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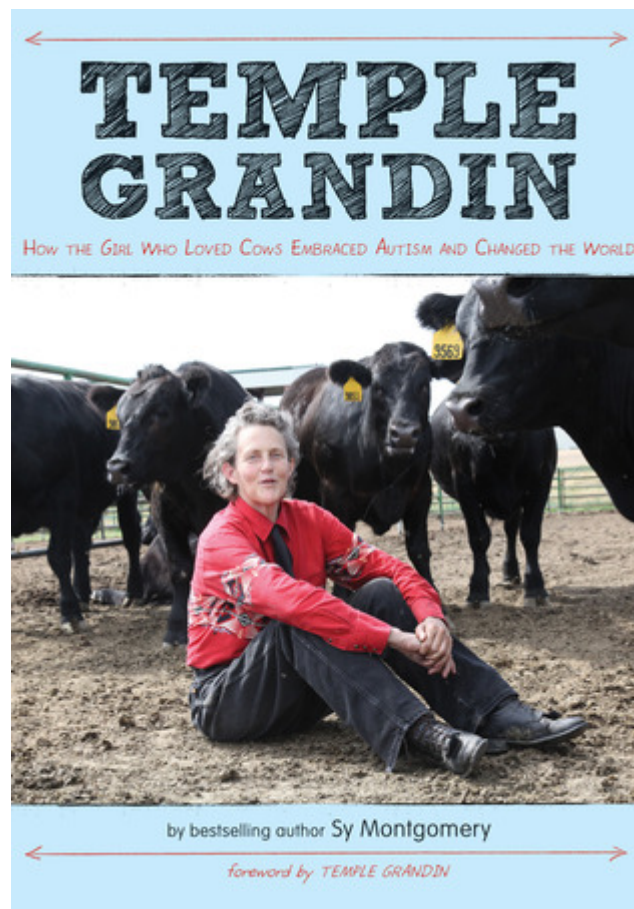
## Temple Grandin Teaches Us About Autism Spectrum Disorder and Acceptance

for Grade 7 Life Science  
by Amy Wilkins

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**Temple Grandin: How the Girl Who Loved Cows Embraced Autism and Changed the World**  
by Sy Montgomery; foreword by Temple Grandin



Montgomery, S. (2012). *Temple Grandin: How the girl who loved cows embraced autism and changed the world*. Houghton Mifflin Books for Children.

### Lesson 1: An Introduction to Temple Grandin

**Warm-Up:** Have the students write down what they already know about disabilities and autism spectrum disorder.

**Discussion:** Have the students get into small groups, discuss what they wrote down, and create a master list of everything their group thought of. Ask the students if they know who Temple Grandin is and what they think they know about her. Have them discuss this as a group and record their answers. As a whole class, have the students share what they wrote down about disabilities and autism spectrum disorders. Create a master list on the board for the whole class. Have the students add anything they didn't have to their lists. Then ask the students what they know about Temple Grandin.

Introduce the students to the book they'll be reading, *Temple Grandin: How the Girl Who Loved Cows Embraced Autism and Changed the World*. Then introduce the students to Temple Grandin by showing a short video about her:

Temple Grandin and Her Cowboy Shirts: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=379knneYABI>

Discuss what makes Temple unique.

**Closure:** Have the students each draw and decorate a cowboy shirt that shows their own personality. On the back, have them write down characteristics that make them each unique. Display the cowboy shirts in the classroom.

## **Lesson 2: Sensory Overload**

Students will read up to page 37 of on their own at home or when their work is completed in class and the lessons on the readings will happen on Fridays. The chapters in this section of the book include:

- Foreword by Temple Grandin
- Chapter One: Senses on Fire
- Chapter Two: The Animals' Advocate
- Chapter Three: What Is Autism?
- Chapter Four: Different But Happy

**Discussion:** Chapter 3 talks about what autism is. Have the students discuss what autism is and what some of the traits and mannerisms are. Have the students talk about what traits and mannerisms Temple Grandin displayed in her early childhood. Lead into the activity of the day that illustrates to the students how people with autism are bothered by things most people don't notice. People with autism are often sensitive to noise (including background noise), light, movement, smells, and scratchy clothing.

**Activity:** Divide the class into groups of five. Explain that they will each have a job to do. Go over their jobs: One student in each group will play the part of someone with autism. The other four people each have different jobs:

- Person #1 – You will play the part of a person with autism. Your job is to try and listen to what Person #5 is reading to you so you can take a test on the material. Try to ignore everyone else.
- Person #2 – Stand behind the student playing the part of someone with autism. Rub the edge of an index card against the back of their neck. You do not need to rub hard but keep doing it over and over.
- Person #3 – Grab a book (any book will do), lean close to Person #1 and read in a loud voice the entire time.
- Person #4 – Pat Person #1 on the head and shoulder the entire time.
- Person #5 – Using a normal voice, read a paragraph to Person #1, then ask them questions about what you read. Do not try to drown out the other noises.

Tell the students to start when you give the signal. Have all the students take a turn being Person #1 before holding a class discussion. Discussion questions:

- How did it feel to have so much commotion going on?
- Did it make you want to scream or run away?
- Were you able to concentrate on the paragraph being read?
- What might have helped?

**Closure:** After the discussion, have the students write a paragraph about what they learned from this activity: what it would be like to have Autism Spectrum Disorder, how well they would cope with it, and how this changes their perspective of students with autism.

### **Lesson 3: Exclusion vs. Inclusion**

Students will read pages 38-77 on their own at home or when their work is completed in class. The chapters in this section of the book include:

- Chapter Five: Trial by Teasing
- Chapter Six: Hampshire School for Wayward Wizards
- Chapter Seven: "Animals Saved Me"
- Chapter Eight: Scientist at Work

**Warm-Up:** In Chapter 5, Temple experienced teasing, bullying, and exclusion in junior high school before being expelled for throwing a book at a girl who called her a retard (we don't use this word). She finds acceptance when attends the Hampshire School for students with unique abilities. In college, Temple is sometimes rejected and ridiculed by her professors. As a class, discuss how teasing, bullying, rejection, and ridicule affected Temple.

**Activity:** Individually, students will create a chart with two columns. One column is for them to list ways they see students who are different (not just with a disability) get teased, bullied, and excluded. The second column is for them to list ways they could stop it or help the student feel included.

**Closure:** As a class we will discuss their lists and create a master list of the best ways they can help students who are being bullied, teased, or excluded. The students will add any ideas not on their list to their own.

### **Lesson 4:**

Students will read pages 78-113 on their own at home or when their work is completed in class. The chapters in this section of the book include:

- Chapter Nine: "No Girls Allowed"
- Chapter Ten: Humane by Design
- Chapter Eleven: To Hell And Back

**Warm-Up:** Have the students brainstorm a list of how they feel when they get rejected or ridiculed. As a class, have the students share their feelings. Discuss how even as a scientist, Temple Grandin is often excluded for being a girl, and her ideas are often rejected because they are different.

**Activity:** Have the students work in groups of four to create short skits portraying Temple Grandin's confrontation with Ron in Chapter 9, who told her girls weren't allowed on the feedlot. Have them include

how Temple managed to get past Ron's rule and onto the feedlot. Have the students perform their skits in front of the class. Have the students discuss how this scene made them feel.

**Closure:** Have the students create a mind map linking their thoughts about Temple, how she's been treated, how her brain works differently, and how she feels about animals. We've spent a lot of time talking about Temple Grandin as someone with autism spectrum disorder, but she is also a world-renowned animal scientist who has a special connection with livestock, especially cows.

## **Lesson 5: The World Needs All Kinds of Minds**

Students will read pages 114-141 on their own at home or when their work is completed in class. The chapters in this section of the book include:

Chapter Twelve: The Other Half of the Solution

Chapter Thirteen: Temple Today

Appendix: Temple's Advice for Kids on the Spectrum

**Warm-Up:** Have the students watch the YouTube video, Temple Grandin on Her Search Engine:

<https://youtu.be/lfsh6sojAvg>

Have the students Think-Pair-Share about the following questions:

- Does your brain work like Temple's?
- How is her brain similar to or different from yours?
- What are the advantages to having a brain like that?
- What are the disadvantages?

**Activity:** Have the students in pairs research other famous people with autism spectrum disorder. Scientists who likely would be diagnosed with autism today include: Albert Einstein, Nikola Tesla, Sir Isaac Newton, and Charles Darwin. Both Steve Jobs (deceased) and Bill Gates are on the autism spectrum. In pairs, have the students create a PowerPoint slide featuring the accomplishments of the person they researched and how the world would be a different place without them.

**Closure:** Temple Grandin is known for saying "The world needs all kinds of minds." Have the students write reflection, a few well-formed paragraphs long, on this statement, the book, what they've learned, and how they will include people with autism spectrum disorder and other disabilities in the classroom, in extracurricular activities, and in their everyday lives. Circulate the classroom while they are writing to check in how they are doing. If any students have written anything especially insightful, ask if you can share it with the class for inspiration.