

## **Fish in A Tree**

**By Author: Lynda Mullaly Hunt**

**Reviewed By: Ashton Anda, 15**

**Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity**

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A quick-witted, art-infatuated, 6<sup>th</sup> grader named Ally is constantly trying to hide her educational shortcomings. Ally finds herself always trying to fade into the background and go unnoticed because she's hiding the fact that she can't read. She feels self-conscious and dumb and just wants to be like everyone else. She longs for friends, which has been a difficult task because her father is in the military and her family moves often. School is a constant emotional drain and she finds herself in the principal's office frequently for disobeying or talking back to her teacher. It wasn't until her teacher left on maternity leave and Mr. Daniels took over, that Ally's life began to change for the better. Mr. Daniels was gentle and kind and recognized that Ally's was displaying signs of dyslexia. Ally worked with Mr. Daniels after school to help her with her learning differences, and she began to use techniques to help her with reading. She also managed to make two close friends, Keisha and Albert, who were deemed misfits by the 'popular girls'. Ally continues to gain confidence in herself and her abilities and finds herself the class president and surrounded by friends. There is even an instance of Ally 'paying it forward' to help her brother, who also experiences reading difficulties.

I found Linda Mullaly Hunt's book to be engaging and definitely worth the afternoon it took to read it. There are many embedded life lessons and the author uses great analogies throughout the book. Some of the many issues highlighted in this book include fitting in, making friends, helping others, accepting others as they are, overcoming personal insecurities, finding your own talents and showcasing them. I believe that all of these things are relevant to the middle school experience, and it is nice to read a story with positive ways to deal with such things. Because of the relevant issues, the book is extremely relatable for anyone in middle school and anyone with learning differences.

Fish in a Tree is geared towards middle school-aged girls because it tackles many issues that are common to that group. But it should be known that any gender will enjoy the read and perhaps take a way some new perspectives and learn a lesson or two. There was nothing graphic or offensive to note, however there are instances where some students bully or pick on others. I believe this is simply representing a sad reality and needed to convey important messages and lessons to the reader. I highly recommend this book for anyone ages 11 and older. I believe that readers under that age group may not understand the lessons or be able to relate to the things that Ally faces. Fish in a Tree would be a great gift for anyone who faces learning differences, because it's a story of overcoming obstacles and becoming the best version of yourself.

### **Recommended Titles:**

Restart by Gordon Korman

Ungifted by Gordon Korman

Out of my Mind by Sharon M. Draper

Counting by 7s by Holly Goldberg Sloan

The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind by William Kamkwamba