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Major themes

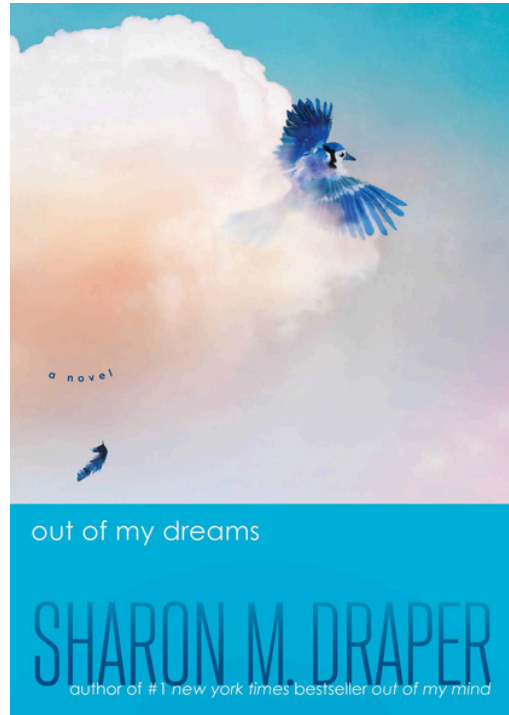
Communication and voice
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 Inclusion and exclusion
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About the Author

Sharon M. Draper is the New York Times bestselling author of *Out of My Mind*, *Blended*, and *Out of My Heart*. She's won Coretta Scott King Awards for *Copper Sun* and *Forged by Fire* and multiple honors. She's also the recipient of the Margaret A. Edwards Award honoring her significant and lasting contribution to writing for teens. Sharon taught high school English for twenty-five years and was named National Teacher of the Year. She lives in Florida. Visit her at SharonDraper.com.

Out of My Dreams by Sharon M. Draper

Educational Resource



When Melody saves an elderly back-in-the-day actress's life, she ends up on their local TV channel. The studio is so impressed with Melody that they arrange for her to be a speaker at an international symposium for kids who are differently abled, and this year's symposium is in London! To Melody's utter shock and delight, her parents say yes. Yes!

Melody finally gets to fly on an airplane, and many adventures in London await, including a cheeky interaction with a royal guard's horse, becoming a little too acquainted with old-timey armor, and a run in with one of the most popular pop stars on the planet! But the biggest adventure is the I.D.E.A. symposium.

There, Melody meets kids from all over the world who are rallying for greater accessibility and more thoughtful planning on how to make the world more equal for every kid, no matter the challenges they face. But as Melody's time to speak approaches, big-time nerves set in: how can a girl who's never spoken a word out loud in her life give an entire speech?

Pre-reading:

Looking back and looking ahead

If students have read *Out of My Mind* or *Out of My Heart*, ask:

- What do you remember about Melody?
- How has she changed across the series so far?
- What might she still be dreaming of?

If students are new to the series, prompt a brainstorm around:

- What challenges might a person with a disability face in a new environment?

What does the title suggest?

Ask students to consider the title, *Out of My Dreams*, and make predictions around:

- What might Melody be dreaming of?
- Could “dreams” also mean fears or goals?

What tone or mood does the title hint at?

Discussion questions:

1. Why is it such a big deal when Melody calls 911 to help Miss Gertie? What does this moment show about her abilities and courage?
2. How does Melody feel about preparing for the I.D.E.A. symposium? What challenges does she face, and how does she overcome them?
3. How does Melody’s family and Mrs. V support her throughout the story? Can you find examples where their encouragement makes a difference?
4. What role do Melody’s friends play in supporting her at important moments? How do they show loyalty, kindness, or encouragement?
5. How does Melody’s confidence change from the beginning to the end of the book? What events help her grow the most?
6. In what ways does Melody stand up for herself in this story? Why is this important not just for her, but for others too?
7. What do you notice about how different people (reporters, teachers, strangers) react to Melody? How does she respond to these reactions?
8. Which scene stood out most to you, and why?
9. Why do you think the author chose the title *Out of My Dreams*? What “dreams” do you think Melody is beginning to achieve?
10. What does this book teach us about the power of finding your own voice?

Activities:

Diary entry

Have students write a diary entry from Melody's point of view after the first day of the I.D.E.A. symposium. Encourage them to capture not only what happened but how Melody felt — nervousness, pride, frustration, or joy. Prompt them to use sensory details (what she saw, heard, or imagined) and emotional language to show the contrast between her inner world and how others might perceive her.

Extension: Ask students to write a companion diary entry from another character's POV, for example, Catherine, Rose, or one of Melody's teammates. Compare how perspectives differ.

Year 5-6 Australian Curriculum links: [AC9E5LA05](#), [AC9E5LY06](#), [AC9E6LE03](#), [AC9E6LY07](#)

Communication toolkit

Explore how Melody advocates for herself, even when it is difficult. Discuss real moments from the book where her voice is misunderstood, ignored, or finally heard. Then, ask students to design a "Self-Advocacy Toolkit" for Melody or themselves. This might include:

- Supportive or empowering phrases Melody could use on her device.
- Positive body language (eye contact, posture).
- A list of trusted people who help her succeed.
- Strategies for staying safe, calm, and confident in hard situations.

Encourage students to decorate their toolkit with drawings, diagrams, or "cue cards" to make it practical.

Year 5-6 Australian Curriculum links: [AC9E5LY07](#), [AC9E5LA04](#), [AC9E6LY07](#), [AC9E6LA01](#)

Timeline of courage

Students should create a visual timeline of Melody's acts of courage across the Out of My Mind series, finishing with key moments in Out of My Dreams. This could be a poster, digital slideshow, or comic strip.

- Include direct quotes from the text that highlight her bravery.
- Add symbols or drawings (e.g., a microphone for her presentation, a musical note for her choir performance).
- Reflect briefly on how each act of courage built her confidence.

Encourage students to notice the progression. How does Melody grow in confidence and how do people around her learn to listen better?

Year 5-6 Australian Curriculum links: [AC9E5LE05](#), [AC9E5LA08](#), [AC9E6LY03](#), [AC9E6LA01](#)

Activities:

Empathy circle

Hold an “empathy circle” where students choose a character (Melody, her parents, Catherine, Rose, or a teacher) and write a short monologue from that character’s perspective about one event from *Out of My Dreams*. Then, in small groups, students share their monologues aloud. The focus is on empathy and understanding different viewpoints. How do Melody’s challenges and triumphs affect others around her, and how might those characters express support, doubt, or pride?

Year 5-6 Australian Curriculum links: [AC9E5LE03](#), [AC9E6LE02](#), [AC9E6LY04](#), [AC9E6LY07](#)

Note: Many of these tasks can also be linked to the General Capabilities, especially [Personal and Social Capability](#) and [Critical and Creative Thinking](#), in terms of:

- Empathising with others
- Expressing emotions appropriately
- Reflecting on different perspectives

Final reflections:

Decision-making

Recreate scenes from *Out of My Dreams* that involve moral or emotional decisions (Melody calling 911 for Miss Gertie, speaking at the symposium, dealing with media attention).

- In pairs or groups, roleplay the scene.
- Afterwards, reflect together: What was hard about this choice? What felt right? What would you have done?

The full trilogy

Each student should share their answers to the following prompts:

- “After finishing the trilogy, I now understand that...”
- “Melody’s journey helped me realise...”

Use this to spark a short discussion about how Melody grows across all three books, and how students’ own ideas about courage, inclusion, and voice may have grown too.