



## Exploring Struggle and Achievement in Judy Blume's Deenie

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### Abstract:

Regardless of a person's age or gender, they will inevitably face obstacles in life. In her book Deenie, acclaimed author Judy Blume tells the story of a girl who is thirteen years old when she faces tremendous hardships that she never saw coming. Deenie faces new challenges after learning she has scoliosis, and her mother's dreams of having her become a model are dashed. Overwhelmed by the agony of her ongoing illness while also juggling her mother's strong ambition to shape her into an idealized role model. Judy Blume gives the teenager Deenie an unbreakable will to succeed, yet the only way out of Deenie's jam is for her to be tough and keep going no matter what.

**Keywords:** challenges, courage, disease, psychology, struggles, success, teenagers

تحليل لمظاهر الصراع وتحقيق الذات في رواية ديني لجودي بلوم

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### المخلص

بغض النظر عن عمر الإنسان أو جنسه، لا بد له أن يواجه عقبات في حياته. في روايتها ديني، تسرد الكاتبة المرموقة جودي بلوم قصة فتاة تبلغ من العمر ثلاثة عشر عامًا، تواجه محناً شديدة لم تكن تتوقعها. تبدأ التحديات الجديدة حين تكتشف ديني إصابتها بانحناء العمود الفقري (الجنف)، مما يؤدي إلى انهيار أحلام والدتها التي كانت تطمح لأن تصبح ابنتها عارضة أزياء. وبينما تتألم من مرضها المزمن، تجد نفسها مضطرة للتعامل مع طموحات والدتها المفرطة في جعلها نموذجاً مثالياً. تمنح جودي بلوم بطلتها المراهقة إرادة لا تنكسر لتحقيق النجاح، مؤكدة أن السبيل الوحيد لتخطي أزمتها يتمثل في أن تكون قوية، وتستمر في المضي قدماً مهما كانت الظروف.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التحديات، الشجاعة، المرض، علم النفس، الصراعات، النجاح، المراهقون

Throughout human history, literature has served many purposes. The primary objective is to inspire via narratives that showcase courage and determination. Stories like these have a long tradition of inspiring readers to be strong and unyielding in the face of adversity, much like the protagonist in the story. The hidden hardships faced by Deenie are depicted in Judy Blume's Deenie. Despite the physical limits created by scoliosis, Deenie overcomes them with great emotional and mental strength. Judy Blume provides a role model for readers dealing with their own hardships through the portrayal of a thirteen-year-old girl who embraces her impairment



in a positive light. The story covers the characters' hardships as well as their triumph over an apparently insurmountable challenge. An additional strain on Deenie's already heavy shoulders is the expectation that she must meet her mother's lofty goals for her modeling career. Using her sufficient inner resources, she deftly overcomes her challenges. In order to show that no problem is intractable for people with the will to confront it head-on, the author portrays a young teenager in a frightening circumstance.

Even before Thelma's diagnosis of scoliosis—a spinal curvature disorder—the small girl was emotionally and physically worn out by her mother's ambitions for a successful modeling career. While Deenie felt helpless and overshadowed by her mother's aspirations, their conversations mostly revolved around modeling, a profession for which Deenie had no interest. Deenie demonstrates mental resilience, a quality often absent in most teenagers, by overcoming the psychological strains caused by her mother's ambitions and actions. A thirteen-year-old girl's resilience in the face of adversity exemplifies her determination to tackle a problem whose solution is unclear. Because of the limitations imposed by the Milwaukee Brace on her mobility, which in turn intensifies her pain and suffering, she finds herself in a scenario where leading a normal life is actually an illusion. The underlying psychological illnesses severely limit Deenie's ability to lead a life typical of her peers, even though her problems appear to stem from scoliosis. Circumstances beyond her control have cast a shadow over Deenie, causing her mental and physical suffering. So, it's clear that Deenie shows determination and a strong mindset when faced with challenges. She shows signs of empathy, but it's important to remember that she's still a teenager who isn't quite ready to handle life's obstacles on her own. How did she manage to maintain such remarkable mental strength? Mental toughness is a key notion that will help us accomplish this. The best way to describe it,

Mental toughness (MT) has been studied as an important individual difference factor that allows individuals to deal effectively with challenges and to persist under pressure. It is an umbrella term that entails positive psychological resources, which are important across a range of achievement contexts (Clough et al., 2002).

Furthermore,

it does not only reflect an effective coping mechanism as reaction to stressors (e.g., reappraising stressful situations as opportunities for self-development) but also allows individuals to proactively seek out opportunities for personal growth due to high levels of confidence in one's abilities (St Clair-Thompson et al., 2015).



So, it's obvious that a number of variables are at work all at once. Because Deenie lacked the cognitive maturity to understand the complexities of awareness, all of it worked behind the scenes for her.

So, Deenie's obstacles are completely deliberate and subliminal. The point of getting into a fight is to accomplish something that seems impossible to do. There would be no conflict if something were not real. At the age of thirteen, Deenie felt completely aimless. She had no idea that happiness is the ultimate goal of whatever you do. Judy Blume expertly portrays Deenie's tenacity by highlighting her unwavering will in the face of overwhelming adversity, without ever revealing any trace of mental or emotional fragility. She was in much more pain because she was terrified she wouldn't be able to live up to her mother's expectations.

Interestingly, she is unfazed by the idea of enduring four years of wearing the Milwaukee Brace to rectify her spine curvature. This proves without a reasonable doubt that psychological terror is far more terrifying than physical pain. She wants to live a carefree life, but she can't shake the constant worry that she hasn't accomplished her mother's dreams. Though she loves Deenie with all her heart, Thelma has unrealistic expectations for the adolescent, and she has no idea how much pain and suffering she is creating. There needs to be a thorough examination from all angles because the challenges faced by Deenie are substantial. A response is required before proceeding with discussion of a basic question. How did Judy Blume come up with the idea to write about adolescent characters who encounter unforeseen difficulties? There are a variety of possible responses to that pertinent inquiry. Examining the story more closely reveals that Judy Blume has crafted it to inspire readers to be resilient and hopeful. The message for young adults is to have the same level of dedication as the protagonist and not let life's challenges discourage them. Also, young people are better able to handle difficult events and situations when they have experienced life's inherent challenges at an early age. Consequently, the young adults are self-assured and ready to tackle any challenges that come their way. A lot of parents, like Thelma, want their children to be proud of what they've accomplished and prosper in life. However, young people are put unduly pressured by such unrealistic expectations.

The facts mentioned above are illustrated by Deenie's hardships. Scoliosis not only limits Deenie's movement, but it also makes her feel alone and lowers her self-esteem. The difficulties Deenie had were exacerbated by the cumbersome Milwaukee Braces. She possesses an inherent warrior spirit that allows her to face challenges head-on. Deenie takes solace in confronting her condition, which will last for four years, with the help of her family. The importance of Deenie's strong mental nature is continually emphasized by Judy Blume. This is often emphasized throughout the story by Deenie's words



and deeds. The Milwaukee Brace, her mother's controlling behavior, the weight of her scoliosis, and her mental and psychological journey are the obstacles she faces. She shows bravery by asking the doctors about her illness in a level-headed and collected way, showing that she is determined to conquer whatever challenges the doctors may tell her about. Her level of cerebral control is very extraordinary for someone so young.

So, it's safe to say that Deenie's positive attitude set the tone for her fight, which manifested itself in her actions in response to her situation. While it's true that the love, encouragement, and warmth she felt from everyone around her helped a great deal, it's also true that each person must face their own personal issues and find the strength inside themselves to overcome them. Even as a young teenager, Deenie made up her mind to keep going no matter what and to be patient with herself and her problems.

Judy Blume has painted a picture of Deenie's life that suggests she would give in to her mother's demands and the weight of her problems. But it doesn't work out that way. Rather than causing her anxiety, going to doctor's appointments and learning how to use the Milwaukee Brace have given her the strength to overcome any obstacles. In spite of everything, she is determined to succeed. The takeaway for readers is simple: no matter what challenges you face, you can overcome them by being confident and pursuing your dreams. Deenie hoped to get well and lead a regular life again. Consequently, Deenie's mental and physical health suffer as a result of her unstable present and future. Still, she might find a silver lining in her difficulties. She takes solace in the fact that she has decided against a career in modeling because she did not love it. After Deenie got well, her mother was determined to make her a model, but Deenie started making plans to become an orthopaedic surgeon instead. The fact that Deenie is thinking about changing careers shows that she has goals for her future. In an effort to break free of her mother's expectations, she made plans for her future that were in line with her personal tastes. The inner struggle she goes through is a step toward the success she dreams of.

Deenie transitioned from perceiving herself as failed in her pursuits to acquiring newfound confidence. Consequently, it may be asserted that,

failure can turn into success solely because of the option to try again repeatedly. Determination and focus often increase after experiencing setbacks, especially when you are close to attaining your ambition. You might accomplish your goal on the second attempt or it might take several tries. Even if it feels like it's not working, consider trusting in the process of turning failure into success. It's common to learn more each time you try something, so be willing to take another chance even after experiencing failure



(How Failures Lead to Success and Lessons That Can Help You Succeed, 2023).

The complexity of the task at hand became clear to Deenie. She lacked the self-awareness to differentiate between joy and success when she was a teenager, and the two were instead synonymous. Without giving in to fear or anxiety, she confronts problems head-on thanks to her inner strength and stoicism. Deenie faces many challenges in Judy Blume's narrative, but she perseveres and, by the end, embraces her predicament with determination. Her ability to endure the test is evidence of her triumph. Her unwavering resolve and persistence showcase her strong sense of self-reliance and her desire for a full recovery from her illness. Success can be measured in many ways, and Deenie's journey to success was challenging as she battled the desire for a normal life as a thirteen-year-old girl. The need to wear the Milwaukee Brace from the time she was a teenager until she was seventeen years old severely limited her freedom of movement. Throughout adolescence, students of both sexes devote themselves fully to their studies and future careers. Even in the face of impending danger, Deenie shows courage and resolve to tackle the challenges head-on and emerge victorious.

An important part is how Deenie's struggles and successes are closely related. Adversity is a necessary condition for success. Despite the difficulties she encounters on all levels—mental, emotional, and physical—Deenie emerges stronger from the story's climax. At first, she was strong. She had an air of self-assurance and knew she could beat her illness. More than that, she seems to understand the significance of living in the here and now. Her meetings over a brief period of time sparked all of her alterations. As demonstrated by Deenie in her trials, the connection between hardship and success is based on admirable qualities of character. There was no one to help Deenie while she struggled with her mental and physical ailments; she was on her own. In the end, she had to rely on her own efforts, albeit she had friends who comforted and helped her. She required the ability to forge her own way, relying on her intuition to overcome the mental and physical challenges she faced. Her extraordinary passion and focus paid off, and the end product would delight any girl of thirteen years old.

The relationship between difficulty and achievement hinges on an individual's determination to attain their objectives. To expound upon it further,

According to Expectancy Theory, which has now been supported by dozens of studies, motivation is the product of a) how much you personally value your goal, and b) how high your belief is that you can realistically achieve your goals. The first part of the motivation equation is something that is highly individualized, and thus requires a good amount of self awareness. This is where





mindfulness — the practice of developing a non-judgemental awareness of the present moment — may come into play (Hanson, 2023).

That finding indicates that motivation and mindfulness are the two fundamental elements of an individual's character that enable the shift from adversity to achievement. Deenie possessed them, and they had an intrinsic presence in her awareness. Ultimately, she met the expectations of her demanding role, exhibiting significant mental and emotional resilience that empowered her to face her fears and doubts, which could have otherwise incapacitated and disheartened her.

Judy Blume has written a piece that urges readers to contemplate their inherent talents and how they may utilize them when faced with situations similar to Deenie's or unforeseen problems that emerge unexpectedly. Judy Blume authentically depicts Deenie's journey from hardship to success, presenting the thirteen-year-old protagonist with various challenges while finally enabling her to overcome each one. The message is clear - no situation is insurmountable. This is further emphasized as Deenie contends with her internal struggles and external obstacles while also bearing the additional burden of her mother's aspiration for her to achieve success as a model.

Deenie is hesitant to embark on a modeling career yet is reluctant to disappoint her mother, which compels her to attend auditions at modeling agencies against her wishes. Deenie's readiness to adhere to her mother's desires and achieve her ambitions demonstrates a character trait that may also be seen favorably. Deenie conveyed her appreciation to her mother for her numerous sacrifices, while concurrently striving to reciprocate by following her mother's ideals. Nonetheless, that was an implicit subconscious notion. She has the option to reject the audition; nonetheless, she chose to acquiesce to her mother's desires, as she instinctively understood the importance of satisfying her mother and felt unable of disappointing Thelma after witnessing her efforts to obtain a modeling contract. As a result, Deenie encountered an ethical and moral quandary with her mother. Nonetheless, she sacrifices her own happiness to satisfy her mother's wishes. This is yet another sign of the struggle she had to undergo. From the perspective of a thirteen-year-old's dilemmas, Deenie, as a novel, unveils numerous obstacles that she overcomes through her intrinsic resilience. These trials were designed to evoke her bravery, nurture her positive disposition, and sustain her poise in situations beyond her influence.

Her endeavors were also introspective - to evolve into a warrior driven to face the adversities presented by her situation, notwithstanding her inexperience. Moreover, she was ambivalent on her prospects for success. Deenie had to adjust to circumstances with a demeanor of significant vigor and



positivity. Subsequently, she transforms into a more self-assured individual who adeptly understands her situation, thereby finding calm and a renewed desire to embrace life once again. Furthermore, she prevails in her adversities and extracts insights from them. Her endeavor to revert to her former life prior to the barrage of adversities highlights her resolve and fervor for life as a changed individual. It signifies a revival of Deenie, who is astonished by the arduous obstacles she confronted. By doing so, she achieves victory over obstacles that, in hindsight, seem like hidden benefits. Ultimately, Deenie's success resides in her evolution into a more resilient individual than ever before. Judy Blume has defined success in a distinctive and precise manner that includes accomplishments in both psychological and physical realms. Accomplishment,

is a combination of passion and perseverance in an effort to achieve long-term goals. The concept of grit says that without passion, one who perseveres in something has more chance of dealing with burnout. Possessing both passion and perseverance provides people a mental toughness that enables them to persist and succeed in the face of adversity (The Psychology Behind Success, 2023).

According to that definition, Deenie already possessed certain traits and needed a catalyst to actualize them. Scoliosis acted as a catalyst for her, compelling her to examine her character and utilize the requisite energy to overcome her problems and achieve substantial achievement. Judy Blume has encouraged readers to trust in themselves and their innate capabilities. Deenie, at thirteen, exemplifies the author's compelling assertion that age does not hinder one's capacity to overcome obstacles. Deenie exemplifies the courage of young adults who have overcome personal adversities, experiences that largely remain undisclosed to others.

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