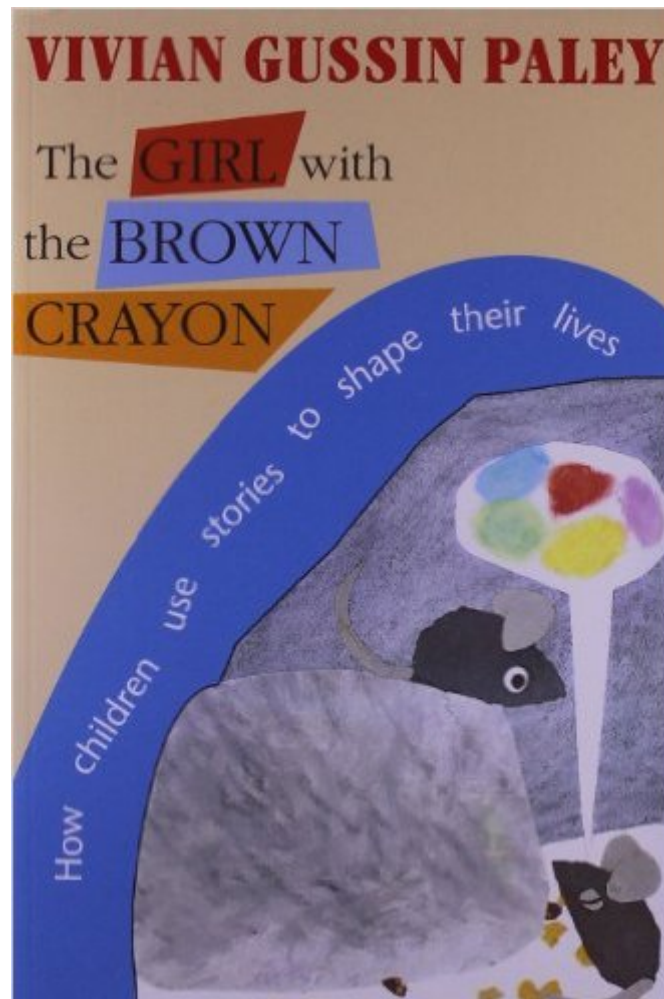


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The Girl With The Brown Crayon: How Children Use Stories To Shape Their Lives



Synopsis

Once again Vivian Paley takes us into the inquiring minds and the dramatic worlds of young children learning in the kindergarten classroom. As she enters her final year of teaching, Paley tells in this book a story of farewell and a story of self-discovery--through the thoughts and blossoming spirit of Reeny, a little girl with a fondness for the color brown and an astonishing sense of herself. "This brown girl dancing is me," Reeny announces, as her crayoned figures flit across the classroom walls. Soon enough we are drawn into Reeny's remarkable dance of self-revelation and celebration, and into the literary turn it takes when Reeny discovers a kindred spirit in Leo Lionni--a writer of books and a teller of tales. Led by Reeny, Paley takes us on a tour through the landscape of characters created by Lionni. These characters come to dominate a whole year of discussion and debate, as the children argue the virtues and weaknesses of Lionni's creations and his themes of self-definition and an individual's place in the community. The Girl with the Brown Crayon tells a simple personal story of a teacher and a child, interweaving the themes of race, identity, gender, and the essential human needs to create and to belong. With characteristic charm and wonder, Paley discovers how the unexplored territory unfolding before her and Reeny comes to mark the very essence of school, a common core of reference, something to ponder deeply and expand on extravagantly.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Girl with the Brown Crayon is a non-fiction book that is also an autobiography. It does not

describe the complete life of the author, but it does explain a year in her life and in her classroom. This book is intended for any one interested in becoming a teacher. I would recommend this particularly a lower elementary teacher, because it would help them to understand the wonderful things children can comprehend and accomplish at such a young age. Ms. Paley has a simple, straightforward writing style that is easy to read. There is one sentence that sums up Ms. Paley's last year as a teacher. "...I resist the uninvented classroom." (p. 50) Throughout the year, Ms. Paley and her students are books of Leo Lionni. It is through these books that the students and Ms. Paley discover themselves. One student in particular plays a major role in the development of the class. Reeny "sees" things before any one else does. She also brings new interpretations to the class. I would say that *The Girl with the Brown Crayon* was an interesting book. At the beginning the author warns us that it might not seem like a true story. She is right, the events do seem incredible. It takes a very special class full of very special students to have a year such as they did. Throughout the book the author is very analytical of herself. She keeps finding traits of herself that the characters in the books also possess. Due to the fact that this is her last year of teaching, she is very reflective, and rightfully so. Ms. Paley is also a good teacher in the sense that she is constantly reviewing what she is doing with her class. It has become stereotyped that older teachers follow the same exact curriculum from their first year. Ms.

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