
A Source Of Inspiration In It Takes A School By Jonathan Starr

Watching Eddie Hall deadlift 500kg (roughly 1,120lbs) at the World's Strongest Man competition two years ago to set a new world record and win the title of World's Strongest Man will continue to be a source of inspiration to me. It is inspiring that an average person can work hard enough and eventually break a world record and lift over a thousand pounds.

Inspiration comes in many forms: celebrities can inspire, songs can inspire, even watching a butterfly stretch new wings to fly for the first time can inspire. Books like *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio seek to inspire the audience, while other books like *It Takes A School* by Jonathan Starr might inspire but it was not the purpose of the book. Both of these books are well written, however, both qualify as a form of exploitative "inspiration porn." *Wonder* cheers on a kid for doing average kid activities like going to school or going to his first sleepover. Starr's *It Takes A School* shows that if one has a lot of money and privilege then they get to accomplish something that the average person could not. *Wonder* is a novel about a boy named August who is going to go to school after being homeschooled, he has a facial deformity that caused his parents to think homeschooling him was the best approach. August, nicknamed Auggie, does not have a handicap in anyway at the beginning of this novel. The only reason Auggie sticks out in a crowd is because of the way he looks, which causes those to assume he is handicapped or disabled in some way. Palacio writes about a kid with no disabilities, going through school and dealing with bullies.

The inspiration that comes out from the book is because readers look at Auggie and think that if he could go through this then they can go through whatever they are going through. The problem with that is just what Stella Young brings up in her TEDTalk, people are applauding those who appear to have a disability for doing average things. Auggie himself believes he is normal, he even says "I think the only person in the world who realizes how ordinary I am is me".

This ordinary kid is getting cheered on because he is going to school. The reason this is supposed to inspire people is because Auggie looks different than others. People use Auggie's story as a way to tell themselves that they can do anything since someone like Auggie could do it. That line of thinking lowers people with a disability into an identity as less than a person. Their standard of living is so bad that because they can achieve normal tasks like going to school, then you can because you are better than them as a "normal" person. Auggie understands this, that he is getting special treatment because those around him believe he has a disability and because he looks different. You can tell Auggie understands this when he says: It's like people you see sometimes, and you can't imagine what it would be like to be that person, whether it's somebody in a wheelchair or somebody who can't talk. Only, I know that I'm that person to other people, maybe even to every single person in that whole auditorium. This type of inspiration comes from viewing someone as less than yourself and believing that since their standard of living is so low that if they can do it than you can. It is a form of exploitative "inspiration porn."

It Takes A School does not use a disability, or perceived disability, to try to inspire. Rather, the

author chooses to show off to the audience that privilege and money allows you to achieve something the average person can not. While it is an outstanding achievement to be able to create a school in a war-torn country and provide education to kids who might not get an education, the story will not inspire the average person. Starr has a very big advantage when it comes to achieving the goal of creating this school. He is already accomplished in his field and has plenty of money saved up. Starr brags about the amount of money he has saved up that he can just freely spend on this school without worry, "On the asset side, it had me, my starting donation of \$500,000".

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