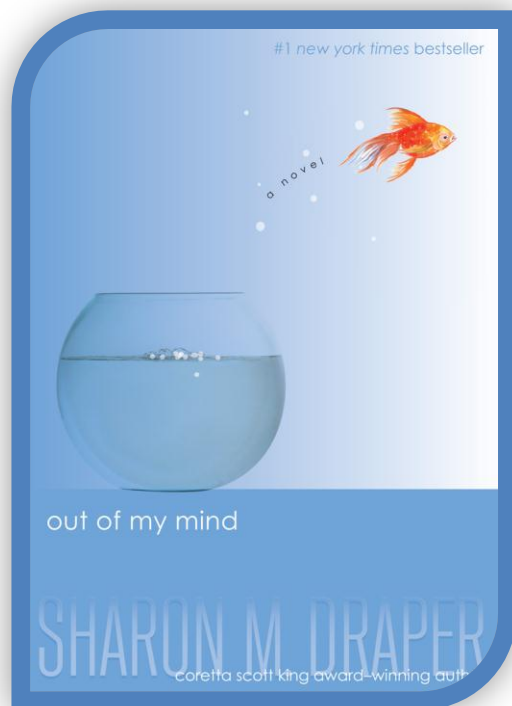




Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Division

About the Book of the Month Parent/Family Discussion Guide: 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 parents, guardians and family members, reading the books listed on this site with your children and integrating the concepts into your interactions with them is an excellent way to help children grapple with and learn about these important principles.



Out of My Mind

Sharon M. Draper (Author)

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

About the Book

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.

Conversation Starters

Whether you read the book aloud or young people read it on their own and you discuss it later, use these open-ended questions to deepen the conversation. Remember not to judge their responses and to listen thoughtfully and engage in a give-and-take that helps them expand upon their understanding of the book and its themes.

- What is the book about?
- What was your first impression of Melody and how did that change throughout the book?
- What was it like for Melody when she started going to school?
- When Melody's goldfish Ollie jumped out of his bowl, why do you think that was such an important scene in the book? Why do you think the author put that on the cover of the book?
- How did Melody's life change when she got her Medi-Talker ("Elvira")?
- Was there anyone in the book who stood out as a friend or ally to Melody and if so, what did they do that made you feel that way?
- In what ways were name-calling and bullying directed at Melody? Have you seen similar behavior at your school?
- How do you think Melody felt when she confronted her classmates about leaving for Washington, D.C. without her? How do you think they felt?
- If you could tell Melody something, what would you tell her?
- How did you feel when the book ended? What do you think might happen next?

Talking Points

Below are some important considerations to highlight in order to make this a learning opportunity for your child and family.

1. People with Disabilities

The book explores people with disabilities through the characters of Melody (who has cerebral palsy) and some of her classmates at the Spaulding Street Elementary School. With your child, reflect on the different disabilities referenced in the book through the different characters and discuss people you know who have a disability. Find out what questions your child may have about disabilities and together discuss [suggested language for people with disabilities](#). Define **disability** as a mental or physical condition that affects a person's movements, senses or activities. Using the book, discuss the feelings expressed and situations faced by Melody and her classmates and their interactions with others in the school. Adults sometimes tell children not to notice or pay attention to a person's disability. It is important to convey that while prejudice against people who are disabled is wrong, noticing people's disability is understandable and a part of who they are. You can also talk with your child about the extent to which their school (and other places in the community) is accessible and welcoming for people with disabilities and what they think is needed to make it better.

2. Bias and Bullying

Talk with your child about the bias directed at Melody because of her disability. Stress that Melody was the target of bias because of other people's prejudice about disabilities, not because of her

disability. Explain that **bias** is an inclination or preference either for or against an individual or group that interferes with impartial judgment. Explain that there are different forms of bias; in this case we are seeing **ableism**, which is defined as prejudice and/or discrimination against people with mental and/or physical disabilities. Ask your child for examples in the book of how Melody was the target of ableism and bias-based bullying by others (i.e. Dr. Hugely, Mr. Dillinger, Claire, Molly) and how Melody and others stood up to this bias. Discuss with your child whether students in their school are targets of bias and bullying and how that can be addressed and challenged. Reading this story is a good way to dispel some of the misconceptions of people with disabilities.

3. Being an Ally

There are various instances in the book where someone acts as an ally to Melody (i.e. when Mrs. Lovelace, the music teacher, opened up her class to Melody and her classmates, directly addressed the bullying, and allowed the kids from H-5 to sit with the rest of the class; Catherine when she helped Melody find the Medi-Talker and stood up for Melody when she advocated for Melody to participate in Whiz Kids). Ask your child about other instances in the book where someone acted as an ally to Melody and/or her classmates. Emphasize that a person can **be an ally** in a number of different ways including: supporting the target, telling a trusted adult, not participating in the bullying, confronting the aggressor, etc. Ask if they have seen anyone act as an ally in their school or if they have ever been an ally to someone who was the target of bias or bullying. Make sure your child knows that they should think through what their goals are in being an ally, to be safe and to ask for the help and support they may need. Model being an ally by showing your children the ways in which you engage in ally behavior and potentially do something together.

Other Books You May Like

Fish in a Tree by Lynda Mullaly Hunt, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/fish-in-a-tree.html

Rules by Cynthia Lord, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/rules.html

Wonder by R.J. Palacio, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/wonder.html

ADL Additional Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on [categories].

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.

Printed Material

Be An Ally: Six Simple Ways

www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/Be-an-Ally-Six-Ways-online-version.pdf

This resource provides simple things youth can do to be an ally to targets of name-calling and bullying.

Glossary of Education Terms

www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/glossary-of-education-terms.pdf

A glossary of anti-bias education terms, especially useful for educators or parents/families using ADL educational resources.

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.

Parent, Family and Caregiver Resources

www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education/c/parent-family-and-caregivers.html

Strategies, tips, guiding principles and resources to help parents, family members and caregivers impart values and principles to the children in their lives.

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