



WHERE YOU SEE YOURSELF

BY CLAIRE FORREST

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The Story

By the time Effie Galanos starts her senior year, it feels like she's already been thinking about college applications for an eternity—after all, finding a college that will be the perfect fit *and* be accessible enough for Effie to navigate in her wheelchair presents a ton of considerations that her friends don't have to worry about.

What Effie hasn't told anyone is that she already knows exactly what school she has her heart set on: a college in NYC with a major in Mass Media & Society that will set her up perfectly for her dream job in digital media. She's never been to New York, but paging through the brochure, she can picture the person she'll be there, far from the Minneapolis neighborhood where she's lived her entire life. When she finds out that Wilder (her longtime crush) is applying there too, it seems like one more sign from the universe that it's the right place for her.

But it turns out that the universe is full of surprises. As Effie navigates her way through a year of admissions visits, senior class traditions, internal and external ableism, and a lot of firsts—and lasts—she starts to learn that sometimes growing up means being open to a world of possibilities you never even dreamed of. And maybe being more than just friends with Wilder is one of those dreams . . .

Reading Group Questions

1. How important is the setting in this story? What about the places where it takes place influence the story and the characters' decisions?
2. What are ways that you can advocate for yourself and/or your peers to get accommodations if you find that your environment isn't as accessible as it should be?
3. Effie has to make challenging decisions about college and about her future. Have you had to make any hard life choices, and how did you make your decision?
4. Does Effie get what she wanted at the end of the story? Is what she wanted at the end of the story different from what it was at the start of the story? If so, how and why did it change? Was the ending what you expected?

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About the Author



Claire Forrest is the author of the Schneider Family Book Award Honor book *Where You See Yourself*, which is based on her lived experience as a wheelchair user who has cerebral palsy. Claire is a novelist and essayist who holds an MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Hamline University. As an undergraduate at Grinnell College, she was a consultant for the Disability Services and Admissions offices, working directly to address the concerns of incoming college students with disabilities and their families. She lives in Minneapolis, where when she's not writing, she spends her time swimming and planning where to travel next. Find out more about her on Instagram and Twitter at @claire4est.

Author Q&A

What inspired you to write *Where You See Yourself*?

I read voraciously as a teenager, but I never saw disabled characters reflected in the books that I read. For a long time, I assumed that this meant that disabled people like me weren't meant to go on adventures, fall in love, or be the hero of the story. As I became an adult, I realized that just because that representation hadn't existed for me, it didn't mean that it could not or should not exist. I wanted to give today's disabled teens a story that was a safe place to explore thoughts about their disability, their bodies, and their place in society. But I also wanted to write a story showcasing that disabled people want—and deserve—all the same things out of life that everyone wants: friendship, love, acceptance, and fun, and so much more.

Did anything about main character Effie surprise you as you wrote?

Effie's wry sense of humor shone through in the earliest drafts of *Where You See Yourself*. As I spent more time with her character, I realized that sometimes, she used her humor as a shield for her more vulnerable thoughts, and her fears about going off on her own, away from her family and friends, to start her own life in college. Developing Effie's softer side endeared her to me, and brought out elements of the story that surprised and delighted me.

Of all the supporting characters, who was your favorite to write—and why?

One of my first sparks for *Where You See Yourself* was the idea of Effie and her crush having an inside joke on how teachers constantly mispronounce her name. Wilder is a character who felt like a ray of sunlight every time he entered a scene that I was writing. I appreciate his allyship, his sense of humor, and of course, his penchant for grand gestures.

What do you hope readers will take away from this story?

I hope that readers will take away that disabled characters deserve to be authentically portrayed, and to be the main characters of their own stories. I also hope the book leads to discussions on how to advocate for accessibility in your own schools, campuses, and communities.