

QUINTON CURRIER (11th Grade: Boardman, Boardman High School)

Level III Third Place Winner

*Letter to Neal Shusterman concerning his book, **The Schwa was Here***

Dear Mr. Schusterman,

Being invisible is thought to be cool, right? The fact that you can do anything you want, and no one can see you which means that you can literally get away with anything. In most instances where superheroes can turn invisible, they can turn right back and be noticed again, but not in the Schwa's case. When I read your book, I couldn't help but find a lot of similarities between him and me. When Calvin was introduced as the one who nobody notices because he blends in with the background, I noticed that sometimes others don't see me either. Not the full effect of the disappearing, but close to it. I knew exactly what it was like for the Schwa, the constant ignorance from others and how he was never remembered. It was all too familiar to me.

When I was young, I lived in a really small town where the stereotypes of everyone knows everyone was true. But, like the Schwa, life was different if you were invisible to everyone around you. Many times my parents would forget to pick me up from after school, forget me at home when they left for errands, call for me when I was next to them, or not hear anything that I was saying to them. School didn't differ much between all the teachers and other students not noticing anything about me. Being a young boy, I thought it was all because people didn't like to be around me, that they were trying to ignore me, and unfortunately I became very introverted not wanting to go out of my way to meet others.

Fast forwarding through time, I read your book and connected to exactly how Calvin felt and was always eager to do anything just to be noticed, even though some of the "dares" could have been dangerous and go the Schwa into trouble. This is a lot like how I was at first, always eager to help someone out so I would be noticed for that brief second before going invisible again. I started to ask myself, "What is it that makes someone invisible to others?" or "What can be done to help me, and possibly others in the same situation?" Your book got me to come out of my shell to say to everyone that "I'm right here in front of you, and let me show you what I can do!" Because of that connection with Calvin and learning a little through of what he went through, even if it was a fictional story, I became visible to the people around me. I joined many extra-curricular activities, and stuck with the hard ones that looked like there was no end to. I worked harder to become better at sports I played, and on my teams I made an effort to befriend all the players, and over the next couple years we did tremendously better because everyone was cooperating with each other. I was lucky enough to be part of it!

Also, the event of Calvin finding Lexi, who always noticed him even though she couldn't "see" him, happened to me. I happened across the amazing person that noticed everything about me, and she grew into my best friend of over 8 years now (Thankfully she is not blind). Where she can remember more about me than even my parents do which can make me feel like the luckiest man on the planet. Plus, she can make me feel like the most important person to ever exist, which I imagine that is exactly how Calvin felt about Lexi.

Once I read your book, I finally connected to someone (Calvin) that understood what it feels like to be invisible, but I have also gone through the trials and tribulations with him and learned much along the way. But overall living through the life of Calvin, it has taught me to be noticed and notice more of what is going on around me. This included making an effort to also notice others. So, thank you very much for helping me to become visible.

Sincerely,

Quinton Currier