



# JENNY SMITH

## The Untypical Typical Teenager

*Before the Intel® Reader, Jenny Smith kept dyslexia at home. Now that she uses the Intel Reader to read a book in a day instead of in weeks, Jenny's confidence has gone up. Instead of keeping dyslexia at home, Jenny gives speeches about dyslexia, including a presentation to her school where most people had no idea that she had a learning disability.*

Though she laughingly dismisses her love of the *Twilight* books as just being a teenage girl, DeWitt, Michigan's Jenny Smith is anything but typical. This sixteen-year-old is a black belt in taekwondo, a certified scuba diver, a 4.0 student, and a published author.

Jenny rattles off a list of her favorite books, including a few fantasy titles, *My Sister's Keeper* by Jodi Picoult, and Harper Lee's classic *To Kill a Mockingbird*, then pauses. "There are just too many to count."

Seven years ago, Jenny couldn't read at all. Simple words like "the" seemed familiar one day, then indecipherable the next. At a sleepover, a friend offered her a book to read, then took it back.

"She said, 'oh yeah, you can't read,'" Jenny recalls, a trace of the old discomfort still fresh in her voice. "Reading would have been the best thing ever."



Though Jenny was clearly having problems reading, a pediatrician dismissed dyslexia, telling Jenny's mom, Anita, that Jenny just wasn't as fast as other kids. The family had no history of dyslexia.

"I tried everything. Hooked on Phonics\*, using my arms to trace words in the air. One day I could read a whole book, the next day, I'd forget everything," Jenny says. Anita read books out loud so Jenny could memorize them before a reading comprehension class.

### **A Diagnosis Brings Relief**

For Jenny, relief came when her keyboarding teacher saw classic signs of dyslexia. Anita quickly began the process of having Jenny tested and officially identified as having dyslexia. Every week, for the next three years, mother and daughter drove an hour each way to Jenny's reading lessons.

Two years into the process of learning to read, Jenny began to write the journals that eleven different editors would help turn into her book, *Dyslexia Wonders*. "The grammar was horrendous, but the words were legible," Jenny remembers.

### **Technology Brings Independence**

In 2009 Jenny won the Remy Johnston Award of Merit for her leadership and service to the dyslexia community. She traveled to Florida to accept her award at the International Dyslexia Association's annual conference. Part of her award was the Intel Reader.

"I thought, 'Yes! I don't have to struggle through my AP History book!'" Jenny says. Her AP History class covers 11,000 pages of text. Before the Intel Reader, Jenny would go to bed at 1 a.m. on school nights, after studying AP History alone for five hours.

In fact, it was her four-inch-thick AP History book that Jenny first used to test the Intel Reader. Intel promised that the Intel Reader

would cut down her homework time. She handed them the book. They handed her the Intel Reader full of images of her history text. That day, she sat down with the Intel Reader and finished her homework in 2.5 hours.

"My life isn't ruled by homework," Jenny says. She uses the Intel Reader for school, pleasure reading, and to the delight of English teachers everywhere, Jenny uses it to read her own papers back for extra proofreading.

### **Hula Hooping and Homework**

After years of memorizing books read to her, Jenny's ear is tuned to memorize text as soon as she hears it. She does her homework with the Intel Reader while hula-hooping or jogging in place with her Wii Fit\*.

Anita notices Jenny is able to spend more quality time with the family. "She eats meals with us and she's not so zoned out from hours of homework." After using the Intel Reader, Jenny is talking more to her peers about her own learning disability.

At a recent speech in Ohio, Jenny faced a crowd of fifty parents and their children, many of whom were dragged to the meeting by their parents. A boy sat with his hood up, and a girl spent the first part of the speech with her hands on her face, embarrassed to be identified as someone with a learning disorder.

By the end of the speech, all of the kids clamored to try out the Intel Reader. Jenny gave them basic instructions and they were able to use it instantly. "Teachers are amazed. Parents and kids think it's something they could use. It's a cool technology," Anita says.

### **The Intel Reader Gets It Pitch Perfect**

When she's not working out and doing homework, Jenny reads the words as the

Intel Reader says them. “The double voice reaffirms the information coming in,” she says.

Hearing and seeing words as the Intel Reader reads them back also helps Jenny’s speed. “I read a book in a day, instead of in weeks.”

Anita has noticed Jenny’s confidence go up. “She can read longer, stronger, and faster,” Anita says.

Recently, Jenny’s dad, who never enjoyed reading, was diagnosed with dyslexia. “When we have some downtime, I could see the two of them sharing the Intel Reader. Father and daughter—dual headsets,” says Anita. But until that break in her homework, Jenny keeps the Intel Reader close by in her backpack or with her Intel® Portable Capture Station, which she uses to efficiently capture large amounts of text.

Jenny uses her Intel Reader to devour books she downloads from bookshare.org and books she checks out from the library, but there’s one book that sounds particularly sweet to her ears—her own. She couldn’t face reading her words in print after reading them so many times through the editorial process so she picked up her Intel Reader. “The book sounds how it’s supposed to—perfect.”

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