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Gulliford's "Can I tell you about hope?: A helpful introduction for everyone" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Gulliford, L. (2019). *Can I tell you about hope?: A helpful introduction for everyone*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. 71 pp. \$14.95. ISBN 9781785926761

What is hope? Is it a warm, fuzzy feeling? A fixture of will power on a desired end? Or is it something more? These are the questions Liz Gulliford attempts to answer in a way that will help children and young teens understand and discuss the concept of hope.

Readers learn a lesson in hope through the eyes of Matt. When Matt grows up, he hopes to be a professional guitarist, but he does not enjoy the nitty gritty of practicing the guitar. Matt would also like to ace his upcoming exam, but he will not study. Matt believes that if he hopes hard enough – if he thinks confident, positive thoughts – then he shouldn't need to study or practice. He believes that if he is "hoping" to the best of his ability, any further action would show that he is not confident of the future outcome.

Through the observation of friends' experiences and other events, Matt comes to rethink his definition of hope. The wheels begin to turn in Matt's head when he sees his friend Darren studying for the upcoming exam. Darren, like Matt, also hopes to perform well and is confident that he will. Matt cannot comprehend at first how Darren could be confident, while still investing so much time into studying.

Matt also visits a friend named Anneka who, after a bad accident, is learning to regain control over her legs. Matt tells her to think positive thoughts, but he sees that – in her hope to walk normally again – she must do more than just think and feel positively. She must exercise and practice. Through these and other lessons, Matt realizes that hoping for a future result often requires action in the present – not just wishful thinking.

Gulliford accomplishes her goal in communicating that hope requires action, using several examples and also tying in the concept of fate among the ancient Greeks, who would have believed that one's actions could not affect the end result. Gulliford also addresses exceptions, like how hope plays a role even when there is no further action to be taken.

Can I Tell You About Hope? is included in the *Can I Tell You About...* series, which has contributions from several authors. In this series, Gulliford writes about hope, courage, forgiveness, and gratitude. She has also written other books and articles on these topics, stemming from work in her doctorate studies.

This book is simply written and includes illustrations and examples that children can relate to, making a complex topic accessible to elementary students. Gulliford has also included key points and discussion questions to encourage parents and other adults to get involved.

Reviewer

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