

Every year as a teacher you get a new group of students. At the beginning of the school year it takes a while to acclimate to your new kids, learning their needs as they get to know you and the rest of their classmates. At times I even find that I miss my students from the year before because this group of kids seem so different. There is never a year that is the same and because of that there are also differences in the things or the way that we teach according to the students we have. Thinking about what I learned throughout this course about quality literature while at the same time thinking about what piece of literature could greatly benefit my students right now, overwhelmed me. I honestly believe that my students would benefit from books that demonstrate high qualities of all of the elements we've discussed this semester, but I ultimately came to a decision that I wanted to choose a book that addresses representation of people with disabilities. I specifically was interested in books about people with autism because I currently have 3 students who have been identified by our school as having Autism Spectrum Disorder and are eligible for services. I felt that this could be a great opportunity for me to expose my students with ASD to literature that contains characters with the same disorder as them, and also for the rest of their classmates to gain a better understanding of ASD.

The book I chose to purchase and read to my first grade class was *The Girl Who Thought in Pictures: The Story of Dr. Temple Grandin* by Julia Finely Mosca and illustrated by Daniel Rieley. This book is part of the NSTA Best STEM Books for K-12 Selection, and NSTA Outstanding Science Trade Book Selection, has won the Dolly Gray Children's Literature Award, and A Mighty Girl Book of the Year Award. Something I love about this book is that not only is it explicitly discussing the experience of a person with autism, "And that thing with her brain...it was AUTISM, see? She was DIFFERENT, NOT LESS, they all finally agreed", but it also showcases the amazing success Dr. Grandin had as a woman and a person with a disability. "Off to COLLEGE she went! A degree? She earned THREE! And though ladies weren't experts on farms at that time, do you think that stopped Temple? NO WAY! She did fine". At the end of the book there is even a letter written by Dr. Grandin to the readers encouraging children to learn from their mistakes and never give up. I also discovered at the end some interesting facts about Temple Grandin and even a timeline of her life so far, which immediately made me think about nonfiction text features I could teach about. This book is uplifting, informational, and showcases the wonderful and true story of Dr. Grandin accompanied with fun illustrations and sing-song-like rhymes. It was a joy to read to my students.

Consciously adding this book to my library forced me to take a deeper look at the books I have now and how they represent people with disabilities. I concluded that the representation is almost nonexistent and something that needs to change. I worry that just introducing a single book is not enough because it almost magnifies the fault that I have only one book that is representative of people with ASD but hundreds of books about children without any disabilities however, it is a great start.