

Fish in a Tree

By Lynda Mullaly Hunt

Grade Levels:

- 4-7

Synopsis:

- "...if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its life believing it is stupid." Ally is a fish in a tree. This is her seventh school in seven years because her father is in the military. So far no one has discovered her secret. She manages to hide the fact that she can't read by causing distractions that get her sent to the principal's office. She lets "mind movies" take her away from the everyday frustrations, however, the class bullies are onto her and they call her dumb and make fun of her. Ally accepts that she is dumb since she can't do what everyone else seems to be able to do with ease. But a new enthusiastic teacher recognizes her unique way of thinking, her ability to solve complex problems and her artistic talent. Mr. Daniels helps to identify Ally as dyslexic and starts teaching her to read in a different way. As she begins to make progress Ally's new school becomes a place of possibilities rather than a setting for failure. Her new friends, Albert and Keisha, help her stand up for herself and show the true Ally who has been hiding inside. With engaging well-developed characters this story will appeal to all children and it will invite them to celebrate differences.

Author Website:

- <http://www.lyndamullalyhunt.com>

Curricular Connections:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.3 Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3 Describe in depth a character, setting, or event

Lesson Ideas:

- Give students a quiet time to think about a topic of interest and create a "mind movie" about it. Then invite them to draw the movie on paper or using a paint program on the computer. Lead a discussion about how the "mind movie" helped them to better understand the topic.
- http://www.penguin.com/static/images/yr/pdf/FishInATree_lessonplans_Final_LR.pdf- An Educator's Guide to Lynda Mullaly Hunt

Suggested Companion Titles:

- *Eleven* by Patricia Reilly Giff. Yearling, 2008.
- *Hank Zipzer: The World's Greatest Underachiever* by Henry Winkler & Lin Oliver. Grossett and Dunlap
- *Thank You, Mr. Falker* by Patricia Pollaco. Philomel, 2012.

Professional Reviews:

- *Booklist* starred (12/15/14)
- *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* (03/01/15)
- *Horn Book Guide* (10/01/15)
- *Library Media Connection* starred (09/01/15)
- *Publishers Weekly* (12/01/14)
- *School Library Journal* starred (01/01/15)
- *Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA)* (02/01/15)

Award:

- Schneider Family Book Award 2016