

Literacy Narrative:

Read to Change

Alli Giles

## Read to Change

A single tear fell down the side of my face as I turned to the next page in my new book. I could not comprehend the emotion I was expressing because I never thought a fictional story would bring me to cry. I was only in fifth grade leading up to when I read the book, *Out of my Mind*. I had much better activities to do than sit down and read a boring book. I had a very active imagination, so I did not need to read in order to expand my creativity. My friend and I would come up with many pranks for the class across the hall, Mr. Warden's class. We folded pieces of paper into a variety of different shaped airplanes. Then, we convinced our entire class to participate in launching every airplane into Mr. Warden's classroom. I am pretty sure that is why Mr. Warden despised me the entire year. I loved playing at recess as well because I had a tremendous amount of energy. I especially enjoyed engaging in four square. Eliminating my opponents by giving them a cherry bomb was the highlight at recess. Fifth grade was delightful until book reports came along. I had to trudge down the long hallways to the library with the rest of my class. This time, I decided to not take a long time picking my book and randomly select one. Glancing at the cover, I saw a goldfish jumping out of its container. I let the librarian scan my book; I stuffed *Out of my Mind* into my backpack. When I picked out this book, I never realized it would change the way I look at reading.

Never wanting to read, I always felt forced when teachers would assign us book reports. I gave myself plenty of time to not read the book and procrastinate. I have always put off reading until the last minute. This does not help me when it comes to actually reading deeper into a story because I have no time. I picked out *Out of my Mind* about one month before the due date of the assignment. I had other activities I signed up for such as choir and engineering. My time before school would go towards learning and practicing all of our songs. After school, there was an engineering group at our school. As a team, we would evaluate how to program a robot and tell the system what to do. Time went on without me even thinking about *Out of my Mind* and the paper I had to write about its characters.

A week prior to the due date, my teacher announced to the class, "The book report is due in one week from now. You should be getting close to being done by now."

Panicked by her words, I quickly pedaled my bike home after school ended. I opened my backpack and searched for my book. Under notebooks, crumpled papers, and binders, I found my book I should have started to read three weeks earlier. This is the very first time I read the title of the book, *Out of my Mind*. There was nothing in the title that stood out to me, but once I started reading, I could not stop.

I had a special spot in my house where I would go to read. It was by far the most quiet room throughout the entire house. There was a couch next to a window. I opened to the first page of *Out of my Mind*; I was not immediately attached to the book. It was not until a couple chapters in where I was able to connect with the characters, especially Melody.

"My hands are pretty stiff, but I can mash the buttons on the TV remote and move my wheelchair with the help of knobs that I can grab on the wheels." (Sharon, 2010, p. 3.)

Melody has cerebral palsy which limits her ability to move and do everyday activities on her own. She could not communicate normally like everyone else. By this description, I had nothing in common with Melody. My connection had nothing to do with her being in a wheelchair, but she wanted to feel accepted by her peers. I tried so hard to fit in with everyone and sometimes felt like people wanted to ignore me. I wanted to be heard by my peers as did Melody. I kept reading, and I could not put down my book. Because I never can read for more

than thirty minutes, I felt accomplished being able to read for more than an hour. Losing track of time, it was past my bedtime when my mom came looking for me.

“Alli, you do know it’s past your bedtime right?” my mom asked me. She was so shocked at the sight of me engaged in a book.

“Wow, I can’t believe it’s that late,” I exclaimed.

I looked at the clock in amazement; it was ten o’clock! I did my nightly routine, and I was almost tempted to sneak my book down to bed with me. Finally, I had a book in my possession introducing me into the world of great stories.

My book was coming to an end, and I felt a connection with the characters. A part in *Out of my Mind* was making me feel anxious. I was afraid of the outcome I knew would shortly come. A tear rolled down my cheek. To explain why I started to cry, Melody’s four year old sister was behind the car. Melody’s mom was backing out while Melody tried screaming at her mom to stop. Instead of understanding Melody, her mom was frustrated with her and kept backing out of the driveway. Penny, the little sister, was hit by the car. I did not know whether or not she would be able to survive. I had to take a break because I had to gather my thoughts about what had just taken place. I knew I would have to keep reading to find out what happened. The little sister lived, and I felt so much relief. Reading this book, I felt emotions on both ends of the spectrum. I also was able to feel for Melody and her situation. It made me want to be become more aware of others around me.

By reading *Out of my Mind*, I was able to know what it was like to get into a deeper understanding of a book. I learned to have patience when I read in order to give time for the characters to build the story. I have more confidence in my own reading because I can read and comprehend a book for longer periods of time. Looking outwards to other people around me is a skill I was able to develop. Not everybody has a situation they are struggling with as obvious as Melody did, but I know I should treat everyone kindly. I am grateful for *Out of my Mind* because my perspective on reading positively changed.

## References

Draper, S. M. (2019). *Out of my mind*. Farmington Hills, MI: Thorndike Press, a part of Gale, a Centage Company.