

HIEROGLYPHICS

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Plot Summary

Mary, a girl from Drumchapel, struggles through school with **undiagnosed dyslexia**. Words to her are "birlin and dancin roond like big black spiders," making reading terrifying and impossible. Teachers call her "lazy," classmates avoid her, and even her mother sees her as "daft." Eventually, Mary finds a way to communicate through **Egyptian-style pictograms** ("hieroglyphics"), gaining confidence and a sense of identity.

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Themes

Misunderstanding & Education

- School system mislabels Mary because they don't recognise dyslexia.
- Teachers "make her look stupid" instead of helping.

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Isolation

- She is left out socially (dance without a partner).
- Even her mother misunderstands her struggles.

Identity & Expression

- Hieroglyphics give Mary a voice when words fail.

Sympathy & Empathy

- Scots narrative helps readers "hear" her voice.

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Key Character: Mary

- Sensitive, humorous, bright in non-academic ways.
 - Strong imaginative voice; determined despite ridicule.
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Symbols

- **Spiders (letters):** fear, confusion, chaos.
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 - **Hieroglyphics:** self-expression, empowerment.
 - **Grey surroundings:** monotony and sadness of her school experience.
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Key Quotations

- "birlin and dancin roond like big black spiders"
 - "She's lazy, ye mean."
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