has a photographic memory; she can remember every detail of everything she has ever experienced. She is smarter than most of the adults who try to diagnose her and smarter than her classmates in her integrated classroom—the very same classmates who dismiss her as mentally challenged, because she cannot tell them otherwise. But Melody refuses to be defined by cerebral palsy. And she is determined to let everyone know it somehow. In this breakthrough story reminiscent of *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* from multiple Coretta Scott King Award-winner Sharon Draper, readers will come to know a brilliant mind and a brave spirit who will change forever how they look at anyone with a disability.

Book Information

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Best Sellers Rank: #330 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #4 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Special Needs #24 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life

Age Range: 10 - 13 years

Grade Level: 5 and up

Customer Reviews

Eleven-year-old Melody has a photographic memory. Her head is like a video camera that is always recording. Always. And there's no delete button. She's the smartest kid in her whole school—but no one knows it. Most people--her teachers and doctors included--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 and again. If only she could speak up, if only she could tell people what she thinks and knows . . . 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. At last Melody has a voice . . . but not everyone around her is ready to hear it. From multiple Coretta Scott King Award winner Sharon M. Draper comes a story full of heartache and hope. Get ready to meet a girl whose voice you'll never, ever forget. *A Note to Readers from Author Sharon Draper* People often ask me, "What was your inspiration for *Out of my Mind*?" I reply, "All great stories emerge from deep truths that rest within us." But the real truth of a story often can be found in places that not even the author has dared to explore. I suppose the character of Melody came from my experiences in raising a child with developmental difficulties. But Melody is not my daughter. Melody is pure fiction--a unique little girl who has come into being from a mixture of love and understanding. *Out of my Mind* is the story of a ten-year-old-girl who cannot walk or talk. She has spirit, determination, intelligence and wit, and no one knows it. But from buildings that are not wheelchair--accessible to classmates who make fun of her she finds a strength within herself she never knew existed. I was fiercely adamant that nobody feel sorry for Melody. I wanted her to be accepted as a character and as a person, not as a representative for people with disabilities. Melody is a tribute to all the parents of disabled kids who struggle, to all those children who are misunderstood, to all those caregivers who help every step of the way. It's also written for people who look away, who pretend they don't see, or who don't know what to say when they encounter someone who faces life with obvious differences. Just smile and say hello! --Sharon M. Draper --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

Gr 4-6 •Melody is an intelligent 11-year-old girl with a photographic memory and cerebral palsy. She can't walk or talk, but she is hungry to learn and eager for language to express herself. Draper has crafted a likable protagonist with typical tween thoughts and emotions. •Melody dreams that she will be the first chosen for school projects and games, all of which are compounded by the difficulties of living with cerebral palsy. Her patience and persistence are inspiring traits that will encourage and affirm the efforts of her readers. Sisi Aisha Johnson has created a charming Melody and successfully voices the girl's parents, teachers, and doctors. VERDICT This is a recommended purchase for all school and public libraries. ["Kids will benefit from being introduced to Melody and her gutsy, candid, and compelling

story": SLJ 3/10 review of the S. & S. Atheneum book.]Ã¢â€”â€œMary Lee Bulat, Harwinton Public Library, CT --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

A few weeks ago, Kelly wasn't feeling well so I took off work to fill in for her at the kids' Valentine's Day parties at school. First I went to Chloe's second grade class. Chloe is non-verbal and has some physical limitations and development delays due to an unidentified genetic disorder. Prior to this year, she has been in special ed classes, with part of her day spent in regular ed classes. Now she is in a regular ed class all day with a full-time assistant and is the only child in her class with special needs. As I sat and watched her interact with the other kids at her table, the other kids' interactions with her impressed me. Without fail, they were sweet, helpful, friendly, and even conversational. Chloe will nod in response, but does not speak, and does not make a lot of eye contact. Yet these kids spoke and interacted with her as if nothing was different about her. One of the little girls asked me if I was Chloe's daddy. I told her I was. She said, "Chloe and I are best friends!" I'm telling you I almost lost it there; I had to exercise lots of self-restraint not to cry in front of her. I loved seeing Chloe, who is content to play alone in her room for hours on end, in this setting, with such great support from her peers. Then I went to help set up for Elliot's 6th grade party and was intercepted by one of his teachers. Almost breathlessly, she said, "I read a book you have to read. It's called *Out of My Mind*, and I thought of Chloe the whole time I was reading it!" She had told Elliot the same thing, so he read it and told Kelly about it so she read it, and since they liked it so much, I picked it up yesterday. I hardly put it down and finished it in a day. Not only did I think of Chloe as I read, but I thought of Kelly, me, and Chloe's teachers and assistants. In *Out of My Mind*, Melody, the 11-year-old protagonist, has cerebral palsy. Though confined to a wheelchair and unable to speak, her mind is active, brilliant, and capable of remembering anything she reads, sees, or hears. Much of her school years have been spent in boring, humiliating special ed classes. When she can read thousands of words, of course she gets upset when the teacher is teaching the alphabet. Finally, through her own initiative and the persistence of her assistant and her family, she gets an assistive communication device, giving her a voice for the first time in her life. Finally she can communicate verbally and participate more in school, even helping the school's quiz team qualify for the national finals. Throughout the story, my heart broke for this precious girl, bringing me to tears on several occasions. How frustrating not to be able to make oneself understood. How isolating not to be able to interact with people around you. I, of course, kept thinking of Chloe, my smart little girl who has such a hard time communicating. I don't know that she has a photographic memory like Melody, but I know she's always been smarter than we know. What's going on in her mind that we

can't see or hear? How many inane, boring lessons has she sat through, thinking "I know all this! Stop with the baby lessons!" And when Chloe watches the other kids run and talk and laugh and play, does she long, like Melody, to be a part? Does Chloe get embarrassed by her difficulty in feeding herself, that she wears diapers at age 9, that she rides the handicapped bus? I thought of Kelly as much as I thought of Chloe. Melody is a lucky girl in that her mom never gives up believing in her. She has to come to bat for Melody time and again, sometimes in a militant way. In the same way, Kelly has been Chloe's biggest advocate, her momma bear instincts pushing and pushing to make sure Chloe gets services she needs and is in the best placement for her growth. And the link between Melody and her mom could just as well describe Chloe and Kelly. Kelly knows what Chloe's every little gesture means, and usually knows what Chloe's thinking. She can tell by looks if Chloe feels bad, and can smell when she's thirsty. Weird. Melody's dad plays a smaller role, like me; he's not as clued in to his daughter as the mom, but does all he can do to help. Draper is a long-time teacher--honored as National Teacher of the Year in 1997--and the parent of a child with "developmental difficulties" (her description) so it's no surprise that her classroom scenes and dispatches from the special ed classroom seem so real. And her appreciation for the special ed assistants should be noted; I agree with Draper--those folks do wonderful work for way too little money. I for one am so thankful for the faithful ladies who have fed Chloe, changed her diapers, and invested in her learning and development during her school years. *Out of My Mind* gives the reader a believable window into the mind of a disabled individual. But Draper's real target audience is the rest of us. As Draper says on .com, *Out of My Mind* is "written for people who look away, who pretend they don't see, or who don't know what to say when they encounter someone who faces life with obvious differences. Just smile and say hello!" I may be too honest in this admission, but this book has reminded me to take more time with Chloe, to remember that even when she acts like she's in her own world she is hearing and seeing and taking it all in, and that it's up to me, Kelly, and all of Chloe's support team, to work together to help Chloe take part in her world and to overcome the challenges in her life.-----Update, October 2013 On a recent rainy morning, my wife pulled up to drop off Chloe at school. One of Chloe's 5th grade classmates got out of the car behind Kelly's. Kelly recognized her as one of Chloe's friends from class. As Kelly was unloading the wheelchair and getting Chloe into it, the little girl offered to help. Kelly thanked her and they walked into the school together. Chloe's friend said, "Chloe reminds me of a girl in a book I read. Her name was Melody." As if I needed further convincing, this comment reminded me of what a powerful story *Out of My Mind* is. This little girl's perception has forever changed, and she has been a friend to Chloe in a way that perhaps she never would have been without the example Draper presents.

Thank you Ms. Draper for shaping the attitudes and perceptions of Chloe's friends and so many others. I'm ordering two more copies now to pass along!

I'm writing this review after consulting with my 11-year-old daughter Laurel, who has severe cerebral palsy and can't walk, talk, or do activities of daily living for herself. In other words, she's a lot like Melody, the protagonist of this book. In Laurel's case, she communicates by using eye gaze to indicate yes/no or one of two choices (Laurel very badly wants a communication system similar to Melody's that would work with eye gaze, and we're looking into it now). We read this book together (like Melody, although Laurel can read, her eyes jump around and it's hard for her to follow lines). Laurel gives *Out of My Mind* five stars. She indicates that she feels that the book is realistic, both in terms of the character of Melody (except for the perfect memory; although perfect memory does exist, it's very, very rare, and Laurel forgets things like the rest of us) and the way people treat Melody. Although Laurel has never been wholly isolated from her peers, she relates to the experiences of being taught the same thing over and over again (in Laurel's case, it was shapes) and of spending large amounts of time in the special education room. Contrary to some comments, she does not feel that having therapists included in the narrative would have significantly changed the arc of the story. Laurel feels that this is an excellent book for people to read if they want to have a better understanding of people like her.

I think this book has a lot of good insights overall. I felt like the end of the book got a little too "over-the-top" dramatic for my taste and was different than the rest of the book. However, I do think this book is captivating and keeps the reader's attention. It tells a lovely story about one girl and her feelings/thoughts with how people interact with her since she is "different." It also shows the power of how assistive technology can really be life-changing for those individuals who can not orally verbalize their thoughts, needs, and wants. This book was very easy to read and would be great for parents, teachers, and really anyone in the world because each person can take away something really important from this story. I would recommend it!

This may be a review coming from a ten year old but I absolutely loved this book! It gives you a view of her life, from Melody's point of view. Between not being able to do so many things on her own, not fitting in, having people think she's dumb, but yet she has a photographic memory. She has to find a way around these disabilities and show she has what it takes!

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