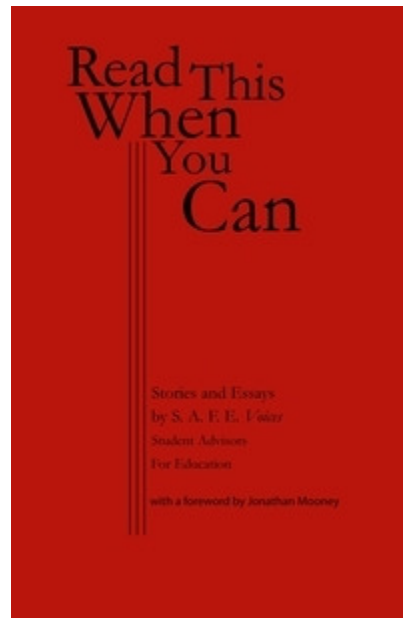


SAFE Voices Book Review

Read This When You Can: Stories and Essays by S.A.F.E. Voices

Review by Mary Pat Hough

Read This When You Can is a collection of stories written by 20 or so high-school students about their experiences and thoughts growing up with learning differences. The foreword, written by Jonathan Mooney, challenges parents, professionals and the educational community, to “start talking about what is right with kids who learn outside the lines” rather than seeing learning differences as “deficits” or “problems to be cured.” He notes “[E]ach of these young writers and activists ground their experience of LD/ADHD within a non-deficit strength-based model. Their gifts and the gifts of LD/ADHD fly off the page.”



These teen narratives range from the satirical to the sad, poignantly describing each author’s journey from feeling inadequate and “other” to feeling confident, self aware, competent and successful. The emotion is palpable. The painfully honest revelations, at times, almost too much to bear. Some themes recur over and over: observing that school was “easy” for others, learning to read late, feeling different and separate from peers, searching for some measure (any measure) of success in school and the huge investment of time and energy in learning.

In addition to these intimate, personal accounts, the book contains essays on topics such as 'Accommodations for Kids with LD/ADHD' and 'Alternatives to SAT Testing.' The book closes with a long list of famous people with dyslexia and other learning differences which illustrates that success is well within reach of those who learn differently.

Jacqui Shine, a graduate student at UC Berkeley, and a project volunteer coordinator at 826 Valencia Street agreed to lead these students members of S.A.F.E. Voices through the process of writing and publishing a book. SAFE Voices is a student-organized branch of PEN and is comprised of approximately 50 students from Bay Area public, independent and parochial schools. 20 of the S.A.F.E. Voices student members contributed to this compilation. 826 Valencia Street, Jon Mooney and Jacqui Shine made this book possible by lending their support in the form of location, editorial assistance, adult volunteers and literal and figurative nourishment, to accomplish this unique effort.

This is a must read for parents, teachers and professionals. *Read This When You Can* is the first book of its kind which tells the journey of growing up LD/ADHD from the high school student’s perspective. It contains unconventional wisdom delivered by unconventional learners and is a gem that you will want to read over and over and share

with everyone close to you. This book offers insight and advice to those who are raising LD/ADDHD children about the road to coping and managing the LD educational experience.

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