

There Are No Words

by Mary Calhoun Brown

Reviews & Media Coverage

An "Outstanding Book for Young People with Disabilities 2011"
IBBY Documentation Centre of Books for Disabled Young People, Norway

Runner-up at the Nashville Book Festival
(teenage / young adult category)

Reviews:

"What is perhaps most remarkable about this sweet, uplifting fantasy is that Jaxon is an unlikely heroine; perhaps even a contradictory one. Nonverbal her entire life, as a consequence of having autism, Jaxon's first-person account of this extraordinary story is, in a word... *eloquent*. She breathes life into her experience of autism, rendering her exquisitely-articulated sensory sensitivities almost palpable to the reader. One gets the feeling that Jaxon not only knows and accepts herself, but that she is also comfortable in her autism—that while she (almost casually) acknowledges the lack of comfort that some (indeed, even her own mother) have with her condition, she herself has come to terms with it and with all of those others who do not know her secrets (that she can read and understand and think and feel and absorb!).

"The intertwining themes that run through this story are as powerful as they are subtle. Attitudes toward differences (whether racial or developmental) surface, as does the value and importance of true friendship.

"*There Are No Words* has a great deal to say! Its message is hopeful and timeless, and in my opinion, especially appropriate for young people who, though educated alongside their peers with autism, may not yet give them their due. Author Mary Calhoun Brown is to be commended for not only turning out a remarkable work of fiction, but also for making available a curriculum guide that further explores important themes and expands upon the message that, adversity is no match for the human spirit!" ~ Diane Twachtman Cullen, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, Autism Spectrum Quarterly, Spring 2010



"I can definitely say that your book will be chosen for the 'Outstanding Books for Young People with Disabilities 2011' by the IBBY Documentation Centre in Norway... Your book is a beautiful, genuine story about love and friendship, and I think you have captured the true hyper sensitivity to touch and sounds that so many autistic persons experience. I can honestly tell you that when Jaxon said goodbye to her new friends and slipped back through the painting and into her own world, it brought tears to my eyes." ~Heidi Cortner Boiesen, IBBY DOCUMENTATION CENTRE OF BOOKS FOR DISABLED YOUNG PEOPLE, Norway



"I am so impressed with your attention to detail and beautiful descriptions, not to mention your stick-to-it-iveness in getting it published. I'm taking a lesson! It is one thing to have empathy and another to be able to put across on paper the super-sensitivity to sound and touch. Wow. Your love of the characters shines through and the use of photos is brilliant. Boy, I could sure smell those roses and the leaves on the forest path. Great job!" ~ Sara Hunter, Sara Hunter Productions, award-winning author of *The Unbreakable Code*, a Smithsonian Notable Book for Children



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"Your book, *There Are No Words*, is lovely. A fascinating entry in the world of autism through an endearing character going back into time to rescue her grandfather's best friend. In addition to being a great piece of writing, this book is for anyone wanting to learn more about autism from an "inside" view. *There Are No Words* has my highest recommendation." ~ Stephen Shore, author of *Understanding Autism for Dummies; Beyond the Wall: Personal Experiences with Autism and Asperger Syndrome; Ask and Tell: Self-Advocacy and Disclosure for People on the Autism Spectrum*



"The most terrifying future is a future you cannot change. *There Are No Words* tells the story of a mute girl who finds herself with a voice, but sent back decades ago. With the knowledge of a train wreck that will kill one of her grandfather's friends, Jaxon MacKenzie finds herself in a time before said accident. But a twelve-year-old girl can't do much to stop a government train...can she? *There Are No Words* is a charming story of determination and friendship, highly recommended." ~ [Midwest Book Review](#)



"The author, Mary Calhoun Brown, brings her characters to life in *There Are No Words*. It is a wonderful story of a twelve-year-old girl, Jaxon, being raised by her grandparents. Jaxon loves going for walks with her grandfather and listening to his stories about his life. Although she tries, she is unable to speak, but she can read even though she keeps that a secret.

"Although the story takes place in the present day, Jaxon has the unique opportunity to go back in time to save her grandfather's best friend. During her adventure, she meets a wonderful group of children and is given a voice. Through her adventure she learns about prejudice and comes to realize that she too has challenges to overcome. However, she is proud and happy to be Jaxon!

"The author writes with so much detail that you will find yourself cheering for Jaxon during her adventure and learning so much from her even though she is unable to speak. This book will be adored by young teens, teachers and parents." ~Reviewed by Lara Blanchard, M.A., BCBA, MAAP Services for Autism and Asperger Syndrome



5 Stars: "*There Are No Words* is narrated by Jaxon, a 12-year-old girl with autism who lives with her grandparents. Though she shares with the reader that she cannot speak and describes her intense reactions to sound and touch, this is not really a book about autism. It is an adventure whose protagonist happens to be autistic.

"Jaxon also proves to be a strong, quick-thinking girl with a crush on a black boy and a friend who, in 1918, likes to wear boys' pants and shoes under her dresses. Author Mary Calhoun Brown defies many stereotypes. Teachers and parents looking for a book with strong female characters or gentle, nurturing men will find them here. The book also promotes awareness of autism without presenting it as a problem to be overcome. In fact the main problem from Jaxon's point of view is that other people do not understand autism and treat her as though she is stupid or, to use her word, unworthy.

"We see the world through the eyes of someone who is extremely sensitive to touch and to sounds. Jaxon also pays close attention to details and colors. The descriptions of the world around her—the feel of the carpet, the sounds of the rain—are peaceful and poetic. Jaxon, who has much difficulty communicating with others, including her own mother, is still able to paint for us beautiful images of the world as she sees it.

"When Jaxon is magically transported through a painting and back in time, she finds that she is able to speak. In fact she seems to have no trouble communicating whatsoever and to be unusually good at intuiting the feelings of others. In Tennessee in 1918 Jaxon's autism is not a problem, but she soon discovers that racism, an issue that she had been unaware of before her time-travel adventure, is a huge one.

"Ms. Brown more than once compares racism to the discrimination that Jaxon faces as a person with autism. Brown's presentation of race issues in the United States does not go very deep. Happily the black character, Oliver, has three

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wonderful white friends who are willing to risk their lives for him. Also, Jaxon seems to believe that racism is all but gone in her modern world. We can forgive, perhaps, her surface-level observations on race, knowing that Jaxon almost never leaves her grandparents' house and interacts with few people outside of her family. Though readers may not feel convinced that the experience of a black person in the south parallels that of an autistic child so neatly, teachers and students will appreciate Brown's message of tolerance toward all others.

"The strongest aspect of the story is the unfolding mystery and adventure as Jaxon and her friends race against time, hoping to stop a train wreck and to rescue Oliver. There is real suspense, and Brown describes the action with vivid images, employing the same poetic language that she uses for the pastoral scenes in the beginning of the book. Despite the excitement of a train hurtling toward tragedy in the hours before dawn, the book maintains its peaceful, dreamlike feel throughout.

"*There Are No Words* is a quick read with thoroughly likable characters. The relationships between the characters are sweet while still being very real. Readers will be inspired by the patience of Jaxon's grandparents and the kindness of her friends.

"Quill says: A dream-like adventure that reads like poetry while challenging stereotypes." Feathered Quill Book Reviews



"I found *There Are No Words* to be a very interesting, informative and easy read. Jaxon MacKenzie is an autistic twelve year old girl living in the modern world and yet this story seems firmly rooted in a past era. I attribute this 'feel' to two separate but intertwined things. Jaxon lives with her grandparents who come from an older generation which encompasses a different set of values and she gets pulled into a painting that sends her back in time to July of 1918. *There Are No Words* is the story of Jaxon's life here as well as her adventure in the past.

"I definitely appreciated the historical facts which were used in the telling of this tale as it made the book very interesting to me. I also enjoyed the various photographs and pictures which were used throughout the book. They were an authentic touch and consequently they made the story that much more realistic. I am sure that the younger readers will greatly enjoy this aspect as well.

"It was also wonderful to read the book from Jaxon's perspective and to be present during her different stages. She starts out as an autistic child unable to really communicate with the world around her yet once she goes through the painting she suddenly finds she is able to interact with people in what we would consider a 'normal' manner. How wonderful to finally have the ability to talk with people outside of her head! How amazing to have people treat her the same way they treat everyone else!

"I give high praise to the author, Mary Calhoun Brown, for being able to help me understand and experience life in a way that an autistic child might. How many times do we overlook or simplify what autism is simply because we do not understand it or have never experienced its effects in our lives? How frustrating it must be to be that child. To have to wonder about life every day and yet never have any answers to your questions. Jaxon was truly blessed to live with someone as intuitive as her grandparents.

"*There Are No Words* is a charming and likeable story, and I recommend it to readers of all ages." ~Charline Ratcliff, Rebecca's Reads



"This delightful and gentle fantasy is told in first person by Jaxon MacKenzie, a 12-year-old girl with autism. Mute and not in school, she lives with caring and good grandparents. She knows hurt when people outside the home sometimes speak down to her or say unkind things, as though she wasn't there.

"In the house hangs an old oil painting in which a happy girl and boy are holding hands as they dance away from a large tree. One night the girl in the painting reaches out to Jaxon saying, 'come with us. We've been waiting for you.' Helped out to the 'other side of the painting' (as she calls it) by a spritely and happy Sarah, Jaxon begins to talk. She has new adventures, is touched by warm friendships and is moved by their acceptance of someone who is not like them. After some interesting—one dramatically tragic—experiences—she finds her way home.

"Mary Calhoun Brown has given us an unusual path in getting to the story of autism. Young teenagers, their teachers

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and parents will be happy to have this one in their library." ~ Dr. Ruth C. Sullivan, first President of the Autism Society of America



"Mary brings her characters to life with an infinite attention to detail and infuses them with depth, humor and selflessness. *There Are No Words* propelled me into a time and place in which even children were faced with the realities of racism and war." ~Mike Grady, CEO of the Autism Services Center, Huntington, WV



"I just finished *There Are No Words*, it was a wonderful story, it reminded me of *The Wizard of Oz*. The way it was written made me really believe the story." ~Sarah Byrd, author of the upcoming book *Guardian Spirits*



"I was looking forward to reading this book about a young girl with autism because I am a teacher who has had students with various learning differences through the years. I always want to learn more and find books I can share in my classroom. However, the main reason I picked this book is my own nephew has autism. You see 19 years ago my brother and sister adopted a special needs baby who as he grew up we saw that he looked at things differently than other children. After many doctors and testing, sometime when he was in grade school he was diagnosed as autistic. Unlike Jaxon the 12-year-old girl in the story, my nephew is not mute but he does have many of the other characteristics of Jaxon.

"Jaxon MacKenzie lives with her grandparents and cannot talk but does read though no one realizes it. Her grandparents are very loving and supportive. Her grandfather tells her the story of his childhood friend, Oliver who dies in the greatest train wreck in American history. Jaxon loves her grandfather and his stories.

"In her grandfather's parlor is an old painting that one night as she is looking at it the children in the picture pull her into their world. They all quickly become friends and Jaxon realizes that something is going on because Dewey, one of the boys has her same last name. She also begins to wonder about Oliver, as he is also black like her grandfather's friend. She works with them and a girl, helping around the farm but becomes worried when Oliver leaves on a train for a job. She realizes this is the same train her grandfather told her about and that it is going to wreck. She is determined to save Oliver and her new found friends help.

"This was a great historical adventure story. Mary Calhoun Brown made the characters interesting and children will enjoy this story and it will help them to understand others who might be different than they are. I plan to read it to my nephew.

"Caution: in the second chapter, p. 21, Jaxon's mother makes a brief appearance and uses the word "hell". It is used to show how she does not care for Jaxon but as some autistic children repeat things obsessively I will be leaving that word out as I read it to my nephew." *Reviewed on 03/12/2010 by ReviewTheBook.com Member Janice Hidey*



"Jaxon's world is engaging from page one, the author's simple, quiet style lending itself well to such a gentle, thoughtful read. ... Love and tolerance are certainly abundant, but unlike most teen books in this niche it is balanced with sorrow, anger and prejudice in real-life doses, which rescues it from sentimentality and gives it a whole new dimension of excellence. ... A heartwarming tale of trials and triumph, judgment and acceptance; one that challenged my beliefs and brightened my day. It's short, it's sweet, and it's worth far more recognition that it will probably get." KIDS Reader Views, Maggie Desmond-O'Brien (age 14) for Reader Views (12/09)



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"Your book is amazing—your descriptions are unbelievable! What a talent! Your book is a gift to the world!" ~Betts Carpenter-Reed, MD, Ph.D., Medical Director, LabCorp Charleston Cytology Laboratory



"Just finished the first chapter.... I am LOVING your book! I love the figurative language.... you are a Reading Teacher's dream come true!" ~Melanie Alley, M.A., Fifth Grade Teacher, Columbus City Schools, Columbus, OH



"I enjoyed reading your book. I loved how you described the forsythia bush. I will never look at a forsythia bush again without thinking about your fabulous description.....I miss springtime!!!" ~Christina Foy Ellis, Educator and Leader People to People Student Ambassador Program



"This book is one that makes the reader look at lives of others [in] a whole different light while it adds a bit of whimsy and 'what if' to round it out. I suggest this book for readers of all ages, and especially those who want a more positive book about autism than they have previously read. It is a 'keeper' in every sense of the word." ~*ReviewTheBook.com* Member Susan Pettrone



"Mary Calhoun Brown has provided a voice for the voiceless, in this riveting tale that draws attention to the plight of autism. An epic story that touches the heart *There Are No Words* is truly a story of love and devotion. With actual family photos scattered throughout the book and a carefully crafted story, Mary Calhoun Brown has given *There Are No Words*, a heartbeat of its own. The perfect blend of history and fiction, I would recommend this book to everyone." ~by *ReviewTheBook.com* Member Angela Simmons



"*There Are No Words* is wonderful...While the title of this book is *There Are No Words* I found Mary Calhoun Brown's delightful words to be very educational and uplifting. I had no prior knowledge of the train wreck that serves as the backdrop for this novel, and was intrigued enough to then do my own research on the this historical event — I thank Mrs. Brown for this inspiration. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, her handling of the characters was gentle and thought-provoking and the juxtaposition of race relations among a group of friends against the beliefs and actions of their elders was careful but meaningful. All in all I found this book to be wonderfully creative, enlightening, and inspirational. I have passed it along to my 12-year-old son and am confident that he will benefit from it just as I did." ~by S. Harz on wikio.com



"I just finished *There Are No Words*, it was a wonderful story, it reminded me of *The Wizard of Oz*. The way it was written made me really believe the story." ~Sarah Byrd, author of the upcoming book *Guardian Spirits* (Lucky Press, LLC)

Media coverage:

WOWK TV Interviews Mary Calhoun Brown:

<http://wowktv.com/story.cfm?func=viewstory&storyid=74212>

CNN Interviews Mary Calhoun Brown:

<http://www.cnn.com/2010/HEALTH/02/11/aspergers.autism.dsm.v/index.html>

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Lexington Literature Examiner:

<http://www.examiner.com/examiner/x-12171-Lexington-Literature-Examiner~y2010m2d16-CalhounBrown-finds-the-words-in-her-latest-novel#comments>

Listen to Audio Interview of Mary Calhoun Brown on Empowering Educators Radio:

<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/empowering-educators/2010/01/14/there-are-no-words-author-mary-calhoun-brown>

Herald-Dispatch (Huntington, WV) Interview:

<http://www.herald-dispatch.com/news/x300713368/First-time-author-releases-fictional-story-to-help-people-understand-autism>

The Autism News:

<http://www.theautismnews.com/2010/01/21/there-are-no-words-the-debut-novel-for-autism-advocate-mary-calhoun-brown/>

Video Interview: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNB8EXM49j0>

Book specifications:

There Are No Words by Mary Calhoun Brown

Copyright 2010 Genre: Middle grade/young adult

ISBN: 978-09776300-2-8 (paperback \$9.95) 130 pages 6 x 9 inches Carton quantity: 42

ISBN: 978-097763007-3 (hardcover with jacket \$22.00) 130 pages 6 x 9 inches Carton quantity: 62

Publisher: Lucky Press, LLC, PO Box 754, Athens, OH 45701-0754 Established 2000; 22 titles

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Also available from the author's web site: www.marycalhounbrown.com (Ask for the free, extensive Teacher's Guide). Set up a SKYPE author interview with Mary Calhoun Brown!

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