

Around the Corner

By Chloe Cabot

I never understood the joy people found from reading. My attention was only ever captivated by movies. Throughout elementary and middle school, I got by with lying on every reading log to avoid torturing myself and reading everything. I never expected that to change.

I was always the type that could never sit still for long enough to read more than a page without getting distracted by something else. For every summer reading assignment, I went to the library with my mom to pick up the required books. Instead of actually reading those books, I spent that time googling summaries and creating fake annotations for every chapter. My sister, on the other hand, turns page after page. She spends time looking over magazines, news articles, the weather, and anything she can get her hands on. However, my sister has Wolf-Hirschhorn Syndrome. This genetic disorder affects her physically and mentally by causing low muscle tone, seizures, and intellectual disability, meaning she is unable to read or write. But she loves looking over each word on the page, even if they have no meaning to her. I never understood how she found the written world so fascinating.

One summer, I was looking over the options for my summer reading, and I came across a story that piqued my curiosity. The book is based on a ten-year-old girl named Melody who has cerebral palsy and is highly intelligent, but no one knows since she cannot express it due to her disability. Cerebral palsy affects a person's motor functions, such as moving or talking. Melody's teacher hires a woman named Cathrine to help aid Melody. Together they find a device called the Medi-Talker, which provides a voice for Melody to communicate with. Everyone around her then discovered Melody is highly intelligent, but no one knew. The book *Out of My*

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Mind by Sharon M. Draper forever changed my perspective on the written world and helped me find my purpose in helping children, just like Melody and my sister.

I could never sit still long enough to read books, but Melody fascinated me and sparked questions. I began reading and researching more often and stopped thinking about how annoying I found reading and began thinking about how fascinating the written world is. I found books about my sister's disability and her friends and anything else I could think of. I wanted to learn everything about them so I could eventually figure out how to help them.

This book opened my eyes to the people around me, such as my sister and her friends. It made me realize I want to help children with disabilities, just like Melody got the help she needed to express herself. Like Melody, my sister has friends who cannot speak to express themselves. My curiosity grew, and I became intrigued to learn how their brains work despite their disabilities. Are any of them just like Melody? Is there any way I can help them like Melody got help? The book led me to an array of questions that I felt the need to find answers to.

I found it absurd how one book could drastically change my perspective on the written world and help me find my purpose in life. This book gave me hope for not only this girl but also other children experiencing similar situations. I now realize that it is my calling to help special needs children to achieve a happy and healthy life. After seeing how Melody found a person who was willing to find a way to help Melody communicate, I came to the realization that I want to be that someone for many children in the future. I continued reading more to figure out how to achieve my goals and get advice on how to do so.

In the narrative "The Joy of Reading and Writing: Superman and Me" by Sherman Alexie, he states, "We were Indian children that were expected to be stupid." He continues to say, "I am trying to save our lives." Alexie devoted his life to helping children become intelligent

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and successful by teaching other children how to read and write to open up more opportunities for them that they would not have had without him. Alexie explains how he and other Indian children were expected to be failures and not do good in life. Alexie saved them by preventing them from becoming the failures they were expected to be. Just like Alexie is saving lives, Melody's life was saved, and I will help save the lives of children like my sister with disabilities so they can be as happy and successful as possible.

A famous saying goes, "In life, you can find a surprise around every corner." This proved true to the many children I will help in the future and to me. Reading was never something I enjoyed or spent time doing. That all changed when the book about Melody came into my life and changed my perspective on reading for years to come.