

Dewey: The Small-Town Library Cat Who Touched the World

by Vicki Myron and Bret Witter

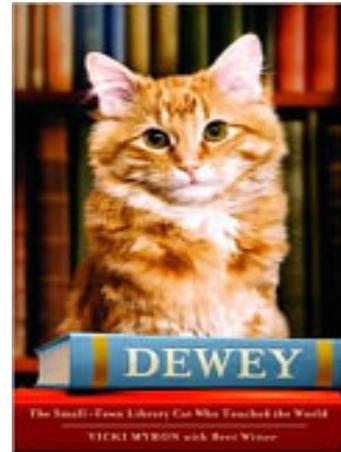
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Discussion Questions

1. What do you think of Dewey Readmore Books? Was he a special cat because of his personality, his circumstances, or both?
2. What was your favorite Dewey story? What was the funniest Dewey story? Which was most touching? Did his habits remind you of cats you have known or owned?
3. Vicki Myron believes she had a deep connection with Dewey. For example, he knew when he was going to the vet before she even said the word. Do you believe people and animals can have such a connection? If so, how do they read us so well?
4. Why do you think Dewey became so famous?
5. What does this book say about small town life? Has it changed your opinion of towns like Spencer, Iowa?
6. How much of an impact do you think Dewey had on Spencer? Do you believe he affected the town? If so, how?

- 7.** At the beginning of the book, Spencer is going through hard times because of a collapse in land/housing values. Do you see parallels to our current economic situation? Are there lessons to be learned from this town?
- 8.** Do you agree with Vicki that it was wise for the town of Spencer to vote against the jobs and incomes that a slaughterhouse and a casino would have provided? What about the decision to embrace big national stores like Wal-mart?
- 9.** Vicki Myron says: "In our society, people believe you have to do something to be recognized, by which we mean something in your face, and preferably caught on camera." Do you agree? Is this a good or bad thing? What about Vicki's belief that Dewey was special precisely because he wasn't like that?
- 10.** Some people think Vicki Myron should not have included so many details of her life in the book. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- 11.** How do you think the circumstances of Vicki's life affected her relationship with Dewey? How do you think the circumstances of Dewey's life, particularly his night in the book drop box, affected his relationship with Vicki?
- 12.** What did you think of the library board's desire for Dewey to retire to Vicki's house to live out the last months of his life?

Author Biography

I was born in Spencer and grew up on a farm south of Moneta, Iowa, a town that no longer exists. I graduated from Hartley Iowa High School and moved to Mankato, Minnesota where I worked, married, had a daughter and went to college. I have a bachelor's degree from Mankato State and a master's from Emporia State University, Emporia, Kansas. In 1982, I returned to Spencer, Iowa to begin working at the public library. In 1987, I was named Director of Spencer Public Library and I served in that position for 25 years. I retired in 2007 to write this book. I currently reside in Spencer.

I love George Orwell, Frederick Feikema, and the Harry Potter series for fiction. I read all of Torey Hayden's books about abused children and many other non-fiction writers. I rarely read fiction these days unless it is a truly special book.

LJ Talks to Dewey Author Vicki Myron

Jeff Ayers -- Library Journal, 09/16/2008

When Dewey Readmore Books, an orange tabby who had charmed librarians and patrons for 19 years at the Spencer Public Library in Spencer, Iowa, died in 2006, his obituary ran in over 250 newspapers, including *The New York Times*. A year later Dewey made headlines again when Grand Central Publishing paid \$1.2 million to then-Spencer Public Library director Vicki Myron and co-author Bret Witter for the rights to the cat's life story. Pubbing September 24, *Dewey: The Small Town Library Cat Who Touched the World* has already garnered strong reviews, including a starred one in *LJ* (7/08). Could this be the next *Marley & Me*? Seattle Public's Jeff Ayers caught up with Myron.

How did Dewey come into your life?

I found Dewey as a small frozen kitten in our book drop on January 18, 1988. It was a bitterly cold Monday morning, and he was piled in with all the books. I pulled him out, bathed him to get him warm, and fell in love. He was the perfect addition to my plans to make the library warm and friendly.



What inspired you to write a book about Dewey?

I knew he had a story to tell all along. After his death, I was approached by three agents. I picked the best one, and the rest is history. Dewey's story is timeless: a tale of survival and triumph over adversity. I wanted both his fans and those who never knew him to be inspired and love him as I did.

Why do you think other libraries around the country have adopted cats?

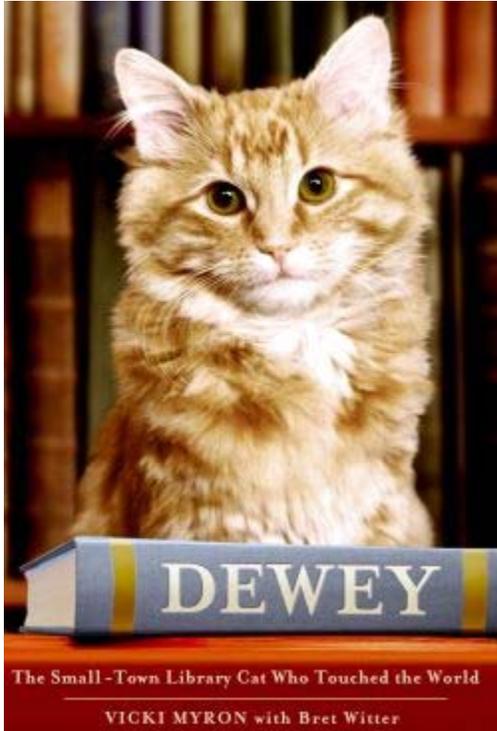
Felines were originally used to control rats, but books and cats seem to fit so well together. It brings back the coziness of curling up with a good book or visiting a place that values the community and makes you feel warm.

The book is not only about Dewey's life but also yours. Did you find it difficult to discuss such personal matters as the loss of your family farm and a breast cancer scare?

Actually I didn't find it too hard once I realized where the book was leading. It was not what I expected but it was the true story that needed to be told.

What was life like running a library in a small town like Spencer?

In a small town, everyone knows you and the politics are heavy, but I thrived in Spencer because I loved the community and the library. I had the best job in the world. I did everything in such a small library so I got to wear a different hat every day: graphic design, budgeting, cataloging, customer service, long-range planning, writing my newspaper column. It was always varied and never boring. I also had connections with many other agencies in town and loved working with different groups. Speaking to civic groups and telling the library's story was always a delight and talking about Dewey or greeting his visitors was the icing on the cake.



What has been the reaction of the library staff and townspeople to the book?

Library staff and patrons are very excited and happy for me. Those who have read the ARC love it so far.

Do you plan to do any library-related programs for this book?

I am doing events at the Spencer Public Library, a big reception and signings at the Iowa Library Association (ILA)'s annual convention October 15-17, where I will also donate all proceeds from the signings to the ILA Foundation, as well as another signing at the Spirit Lake Public Library, IA.

Are you donating any of the money you received from the book back to the library system?

I have always planned to give some of the money back to the Spencer Library since it gave so much to me and to Dewey. That was my first thought when the book sold. The amount will depend on sales.

And how did it feel when you found out how much Grand Central Publishing offered for your book?

It was mind-blowing. I never expected it, but I should have known that Dewey's magic was still working. Of course, I don't get all of the money—I have a coauthor, an agent, lawyers. But it is still a good deal of money. I feel like Dewey is still taking care of me.

What are your plans now that you have finished the book and are retired from the library?

I don't feel retired. I am working harder than ever on all the book stuff, planning for a movie of the book, and thinking about a series of children's books based on Dewey's adventures. We are also talking Dewey merchandise, so my life is full and busy.