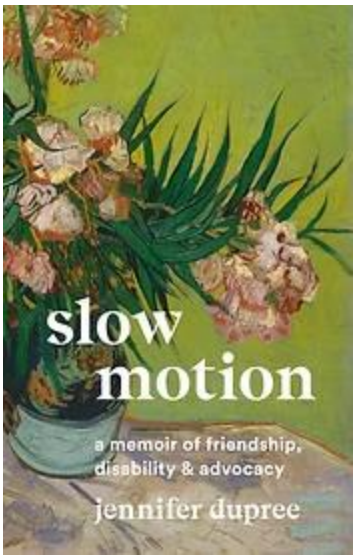
Teacher's Guide: Slow Motion



Themes:

-Friendship
-Disability
-Advocacy
-Belonging
-Ableism

Objectives:

-Students will reflect on how personal memories and identities can inspire social justice action.

-Students will examine the power and possibility of looking at an experience or set of beliefs from another person's point of view.

Essential Questions:

-What is the role of the writer in documenting and preserving history and memory?

-How are stories a form of advocacy?

-What impact does discrimination based on disability have on society?

-How does our past shape the present?

Discussion Questions:

This book is about the unusual, intergenerational friendship between Marcel and Jen. What are some of the barriers to people of different ages, abilities, and genders becoming friends? What are the benefits of "unusual" friendships?

This book is largely about how friends show up for one another. Jen shows up for Marcel by advocating for his personhood. In what ways does Marcel show up for Jen?

Marcel's physical disability often makes people either stare at him or ignore him altogether. Why

do disabilities—both physical and cognitive—often make people without disabilities so uncomfortable? What are some things that could be done to change that?

People often judge Marcel's mental acuity based solely on his physical appearance. Have there been times when someone has misjudged you without getting to know you? Did that make you think differently about yourself?

Catholicism plays an important role in both Marcel and Jen's upbringing. In what ways do the beliefs shaped in childhood carry into their adult lives? In what ways are their responses to this kind of upbringing different?

Marcel's kindness and sense of humor are pivotal parts of his personality. In what way do those personality traits help him navigate the world as a profoundly disabled person? Are there ways in which those same traits impede him?

This book touches on ableism, which is the idea that people with typical abilities and bodies are better and that people with disabilities need to be "fixed." One way ableism shows up is the book is when Marcel is unable to get a player's card at a casino because he can't lift his hand to sign a pad, but he's told that's the only way to get what he wants. What are examples of ableism you've seen or heard about? What can an ordinary person do to correct or avoid their own ableist behaviors?

Because of a lack of access, Marcel was never able to attend school and so cannot read beyond a third-grade level, and yet he's described in the book as being smart. In what ways can someone be smart beyond "book smart?"

Marcel suffers neglect and abuse at the hands of his caregivers. What would it feel like to be completely physically reliant on people who you are afraid of? What kind of systems need to be in place for people like Marcel to feel safe reporting abuse and neglect?

Why does the author employ the use of the 2nd person—the "you" that is sometimes addressed? How does this change the intimacy and/or intensity of the scene in which it's used?

How does the author use humor in this book? Why is it important to sometimes have levity in difficult situations?

Activity:

Think of a person you know well. Then write a few paragraphs that address the following questions: What part of their story would you want to tell? Why is this story compelling to you?

How would you decide what parts of their story to include and what would you leave out? Why would you make those choices? What might be the impact of telling that story? What guidelines would you put in place to protect the person you're writing about? What other considerations might there be before telling another person's story?