

Dyslexic Advantage

NEWSLETTER



PHILIP SCHULTZ

COMFORTS
— *of* —
THE ABYSS



ACTOR MANUEL
GARCIA-RULFO

PHILIP
WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE
SCHULTZ

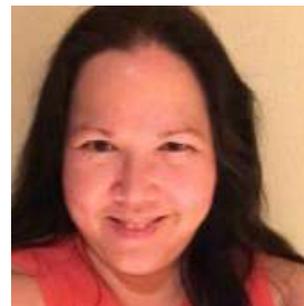
- RESCUED BY RUBY SHOW
- READING FOR PLEASURE
- WRITING FOR DYSLEXIA
- MANUEL GARCIA-RULFO
LINCOLN LAWYER
- DYSLEXIA NEWS



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Fernette Eide MD, Editor



Thanks for the wonderful responses to my call for volunteers. We are so grateful!

We're welcoming Meryl McQueen, Cheryl Kahn, and Jack Martin on our editorial team! Thank you for helping! We'd also like to thank designer Marcia Ciorra for offering to design a new MIND strengths poster- and it looks fantastic. Once it's finished we'll share it in an upcoming issue.

Fernette and the Dyslexic Advantage team

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The app may be used to identify and qualify for services such as Benetech's huge free library of e-books.

Editor's Note: to make our publications easier to read, we will avoid use of italics and certain types of fonts.

Besides our new volunteers, thanks to Shelley Wear, Trish Seres, Michelle Williams, and Dayna Russell Freudenthal. for their astute critique and proofing. Thanks to Lady Grace Belarmino for beautiful design and layout and Andi and Freshea for their social media and admin help!

Newsletters can be read online **HERE**. This issue will be available on the Joomag site for 3 months and can also be downloaded as a pdf file.



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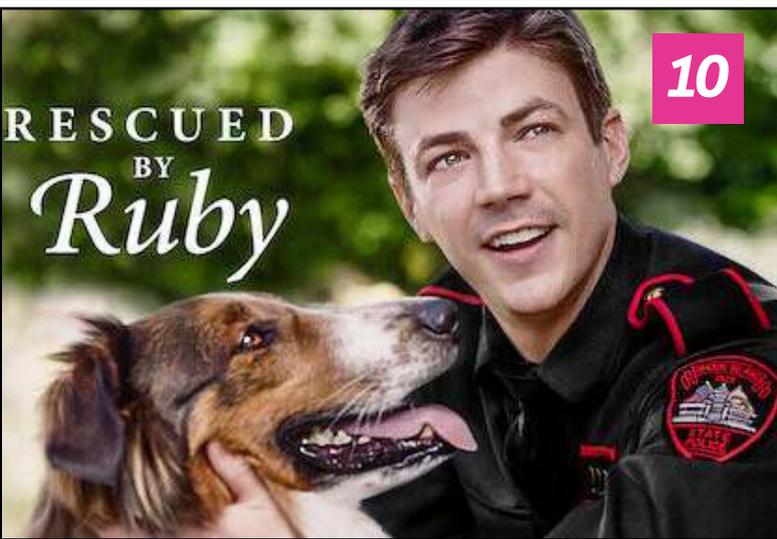
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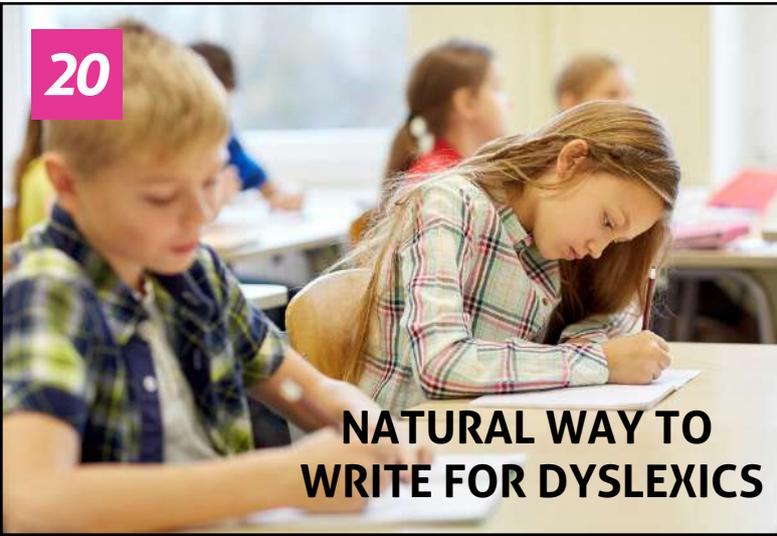
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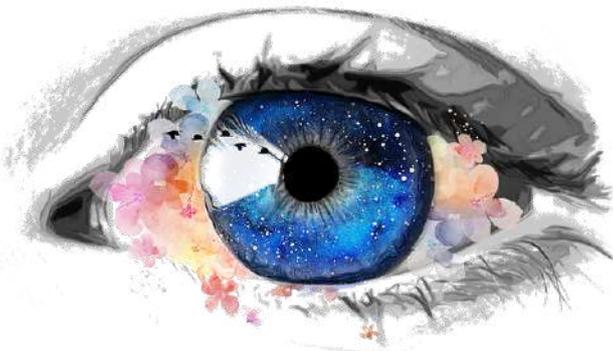
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DYSLEXIA NEWS



COMFORTS FROM THE ABYSS

NEW BOOK FROM PHILIP SCHULTZ

HOW A PULITZER-PRIZE WINNING WRITER OVERCAME HIS DESTRUCTIVE DEMONS

"Schultz, founder and director of The Writers Studio, chronicles the challenges he faced as a poet, fiction writer, and teacher that led him to see the aesthetic and psychological value of creating a writing persona. He has long confronted a pervasive inner critic that he calls "the s*bird," whose "sole agenda is to negate and revoke...—the author discovered that a persona allowed him to distance himself from his material, such as his erratic, self-destructive father, and his own feelings of shame and fear of failure." Kirkus Reviews

Philip Schultz has a new book out called [Comforts of the Abyss](#): The Art of Persona Writing where he shares his battle with dark voices in his head and how he transcends it using borrowed voices and personalities to give him an imaginative distance to see the world and tell the stories from many perspectives. It is not a book for children (strong language, suicide, adult themes), but it is a poignant and humanly important book about the quest of self, suffering, and finding a positive voice.

This book is not explicitly about dyslexia like his other book, [My Dyslexia](#), but it is about dyslexia because Phil's dyslexia was so severe, it impacted so much of his life experience and education.

A beautiful review of Phil's book can be read [here](#). Phil's book is not a how-to book of persona writing, but rather a personal account of how he became awakened to great writers and characters and found a voice of his own after suffering years with severe dyslexia and fundamental questions about himself and who he wanted to become.

It's a side of dyslexic experience that receives all too little attention. To see dyslexia as simply a "problem with phonological processing" completely misses the point of how profoundly it can affect children growing up, and how important it is to consider when children are looking for a positive view of themselves in the future.

Considering how difficult books were for Phil to read, I found it fascinating how important books were to finding a positive view of himself. An example from [Comforts from the Abyss](#):

"I'd go around pretending I was Jake Barnes in *The Sun Also Rises* and Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*, and even the old Huck Finn in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Their opinions and attitudes became mine and I would even try to talk and act the way I imagined they did. Which wasn't an easy feat for a dyslexic. I didn't know that I was dyslexic until much later, or that it was the reason I didn't learn to read until I was eleven, was held back twice, and grew up thinking I was dumb, but this way of reading and seeing the often-confusing world around me allowed me to see myself as a character in stories I wanted to not only read but write..."

"As a child I often felt as if I were living someone else's life, a kind of apprenticeship to someone I was supposed to be or become, that I was in fact only borrowing my personality, living in servitude to a force or authority greater than myself...I..began to wonder what would happen if, instead of denying the embrace of this negative force, our very hunger for servitude, one used it as a source of inspirations and creativity. Failure, which played so large a role in my father's life and in my own undiagnosed dyslexic floundering, eventually became a source of creative strategy and intuition, a subject to draw and paint, and later to write poems and stories about; a means of turning my "self-splintering" into a method of survival and comfort."

And: "Oscar Wilde certainly was onto something when he said, 'Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth.' We all design masks behind which we hide our imperfections, the parts of us we deem unworthy of public display. For many writing is a means of creating an aura of strength and invulnerability, of persuading others that we're worthy of their respect."



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INSPIRATION

Here's our conversation with Phil:



As Phil explains in [Comforts from the Abyss](#), his [Writers Studio](#), was inspired by his friend Ralph Dickey who had the idea that "it's not only possible to turn one's fear and negativity into inspiration, it's the essential process behind the making of art.

Ralph sadly took his life and his loss profoundly affected Phil.

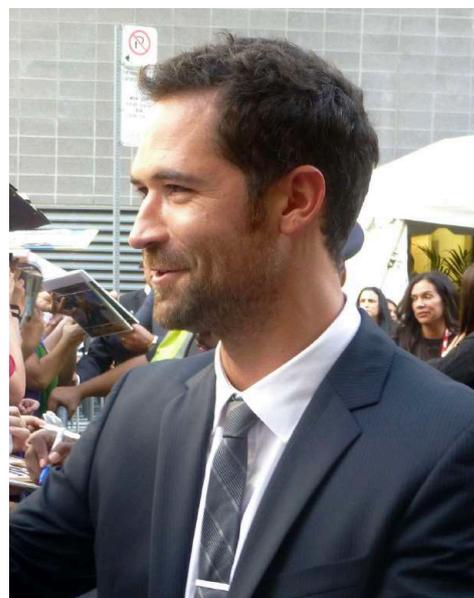
In the aftermath, Phil found that persona writing became a lifeline to him, and a way that he could begin the hard work of positively reassessing and re-interpreting his life.

To honor Ralph today, Phil and his wife Monica have created the [Ralph Dickey Scholarship](#) for Black aspiring writers.

MANUEL GARCIA-RULFO IN NETFLIX'S LINCOLN LAWYER

"We were shooting and I said: 'I can not do this'. I was going to quit."
- Manuel Garcia-Rulfo

Manuel Garcia-Rulfo had big shoes to fill - following on Matthew McConaughey's Mickey Haller in Netflix's remake of *The Lincoln Lawyer*. English is a second language for him AND he's dyslexic. But if you were to watch him in the role today - he's an absolute natural. He brings distinctive differences to the role and he does marvelously.



Brock and I have both been enjoying his series and also love that he's talking about his dyslexia in [interviews](#).

"García-Rulfo's dyslexia increased his nervousness. To learn his lines, he resorted to a method taught to him by his grandmother, who was an artist.

"I bought a blackboard and put it in my apartment and — it was crazy — I made mental maps with images, drawings", he claimed. "I did it for every scene. If there was a gun, he drew a gun. It's easier for me to learn that way."

You can check out the trailer for the series on the opposite page; in the other video, Manuel talks about how researched the part, bringing an authentic presence of the character he plays.

Congratulations to Manuel on this breakthrough role! Some dyslexic actors and actresses have found their careers because they excel at getting into the minds and bodies of others through their craft. Cold reads to audition may be difficult, but the acting part - much easier, once they understand their characters.



RESCUED BY RUBY: NETFLIX MOVIE BASED ON A TRUE

A nice family-friendly movie based on a true story is "Rescued by Ruby". It's a story of a high-spirited and difficult-to-train animal shelter dog who met up with a high-spirited and difficult-to-train state policeman (Daniel O'Neil). The two connected on multiple levels to make an against-the-odds rescue of a young boy who was lost for 36 hours after he took a bad fall and was knocked unconscious. Daniel, the policeman, is dyslexic with ADHD and what comes through in the movie is how important it is to have different learners of all types in difficult real world scenarios.

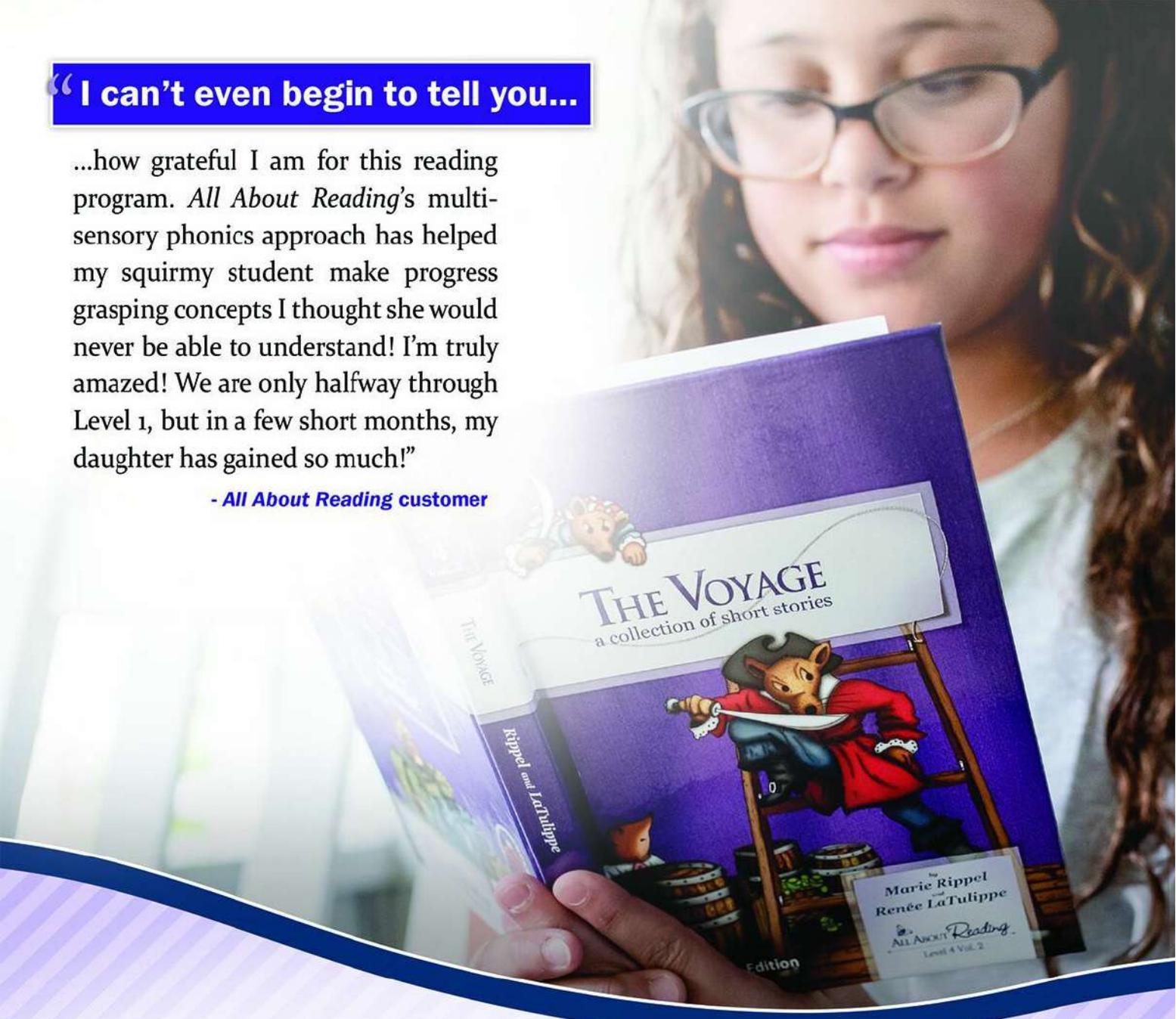
By all accounts, Ruby, an Australian shepherd and border collie mix, was intelligent and also difficult to train using standard approaches. She was placed and returned the adoption center again and again after "hyper" and stubborn behaviors like jumping and failing to follow simple commands like sit or down. She never stopped moving.



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INSPIRATION

By all accounts, Daniel says Ruby saved him as well, because although he dreamed of being part of a K-9 unit, he had also struggled with traditional training for the team. Ultimately, the department didn't have the funds to buy a trained German Shephard for Daniel, but Daniel bonded with Ruby and ultimately convinced his boss to accept the shelter dog.

Besides the dramatic rescue detailed in the story, Dan and Ruby went on to have numerous other successful rescue missions, including helping solve two murders based on evidence that was found. Dan currently leads the K-9 division and training for the department, embracing different handlers and different dogs!

To see the real-life Dan and Ruby, click on the video below. Thanks Monica for the hat tip on this story!



READING FOR PLEASURE: STORYLINE ONLINE & LEARNING ALLY

If you're hoping to find ways to get your students reading independently for fun this summer, check out some of the wonderful resources available through Storyline Online and Learning Ally.

STORYLINE ONLINE

First, [Storyline Online](#):

It's a free resource where famous actresses and actors read popular storybooks online with simple animations from picture books. The videos can be played through Youtube, Vimeo or SchoolTube.

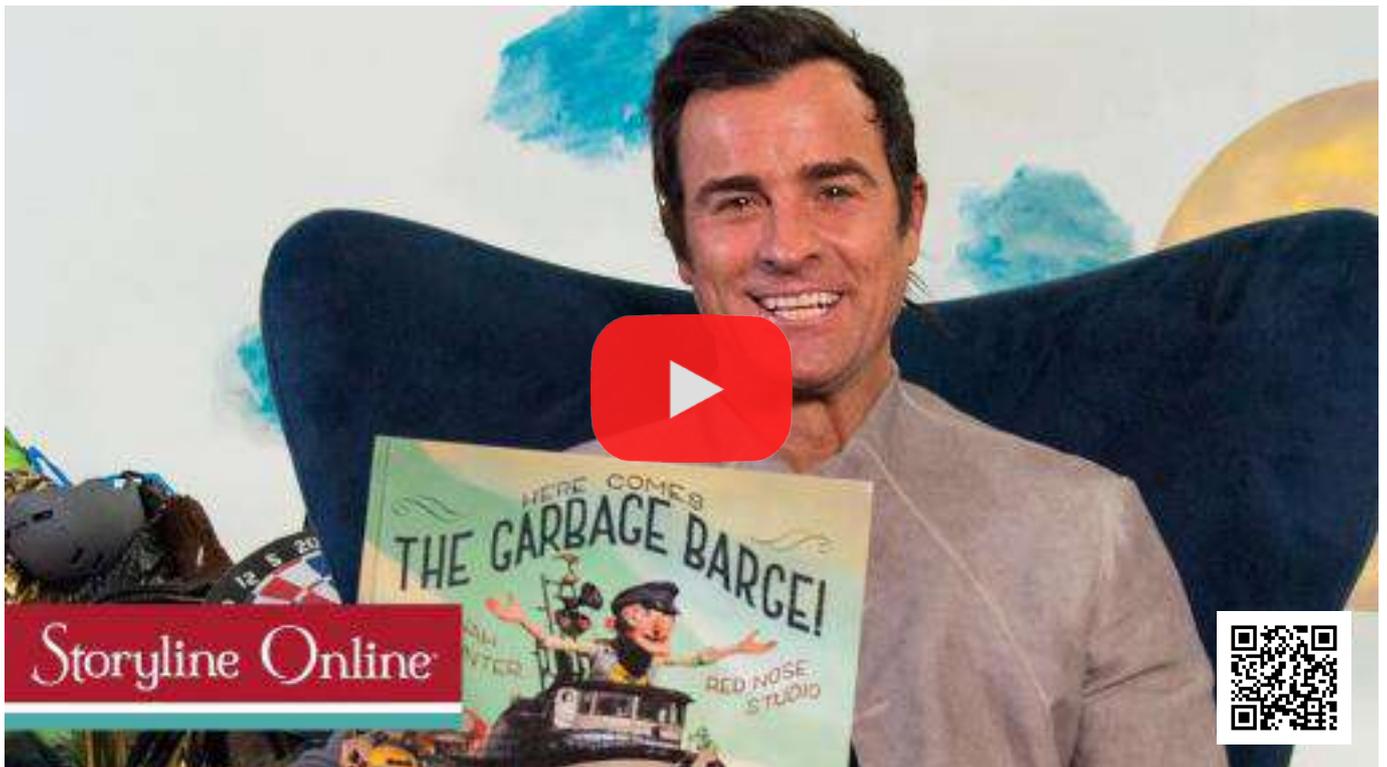
Some teachers use the channel for "reading center" activities because the lengths (10-20 minutes long) fit in well with this.

At home, a site like this can be used with newly independent readers; they can preview books, then have a go reading it entirely on their own.

There's a wide array of books that have been read, some even favorites from my childhood, like Harry the Dirty Dog read by Betty White.

Justin Theroux (filmmaker and actor, who is also dyslexic) reads The Garbage Barge. He does a fantastic job of reading.

Students can read physical books from the library, buy them, or read them online or through a digital device through the public library [Libby app](#).



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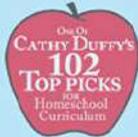
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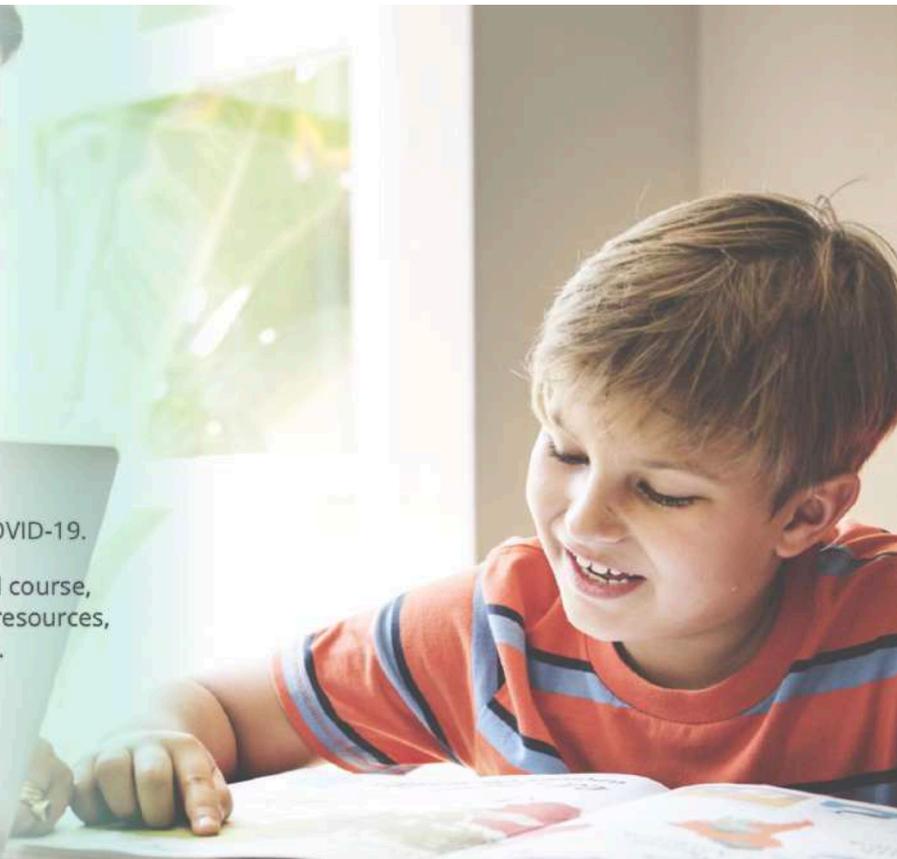
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READING

Patricia Polacco's autobiographic book about dyslexia *Thank You, Mr. Falker* is also available.



For older students, it may be difficult to find content age-appropriate content, pictures, and audio, but Learning Ally has updated its app to include more graphic novels with audio.

If you don't have an individual subscription to Learning Ally (it's \$135 + documented need for a print disability), you can check to see if your school might have an institutional subscription.

If you or your students haven't been formally identified, then it might be worthwhile getting formally tested by an educational specialist, school psychologist, or neuropsychologist. Formal identification with dyslexia may also qualify you or your student for accommodations at school or for you at work. The costs of dyslexia assessment can vary widely - from about \$1000 to thousands of dollars. That may be out of reach for many families, but if sometimes it can be paid for by a school as part of an Independent Educational Evaluation; comprehensive assessments can also be useful for guiding the education of students for several years.

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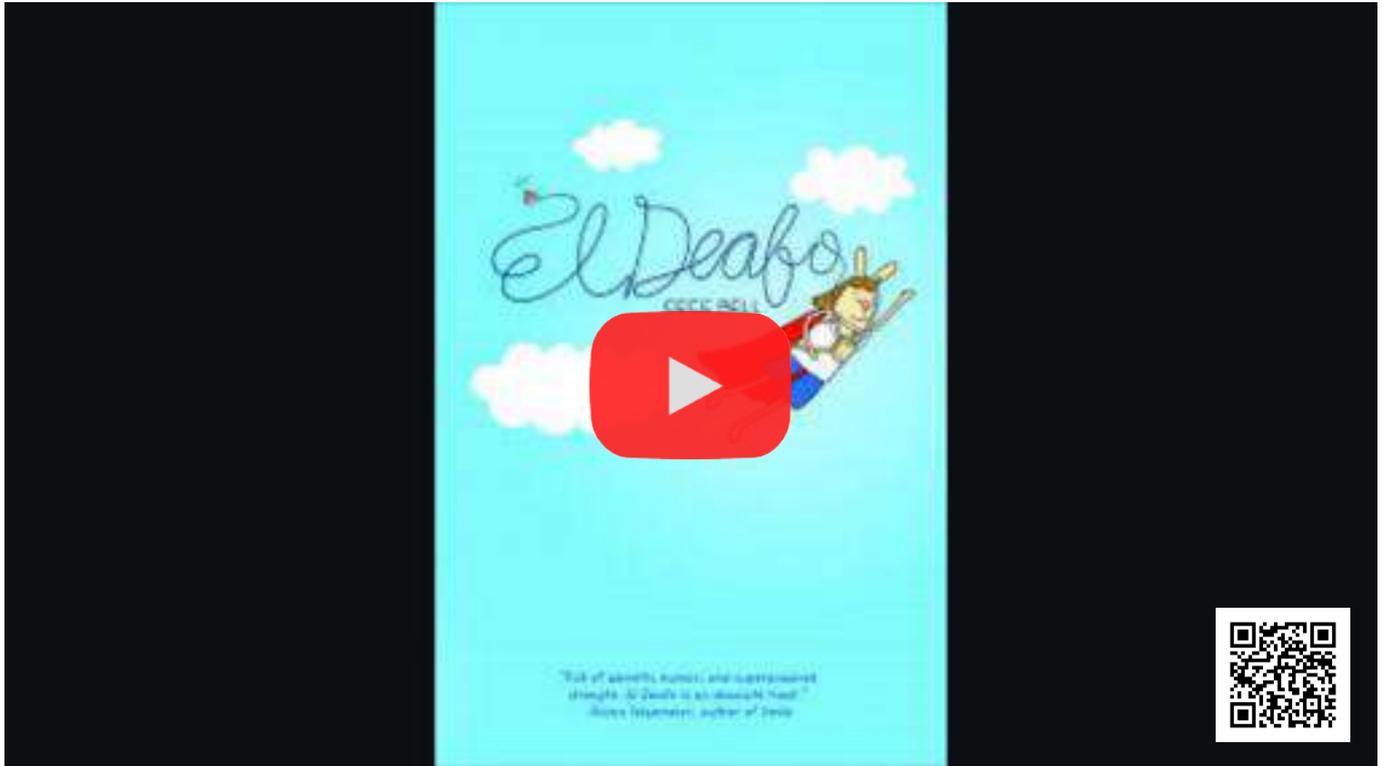


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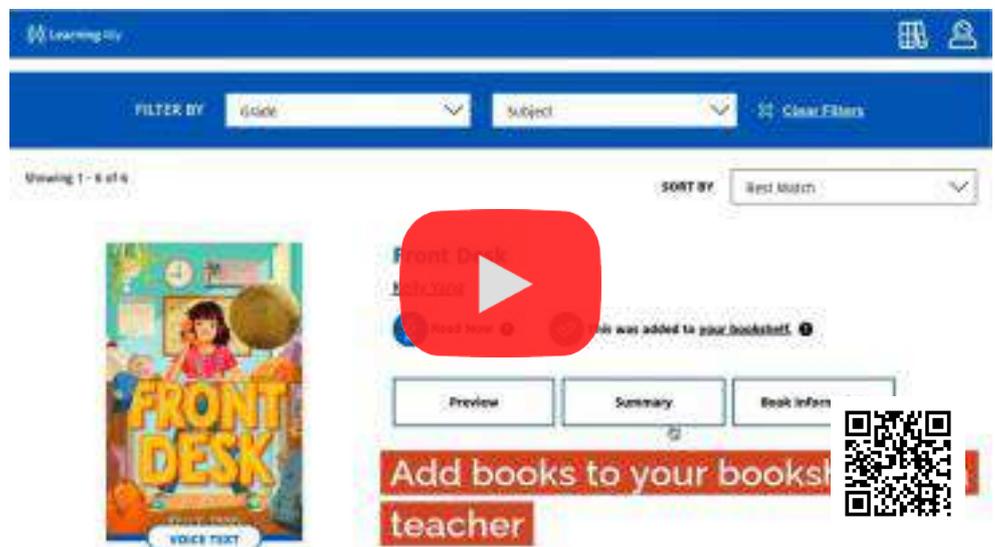
National Center for Learning Disabilities, the International Dyslexia Association have evaluated the Sunday System(r) and deemed that the program contained the required elements for teaching reading identified by the Nation Reading Panel.



If dyslexia identification is just needed to qualify for free e-books from [Bookshare](#) or a [Learning Ally](#) subscription, then online assessment with the [Neurolearning App](#) (\$39.99) might be sufficient.

Learning Ally recently post a video with some of their updates in their audiobook app.

The updates look great!



SUMMER RESCUE PACKAGE



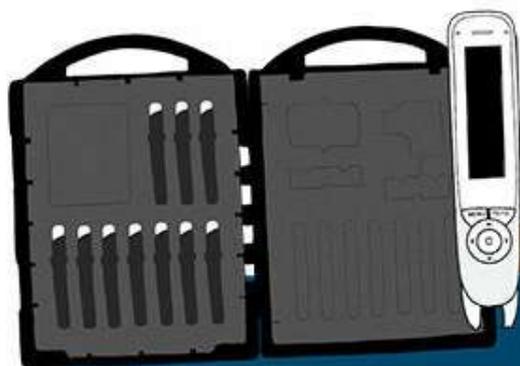
All across America, educators are working diligently on their catch-up strategies to help students overcome literacy obstacles that may have arisen over the past year.

Given the academic year we have just had, setting up effective summer learning will be no easy task. For many students, the opportunity to sustain high-quality learning during the summer will make all the difference in the fall.

Whatever your plans might be, this summer will be unique for everyone which means it's the perfect time to provide your students with the best tools to meet their full potential. Adopt some proven text-to-speech supports into your current strategies to nurture student independence. It's a game-changer!

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IS THERE A NATURAL WAY TO WRITE FOR DYSLEXICS?

Writing is so difficult for people with dyslexia, it's a reasonable question to ask whether certain types of writing might come more naturally than others.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL AND PERSONA WRITING

As highlighted in Philip Schultz's example and in his book *Comforts of the Abyss*, writing with a strong narrative voice, whether it's your own voice and experiences or someone else's, is a style of writing that comes naturally to many dyslexic people. It might be because of strong personal and emotional memories and personal responses to learning about the lives of others; it may be that the feelings and imaginings are difficult to get down on paper, but once they are there, the words may become alive to any reader fortunate to read them.

Formal education may emphasize expository and descriptive (factual or impersonal) writing over personal and creative writing. Sometimes students can find their way around such limitations by writing imaginative stories based on facts (for instance an imaginary conversation between two different famous people) and not only satisfy the demands of their classes and teachers, but also write in a style that is more natural to how they think.

It's like Douglas Merrill told us (Google's first CEO and also dyslexic) that for his graduate thesis defense when he was asked to explain the different theories of cognitive development, he explained the theories by describing the stories of two children - one evaluated through the lens of Erik Erikson, and the other through the lens of Jean Piaget. This way of imagining actually requires deeper understanding than repeating back memorized definitions - but it may not be valued as such, especially if those evaluating favor impersonal or rote memory.



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WRITING

STARTING WITHOUT WORDS

As strange as it may seem, starting without words may be another way of creating stories that comes naturally. What that could mean is starting with a sensory experience (travel, listening to music, drawing) or looking at a picture or focusing on some other sense (smelling, touch, eating) may be a way to jumpstart writing when other verbal prompts fall flat.

Sometimes having students review a movie or video game may be a way to stimulate writing. Free them up to use their own voice, humor, and personality, and they could get hooked. In the video below are ideas to help get students writing music lyrics.

Some people need to dictate their opinions and ideas before getting information down on page. They can use an app like [Otter.ai](#) (it comes with free minutes of transcription).

Others might draw pictures or doodle notes to think through their ideas. Realize that the best written ideas may take time. Raise the ideas or topics on one day then plan for a brainstorming step on another. Allow time for ideas and feelings to incubate - if that's what the students need.



MYSTERY, ACTION, PEOPLE DRAMAS, AND TIME TRAVEL

Finally, again building on dyslexic MIND strengths, some writers really love writing specific genres - like mystery, action, human interest stories, or stories involving time travel - like science fiction or historical fiction. Being able to see people's interactions and events from multiplier perspectives can lend themselves to excellent writing in these types. Active people may also naturally enjoy reading and writing action thrillers - imagining themselves in compelling scenes and situations and figuring out how to survive. There are many famous dyslexic screenplay writers and excellence in action, dialogue, and imaginative scenarios may fuel their work.



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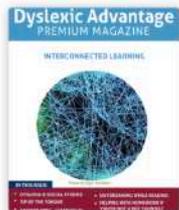
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PREMIUM ISSUE SEVENTY-EIGHT JUNE 2022

Dyslexic Advantage PREMIUM MAGAZINE



TAMING THE MONKEY MIND

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- POOR OUTCOMES LONG TERM OUTCOMES READING RECOVERY
- ROGUE HERO SAS FOUNDER DAVID STIRLING
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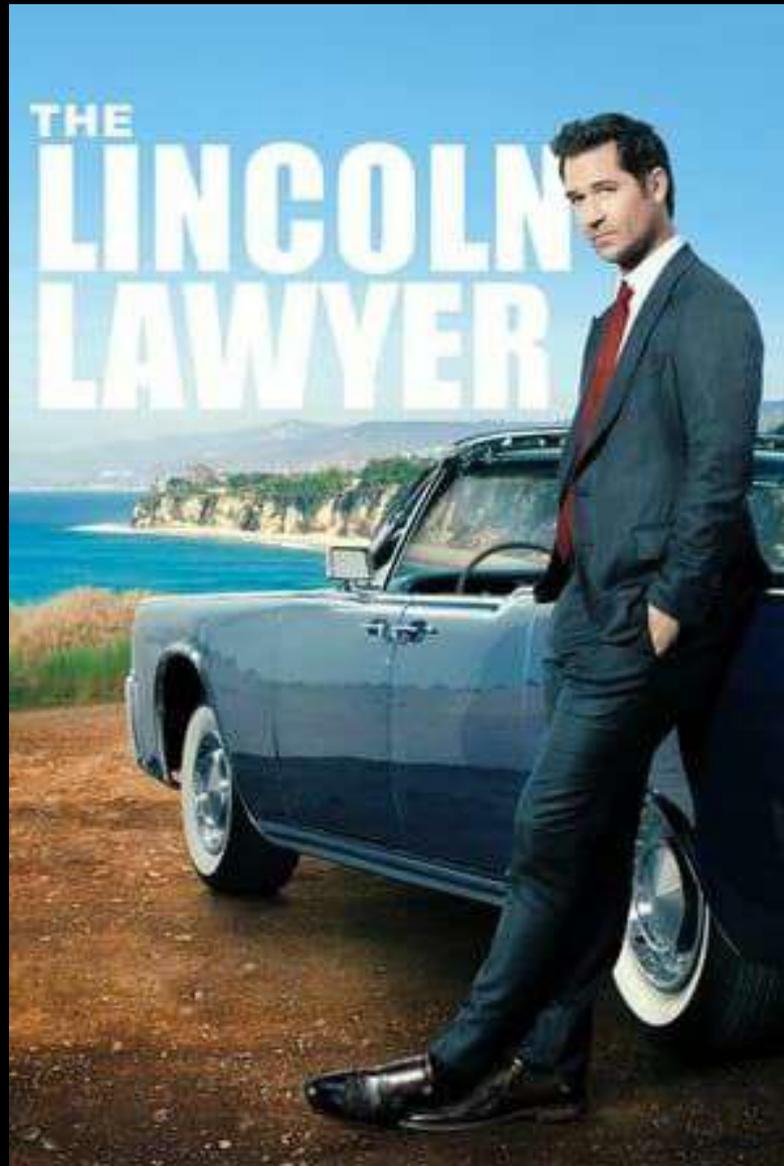
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"There's so much rejection. You fall in love with a character in a project that you really like, and you're there for however many auditions, for however many months, just pouring your soul into the thing, and you get three or four callbacks, and then they might decide it's not you. But I think I've started to build "cuero" or a tough skin. I'm more relaxed now."

- Manuel Garcia Rulfo