

My Storied Year

Katie Proctor

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A seventh grader grows from an angry, insecure boy with dyslexia into a confident, hopeful young man in Katie Proctor's middle grade novel, *My Storied Year*.

Dragon Stewart hates school. He's a year older than his seventh-grade classmates, and his dyslexia makes reading and writing next to impossible. His younger sister is a terror, and the resident bully enjoys making his life a nightmare. Worse, Dragon's unemployed single mother has severe diabetes and spends much of her time asleep in bed. But when Dragon's English teacher, Mrs. Parkman, gifts him with the outlet of writing creative nonfiction, he starts to explore his traumas, faults, and strengths, and he begins to gain confidence in himself and trust in others.

Dragon's narration changes over the course of the novel to reflect how his courage has developed. At the book's start, he speaks in short, no-nonsense sentences, grumbling and waiting for his teachers and peers to give up on him. With the help of some empathetic classmates, Mrs. Parkman, and the supportive new assistant principal, Mr. Mark, his perspective shifts, and he adopts a more hopeful tone.

Dragon's mother's fragile health, and memories from a violent incident the year before, are obstacles to Dragon's self-assuredness. They result in external tension and suspense, though the book is otherwise focused much on Dragon's internal turmoil. He interacts with his peers more and more as his confidence increases, opening up to them and allowing them to open up to him about their own hardships. Supporting characters, especially the optimistic Mr. Mark and Dragon's knowing friend Denzel, are robust personalities within Dragon's own beautiful story.

My Storied Year is an emotionally intelligent novel that illuminates how problems at home influence school behavior, offering hope for middle schoolers.

AIMEE JODOIN (November / December 2020)

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