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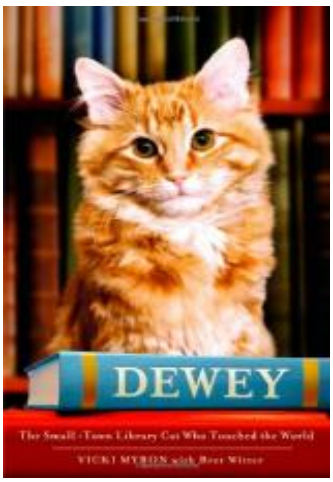
Dewey: The Small-Town Library Cat Who Touched the World

by Vicki Myron and Bret Witter



About the Book

How much of an impact can an animal have? How many lives can one cat touch? How is it possible for an abandoned kitten to transform a small library, save a classic American town, and eventually become famous around the world? You can't even begin to answer those questions until you hear the charming story of Dewey Readmore Books, the beloved library cat of Spencer, Iowa.

Dewey's story starts in the worst possible way. Only a few weeks old, on the coldest night of the year, he was stuffed into the returned book slot at the Spencer Public Library. He was found the next morning by library director, Vicki Myron, a single mother who had survived the loss of her family farm, a breast cancer scare, and an alcoholic husband. Dewey won her heart, and the hearts of the staff, by pulling himself up and hobbling on frostbitten feet to nudge each of them in a gesture of thanks and love. For the next nineteen years, he never stopped charming the people of Spencer with his enthusiasm, warmth, humility, (for a cat) and, above all, his sixth sense about who needed him most.

As his fame grew from town to town, then state to state, and finally, amazingly, worldwide, Dewey became more than just a friend; he became a source of pride for an extraordinary Heartland farming town pulling its way slowly back from the greatest crisis in its long history.

Discussion Guide

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 Bio

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 and ½ 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.

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