

Contents

About	1
Pre-reading	2
Discussion questions	2
Activities	3
Final Reflections	4

Major themes

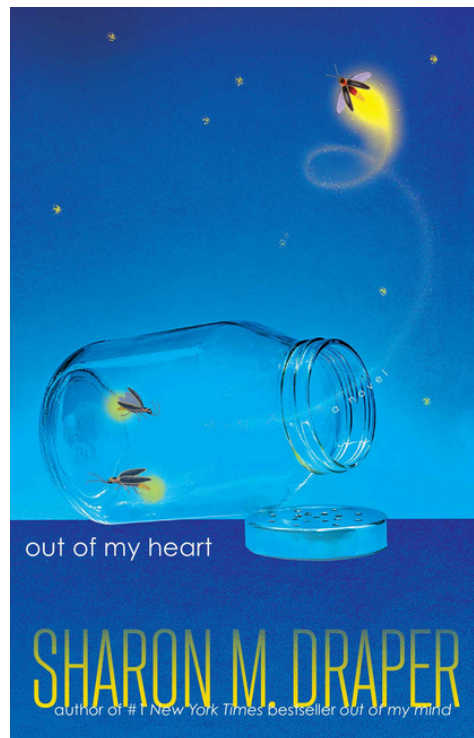
Communication and voice
Disability
Identity and belonging
Inclusion and exclusion
Accessibility
Resilience
Empathy and understanding
Independence
Courage
Friendship
First crush
Nature

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 Heart by Sharon M. Draper

Educational Resource



Melody, the huge-hearted heroine of *Out of My Mind*, is a year older and a year braver. And now with her Medi-Talker, she feels nothing's out of her reach, not even summer camp. There have to be camps for kids like her, and she's going to sleuth one out – a place where she can trek through a forest, fly on a zip line and ride a horse. A place where maybe she can make her own decisions, do things herself, and maybe maybe maybe, finally make a true friend.

By the light of flickering campfires and the power of thunderstorms, through the shock of unexpected creatures in cabins and the first sparkle of a crush, Melody's about to discover how brave and strong she truly is.

Pre-reading:

Summer camp

Describe the concept of a summer camp to students. This is a predominantly American experience, so they may need context. Once students have some understanding, ask them:

- What does your ideal summer camp look like?
- What activities would be exciting or scary?
- What challenges might a person with a disability face at camp?

Students could draw or describe their dream camp and compare ideas.

What if you had to be braver than you've ever been?

Pose this question as a class discussion starter. Then ask:

- What does courage look like?
- When have you done something brave?

How might bravery look different for someone like Melody?

Discussion questions:

1. What does camp represent to Melody, and why is it such a big deal for her to attend?
2. What role do new friends (Trinity, Jocelyn, etc.) play in Melody's experience at camp?
3. How are different kinds of disabilities depicted in this book? What do you think she wants the reader to understand?
4. Why is the firefly a powerful symbol at the beginning of the novel?
5. What is the significance of Melody having her first crush? How does this add depth to her story?
6. Why is Melody's mum hesitant to let her go to camp? How does that reflect real life challenges for parents and kids?
7. How do camp activities like zip-lining and horseback riding help Melody feel more confident?
8. In what ways does Melody advocate for herself in this story? Give some examples.
9. How does Melody's confidence and independence change during her time at camp? What does she discover about herself that she didn't know before?
10. What message do you think Sharon Draper wants readers to understand about freedom and inclusion through Melody's camp experiences?

Activities:

Postcard from Camp

Ask students to write a postcard or letter from Melody to her mum or Mrs. V during her time at Camp Green Glades. They should describe:

- Something new she tried (swimming, zip-lining, horseback riding)
- How she felt before, during, and after the activity
- A moment of surprise or pride

Encourage the use of descriptive language ("the splash of the water," "the sway of the horse beneath me") and emotional depth (nervousness, joy, belonging).

Extension: Students could design the front of the postcard with a drawing or collage that represents camp life.

Year 5-6 Australian Curriculum links: [AC9E5LY07](#), [AC9E5LE05](#), [AC9E6LE03](#), [AC9E5LY06](#)

Confidence map

Students can create a map charting Melody's confidence across key camp moments. They should:

- Use colours (blue for nervous, yellow for happy, red for anxious, green for confident)
- Create a graph, path, or storyboard showing emotional highs and lows
- Add short quotes from the text or short reflections to explain why her confidence rose or fell
- Illustrate or symbolise key events (a horse for riding, waves for swimming, a star for her first dance)

This activity helps students visualise Melody's growth in independence and resilience.

Curriculum Links: [AC9E5LE02](#), [AC9E5LE05](#), [AC9E6LY01](#), [AC9E6LA01](#)

Character development

If students have read both *Out of My Mind* and *Out of My Heart*, ask them to create a split-page comparison:

- Left side (*Out of My Mind*): Melody's traits, challenges, relationships, confidence level, communication style
- Right side (*Out of My Heart*): How those same elements have changed or developed at camp

Encourage them to note what has stayed consistent as well as what has shifted.

Extension: Write a short paragraph answering: "What does camp help Melody discover about herself that she didn't know before?"

Year 5-6 Australian Curriculum links: [AC9E5LE02](#), [AC9E5LE05](#), [AC9E6LE03](#), [AC9E6LY01](#)

Activities:

Before vs. after camp

Students should create a Venn diagram comparing Melody before and after camp. Here are some prompts:

- Before: independence level, fears, expectations, friendships, self-confidence
- After: new skills, friendships formed, moments of pride, new independence
- Middle (same in both): determination, intelligence, creativity, humour

Extension: Write a reflection starting with "Before camp, Melody was..." and ending with "...but after camp, Melody..." to capture her growth in a single paragraph

Year 5-6 Australian Curriculum links: [AC9E5LY07](#), [AC9E6LY01](#), [AC9E6LY03](#), [AC9E6LE03](#)

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

Letter to Camp Green Glades

Ask students to write a letter to the staff at Camp Green Glades, thanking them from Melody's perspective and describing how camp helped her grow.

What did Melody teach you?

Hold a class circle discussion where each student completes one or both sentence stems:

- "After reading *Out of My Heart*, I understand that..."
- "Melody made me think differently about..."

Students could talk about:

- Friendship and inclusion
- Courage in trying new things
- How people communicate differently
- The importance of accessibility and support