

Raven Callaway-Kidd

Dear Ms. Schindler,

In your book, *The Junction of Sunshine and Lucky*, there are two kinds of people: the ones that shine like Old Glory and the kind who are dull like rusted metal at McGunn's. The way I see it, books are the same way. A lot of books that I read shine like Old Glory. Very few are rusted metal. However, even fewer books stick with me. Your book did.

Your book got me thinking—about a lot of things. How could Victoria not see the beauty in Auggie's sculptures? How do we as people not see beauty in recycled sculptures? Why? What was it that made Lexie so into Victoria? Do we do the same thing as Lexie in the real world? What is beauty in the first place? Why did some people (like Victoria) *choose* not to see that some recycled things were special? How could anyone see through trash and into potential? I wanted answers. I wanted to understand. I thought that maybe a theme would help me find the answers to these questions. But how could I come up with that theme? It was so hard to just slap one on. I thought about this for a very long time. Still, I had no idea.

So, what was the theme? I wondered this for an even longer period of time. I'd have a spark of an idea and then it would disappear. At first I thought it was about recycling something to make it look new and beautiful, but that wasn't quite it. Then I thought the theme might be about turning lemons into lemonade. That didn't seem quite right either. Then one day it hit me. The theme was about *seeing* something and its potential and beauty. It's a real gift to be able to do that. Auggie could. And so could T. Walker.

For me the theme was represented by the characters. There was Victoria, a theme in herself. She represents how some people are closed minded and not willing to see beauty in anything under one hundred dollars. She wanted something made for a specific purpose: sculptures made from clay by famous artists, not from monkey bars or oil cans by a little girl.

Then there was Chuck, Gus, Lexie, Ms. Byron, and, of course, Auggie. These were the people willing to appreciate Auggie's work. They represent how people want to see beauty as a way to help our environment. However, a lot of them also wanted to support Auggie. Chuck was practically a dad to Auggie. Gus helped create their sculptures. Of course, they would be supportive! Some people in the world are like that—they want to make someone they care about feel good about themselves. But Lexie and Ms. Byron were two different stories.

Lexie followed Victoria's closed-minded example. Lexie wanted to openly like Auggie's sculptures, but she didn't feel like she could. Lexie truly did appreciate Auggie's art, but she cared too much about Victoria's judgement of her. She wanted Victoria as a friend—or at least she felt that way. Lexie needed help finding who she was—just like Auggie. Auggie was searching for her shine and Lexie was searching for a friend. She didn't realize that what she needed was right in front of her. We often make this mistake in the real world—wanting something more than what we have and not recognizing that what we need is right there.

Ms. Byron, Auggie knew, agreed with Victoria and her family. Maybe it was because they were rich. Maybe it was because they had a professional committee—the House Beautification Committee. Maybe they always seemed so sure that what they were doing was the right thing. Whatever the reason was, Ms. Byron couldn't like Auggie's sculptures. She was persuaded to think junk was junk and that would never change. Ms. Byron and Lexie needed a little help seeing beauty.

The theme got me thinking about my own life. Or, more accurately, about how my own life wasn't at all like Auggie's life. I didn't know anyone who felt it was important to see potential and beauty in anything. I liked the idea of everything being special. I liked the idea of everyone reusing old objects to make something that looked artistic, but not even I did that to the extent that Auggie did. Sure, I could glue two plastic figures onto a tissue box and call it a stage, but that wasn't much. Auggie and T. Walker had an important talent. It was an environment saving talent that nobody I knew really had. Maybe, I thought, if we had somebody who could do that, the planet wouldn't have so much waste. It wasn't like I could just go up and ask somebody to take old broken objects, see beautiful potential in them that would cause them to want to make something artistic out of them, and create a sculpture out of everything like this though. Then I thought that maybe if everyone did a little bit for the planet, we would have a healthier Earth. I can't make everyone do their share, but I can do mine.

I can recycle things and reuse what I can. After reading your book, I decided I would do this. Now, I am always on the lookout for a way to recycle, reuse, and more.

A few months after reading your book, my family went to a recycled art show. There was art made out of old license plates, golf balls, horseshoes, bottle caps, plastic forks, and more. There was even a recycled art fashion show! It was a great way of recycling items! There were dresses made of phonebook pages, bullets, a soil bag, saran wrap, and even a bicycle tire. These outfits reminded me of your book and I was inspired by you and the designers to make an outfit. It was 2016 and you know what? I think that I'll enter the 2017 contest. Thank you for inspiring me!

Sincerely,

Raven Callaway-Kidd