

## Excerpt from *Out of My Mind*

By Sharon M. Draper

Lexile Level: 660 | F&P: Level N | DRA: 30 (414 Words)



Maybe I'm not so different from everyone else after all. It's like somebody gave me a puzzle, but I don't have the box with the picture on it. So I don't know what the final thing is supposed to look like. I'm not even sure if I have all the pieces. That is probably not a good comparison, since I couldn't put a puzzle together if I wanted to. Even though I usually know the answers to most of the questions at school, lots of stuff still puzzles me.

Penny came home from the hospital with bumps and bruises, a cast, and a new red hat. Doodle is back in her arms. They're spoiling her rotten. That's ok with me. Even Butterscotch is treating her like an injured puppy. The dog has brought all her favorite stuffed toys into Penny's room, like gifts.

Today I'm working on Miss Gordon's autobiography project. Mrs. V has Elvira plugged into the computer. Classical music is softly seeping from her new iPod. I hear soft purple.

This is going to take a while. So much is stuffed inside my mind. I have lots to say and just one thumb to say it with.

I guess I'll start at the very beginning...

*Words.*

I'm surrounded by thousands of words. Maybe millions.

*Cathedral. Mayonnaise. Pomegranate.  
Mississippi. Neapolitan. Hippopotamus.  
Silky. Terrifying. Iridescent.  
Tickle. Sneeze. Wish. Worry.*

Words have always swirled around me like snowflakes - each one delicate and different, each one melting untouched in my hands. Deep within me, words pile up in huge drifts. Mountains of phrases and sentences and connected ideas. Clever expressions. Jokes. Love songs.

From the time I was really little - maybe just a few months old - words were like sweet, liquid gifts, and I drank them like lemonade. I could almost taste them. They made my jumbled thoughts and feelings have substance.

My parents always blanketed me with conversation. They chattered and babbled. They verbalized and vocalized. My father sang to me. My mother whispered strength into my ear. Every word my parents spoke to me or about me I absorbed and kept and remembered. All of them.

I have no idea how I untangled the complicated process of words and thought, but it happened quickly and naturally. By the time I was two, all my memories had words, and all my words had meaning.

But only in my head.

I have never spoken one single word. I am almost eleven years old.