

Reflections on Being Gifted

Poems by Gifted Children

Compiled by
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Dedication

This book is dedicated with love to those responsible for my in-house training in giftedness: my husband, Roger, and my three daughters, Kerri, Leslie, and Michelle.

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Gifted

I am in a different class,
And I have special work,
But I am just like everyone else.
My personality is different than others,
But I feel the same things.

I don't consider myself "gifted";
I consider myself "challenged" in the work that I do.
My friends treat me the same way they always have,
And my parents are understanding.

I am proud of the things I accomplish,
And I never have to hide them.
I am sure of myself, and I keep a positive attitude.
It makes me happy to know that if
I want to reach my goals badly enough,
The opportunities are endless.

Amy Podojil, age 13

Introduction

The concept of giftedness is complex. Even experts disagree about what it means to be gifted, and certainly the gifted themselves have differing views of it. Gifted people are an incredibly diverse group, and so what resonates with one person may not mean much to someone else. But even when their definitions diverge, there are characteristics that most gifted people exhibit, as well as difficulties and problems that they often experience.

To find out how gifted young people feel about being gifted, I solicited poetry from all around the country. Gifted students from Montana to Arizona, Virginia to Ohio shared their thoughts and concerns about being gifted. Ranging in age from seven to seventeen, they shared their joys and fears, their fantasies and disappointments, their confusion and their understanding of themselves and the world in which they live. Through their poetry, they make real for us what it is to be gifted.

Some of the things that gifted people experience are the same as those that everyone experiences. Some things, however, are unique to those with advanced abilities or exceptional talents. These people are different, and while being different can be challenging, there is a beauty in it that is worth exploring and celebrating. This book does just that.

Enjoy the poems that follow. I hope that they will inspire you to notice, understand, and appreciate the gifts that these individuals possess—and maybe your own gifts as well.

A Gifted Child

I know the look, the glare.
I come across it every week, every day.
It comes from a classmate or a teacher.
Some have the nerve to say it right out or at least start to.
And just to name a few of these:
From a fellow student,
"I thought you'd do better than me."
I asked, "Why?"
"Because you're a...oh, never mind."
From a teacher,
"You, of all, should understand this problem."
Again, I asked, "Why?"
"Because you're a...oh, never mind."
From a friend,
"I get better grades than you.
How come? I'm not a..."
"A what?" I asked.
"Say it!"
"OK, a gifted child!"

Carrie Jeram, age 14

CHAPTER I

Being Gifted

Being Gifted

When you're gifted, it's like opening a treasure chest,
Because you're special from the rest.
You learn in a great and special way,
Which makes it different every day.
You open a door to a creative place
With horses and demons and queens with lace.
So if you're gifted, you should try
To set your goals up to the sky.

Jill Carr, age 11

Being gifted *is* like opening a treasure chest—a chest filled with wonderful things that can't be enjoyed unless someone cares enough to explore what's inside. This chapter is filled with poems that gifted children wrote concerning how they feel about being gifted. They showcase several different traits common to gifted people, and in many cases, they reveal the challenges these children have with those same characteristics, which often make them feel different, misunderstood, and out of place with their peers.

Before we talk about what giftedness is, let's talk about what giftedness is not.

Giftedness is NOT:

- A perfect person who always gets all A's
- A person who never makes a mistake
- A person who is always mature
- A person who is always polite
- A person who walks around with a book all the time
- A person with thick glasses and curly hair
- A person who is terrible at sports
- A person who thinks he or she is better than anyone else
- A person who always has the right answer
- A person who gets special privileges
- A person who only thinks about school subjects
- A person who knows better

Certainly there are people who do exhibit some of these characteristics, and there are probably some people who exhibit them all. However, the majority of gifted people aren't like that. Many of the misconceptions that gifted people face are not the result of them doing something wrong; rather, they exist because people don't understand what giftedness means. It is more than just having advanced intellect. It is an entirely different way of being, and that way affects everything in a gifted person's life.

Gifted people must learn that giftedness comes with certain abilities, intensities, sensitivities, and other qualities that will affect them profoundly throughout their lives. These can cause embarrassment and confusion, or they can be the source of joy, self-confidence, satisfaction, and pleasure. Knowing oneself and honoring one's inherent

gifts are paramount in avoiding the former and achieving the latter.

Gifted people share many common characteristics. Not every gifted person has every characteristic, but these are the ones that appear most often in the gifted population:

1. Large vocabulary and strong verbal skills
2. Unusually good memory
3. Complexity of thinking, including an enhanced ability to understand abstract concepts
4. Advanced powers of concentration and intense curiosity
5. Creativity, a vivid imagination, and unusual ideas and interests
6. Highly developed sense of humor
7. High energy level
8. Extreme sensitivity to sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and/or textures
9. Emotional sensitivity
10. Intensity

Gifted people often have an insatiable desire to know all sorts of things. When they get excited about something, they want to learn everything they can about it. Sometimes they do this until they have exhausted every resource and are satisfied that they know everything there is to know, and then they move on to the next subject. However, some gifted people pursue information about a multitude of topics at the same time. Their interests are typically diverse and wide-ranging. Their pursuit of knowledge is fueled by their curiosity, their high energy, and their intensity. All these

qualities combine to make gifted people voracious seekers of knowledge.

However, children who are advanced and who already know a great deal of information about a wide range of topics typically find themselves bored in school, where they are expected to keep pace with the rest of the class. They stand out among their peers because of how smart they are and how well they do, and they often feel as though they don't fit in with their classmates. In addition, their teachers see how smart they are and then expect them to do well in everything they do all the time. This puts enormous pressure on gifted kids to perform at consistently high levels.

But giftedness doesn't necessarily mean that a child is gifted in every subject, and even the smartest kids have bad days or struggle sometimes. These children are still just children. When they don't do as well as they think they should, some of them doubt their abilities. It can be difficult being a gifted child. In fact, it can be difficult being gifted at any age.

To gifted people everywhere:

You Are Gifted!

You have been given a mind that learns differently, often faster than others.

You are not better or smarter than anyone else.

You are not gifted because you did well on a test.

You have been given the ability to see and understand things beyond your years.

You have the same responsibility as everyone else—to develop your gifts and talents to the fullest and to utilize them for the good of humankind, be that your family, your community, your country, or your world.

Am I Gifted?

Am I gifted?
Why am I here?
Am I really special?
I'm not really sure.

I get F's,
And that's just a start.
I get A's;
I don't feel smart.

Am I gifted?
Is that why I'm here?
I really don't know.
I really don't know.

Randy Daykin, age 12

Trying to Be Keen

I might be gifted,
But still I'm not perfect.
I might learn fast,
But I'm not the best.
I might be nice,
But I can be mean.
I might be smart,
But I try to be keen.

Paula Hankins, age 10

Being Gifted

Some people say being gifted is fun;
Then some say it's not.
Some people say being gifted is dull;
Then some say it's not.
Some people say it's all fun and games,
And some people *know* it's not!

Carrie Sasala, age 11

Gifted Expectations

People expect you to know everything,
Which really isn't fair,
So why don't people stop and look?
Why must they compare?

Deborah Crum, age 9

Being Gifted

Being gifted is okay;
It's learning in a different way.
Some people think we play all day.
If you could see the way we're mocked,
You might get a terrible shock.
Being gifted is not fun and games.
Our goals are high,
And so are our aims.

Mark Deptowicz, age 10

Being Gifted

Being gifted is not all bad,
But when I'm mocked, I get mad.
I can't explain just how I feel.
Sometimes I think this can't be real!
I get use to it after awhile,
So now I'm gonna give 'em a smile!

Lisa Zgodzinski, age 12

Personal Problem

Just a number,
The Mathematician,
Call it unique,
Use it,
Abuse it,
Change it to another,
For it is only a number,
Just a number,
Neverchanging.

In machines,
Out of machines,
Just a number,
Neverchanging.

Always one higher,
Always one lower,
One, many to be compared to...
Just a number
Neverchanging.

Used,
Abused,
Another to take its place.
No call for tears,
Just a number,
Neverchanging.

The Mathematician is the Mathematician.
The machine is the machine.
The number is itself.
Yet it is just a number,
Just one number,
One individual number.

Glen B. McClanan, Jr., age 15

Gifted

I don't consider myself
To be different from other kids,
But I do meet and take on
Challenges given to me.
Some teachers expect more
Than I can give.
Being gifted is a special feeling;
It lets creativity grow and live.

Joyce L. Luria, age 13