

Hayley's Courage: Diversity Builds Character

Linda M. Steiner

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Diversity is shown to build character and to make groups stronger in this excellent story.

Children quickly notice when someone looks or acts different, and they are not afraid to voice, sometimes loudly, how they feel about those differences. *Hayley's Courage: Diversity Builds Character* is Linda Steiner's endeavor to let children, parents, and teachers know that it takes determination and grit to be different.

Hayley is a regular girl inside and out: she was a baby first; she learned to walk and talk. She even goes to school. However, Hayley has a port wine birthmark on her face because she was born with Sturge-Weber syndrome. When Hayley notices that her face is marked, her mother reassures her that she should be proud of who she is. While others may stare or laugh, she should be brave and remember that she is special.

Hayley is soon given the chance to stand up for herself and others as she grows older and attends school. Hayley's spunk helps her make friends, and her courage to defend herself against bullying gives her confidence. Soon Hayley is turning former foes into friends as she shows her classmates how to treat those who may have a physical or mental difference.

Steiner's prose is age-appropriate and never preachy toward lower elementary students. Her writing flows. As the book is based on the author's daughter, who has Sturge-Weber syndrome, Hayley's character acts realistically and the situations ring true. Illustrations by Leo Latti are pleasant and colorful.

The book's foreword and epilogue are both valuable resources, calling on adults to help those who are different to find their authentic voices, and allowing room for people to advocate for themselves, too.

Linda Steiner's *Hayley's Courage: Diversity Builds Character* is an excellent resource for the classroom, allowing students to learn vicariously that diversity not only builds character, it also gives strength to groups.

KELLY DEPIN (April 13, 2017)

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