



Reviews and Activities by Anna Stewart

Stuck in Neutral by Terry Truman

Age: Young adult

Challenge: Severe cerebral palsy, right-to-life issues

Tip: A book with the potential to haunt readers. It raises BIG questions about how we make assumptions for those who cannot do what we can do.

Truman believable character, Shawn McDaniel, tells readers what's it's like to live in a body that he cannot control. He has a rich inner life but he cannot tell anyone about it due to his severe cerebral palsy.

What makes the story interesting is that Shawn's father thinks that Shawn has a horrible, painful life and that it would be merciful to kill him. Shawn has no way to tell his father that he is happy and wants to live even in the limited way he does. As his father gets closer to killing him, we see what it's like to be Shawn, brilliant inside, and totally crippled outside. It raises the issue of the quality of life for people with special needs and asks readers to consider other ways of viewing rights and awareness.

Write: What assumptions do people make when they meet you? What assumptions have you made at some time in your life that turned out to be wrong? How did that make you feel? How did it make the person you made assumptions about feel? What

did you do to make a connection again? Write what happened in whatever form speaks to you- a story, and essay or a poem.