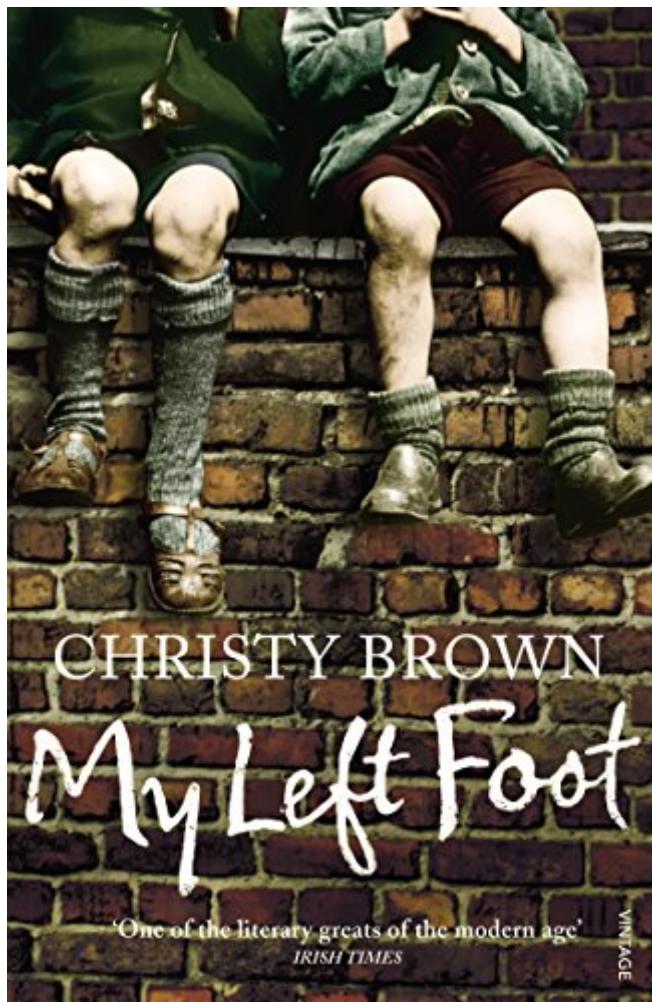


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# My Left Foot



## **Synopsis**

Christy Brown was born a victim of cerebral palsy. But the hapless, lolling baby concealed the brilliantly imaginative and sensitive mind of a writer who would take his place among the giants of Irish literature. This is Christy Brown's own story. He recounts his childhood struggle to learn to read, write, paint and finally type, with the toe of his left foot. In this manner he wrote his bestseller *Down all the Days*.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Could you live with only being able to control your left foot? Could you tolerate feeling as though you were a prisoner in your own body? In *My Left Foot*, Christie Brown paints a vivid picture of his challenging and incredible life. The author's writing style clearly demonstrates his experiences moving through life with the crippling effects of cerebral palsy. Readers who have no experience with this devastating disease will particularly benefit from the account of Mr. Brown's life, and will be taken on an emotional journey they won't forget. Upon finishing this book, it is apparent Mr. Brown

accomplished his goal of showing the reader the challenges of living with a severe impairment. When I read the last page, I was moved, inspired, and thankful for having had the opportunity to read this enlightening book. Brown effectively shares his struggles of living with cerebral palsy throughout the book. In the introductory chapter, he describes his home life: being number ten of twenty-two children in the family. Because of his difficult birth and obvious affliction, his parents chose not to name him, in what seemed like an effort to not get attached to him. As he aged, doctors said there was no hope for improvement, as he had not met any developmental milestones or shown any sign of intelligence. This outward appearance, of intellectual vacuity, was not representative of what was going on inside Christie. He was effectively locked in. But inactive silence would not be his fate. At five years, to the shock of his family, he painstakingly picked up chalk with his left foot and wrote the letter A: "Then I looked up and became aware that everyone had stopped talking and were staring at me silently. Nobody stirred." As the book progresses, Brown tells his story through chronological order, grouping chapters with the ages he was. Chapter 2 describes his life when he was 6 and 7 years old, when he was able to sit up and crawl. By Chapter 3, he is 7, and can sit up without support, but cannot feel himself. He describes these as his best years, where he has good friends, respect, and acceptance for who he is. Although his family doesn't have much money, he is happy and considers his childhood a good one. By Chapter 4, Brown is growing into an older boy, and begins to notice people look at him strangely. He cannot walk, speak, dress or feed himself independently. He realizes he is helpless. This discovery morphs into a self-hatred. However, he eventually develops a hobby: painting. His freedom of artistic expression allows him to rise above his depression. "I was fascinated by the little solid blocks of paint blue, red, yellow, green and white. Later in the day I sat and watched Paddy as he tried to make some impression with the paints on a piece of white cardboard" but he only made a mess and in a queer way I felt annoyed with him and a bit jealous. By Chapter 7, as a 13-15 year old teenager, he is painting everything. Although he doesn't leave the house, he is preoccupied with his neighbor Jenny and develops a crush on her. However, when she looks at him with pity, his feelings for her change. He realizes that she never liked him in return; she only spent time with him because she pitied him. He finds her pity to be insulting and it crushes him emotionally, as his hopes for "normalcy" are ruined. In his later teenage years, Brown falls into a depression again due to his "narrow existence." He is lonely and restless. Painting no longer stirs his soul. He longs for

freedom. He wants to be ordinary. His new passion is to write stories, but he continues to wrestle with loneliness. He feels his life is God's practical joke on him. In his adult years, he is crushed when his hopes that a new treatment that might cure cerebral palsy are quickly squashed. When he meets and communicates with Sheila through writing, his hope is renewed, he now has a purpose for living. In writing, he discovers that he'd like to pen his autobiography hence, *My Left Foot* is born. He finds solace in music, writing, and in a new clinic which helps him to tackle new breathing techniques, improving one's pride, and not focusing on pity. He is very happy with the tremendous results he receives through speech therapy at the clinic, as he is now able to speak with more clarity. The book ends on a high note, with Brown having hope for the future and accepting who he is. The book was a great read overall; however, the pacing near the middle was a little slow. In his later teenage and adult years, my attention wandered a bit, as I was eager to move forward with the storyline. For some readers, the description of his depression in his later teenage years might seem repetitive of the depression he faced earlier in his life, but to leave it out, would be a dishonest reflection of his journey. Despite these shortcomings, the book teaches a lot, not just about cerebral palsy, but its affects individuals and their families as well. It is difficult to imagine what it would be like to live with this crippling condition, but Christie Brown successfully opened my eyes and I was inspired by his tenacity to find his purpose and his triumph over adversity. This book is for people who love stories about the underdog who overcomes seemingly impossible odds, while learning to love themselves regardless of the hand life dealt them. I found myself emotionally involved with Brown's story, rooting for him and hoping that he would find joy and peace. His story is certainly inspirational, and it reminds me to be thankful for what I take for granted: the freedom to easily move and speak.

This story is certainly an inspiration for someone handicapped/disabled, and there are many varieties of both. Attitude houses determination, and even in a child's world, the story of the 'little engine that could' supports a reflective determination as well. This book, I feel, was written from the heart. A story of fact that needed to be written, thus shared. Courage such as this, to be, to do, should be shared. For example my son at age 52 had a massive stroke, and less than 12 hours after life saving treatment began my son's Doctor's strongly began implying he would be a vegetable if he lived, and the issue of the 'plug' being 'pulled' was presented to his family. The family highly disagreed with discontinuing treatment, thus life saving treatment was to continue. As a child he was highly allergic to many things both food and environmental. As he was limited to many foods and activities, he doted on midgit football and wanted to play despite requiring a variety of medications

and nebulizers to do so. With this determination both the medical team and family saw this little tyke scraping with the 'hale and hearty's'...This same little tyke the medical teams and family was reintroduced to possesses this same determination...'I want to live life'. Ten months later he went home. He has been put into an intensive rehab program, and the 'dead right leg + 2 surgeries on ankle and foot' has him walking with a leg brace without any other aids. His right arm also seemingly dead is being fed by a pouch inserted in his side and feeling is being recognized. His speech is improving as well as his short term memory. Predominately he dresses himself, shaves, showers and has been signing his name, left handed, to checks and other things for the past 2 years. His Neurologist that attended him in the ER that fateful day continues to seek him out and follow his progress in awe that this young man has lived in spite of it all and being a productive, Father (G'father as he and his wife are rearing 2 grandchildren, the 3rd grandchild age 8 passed away from side effects of a birth defect in 2014,) and a devoted husband. Faith, prayer and determination well garnished with love can overcome many obstacles. Thus, encouragement, such as this book, generates the courage to seek this determination and rational of, 'if I don't try how would I ever know if I can or can't?', has then introduced many of the 'I can'ts to instill the 'I think I can' into their everyday need and prayer, for they too can potentially join the ranks of the "I know I can's".The book is well written for the author avails himself as if sitting down with you discussing many of the same fears, defeats, successes, inconsiderations shown the handicapped, to name but a few of the mountains he had to climb and how they were overcome by his determination, faith and an amazing endurance. I have shared this book with many who are either facing or have family or friends having a similar situation and are needing this type of proven courage and determination.

It came quickly and in good shape. I was disappointed in the book. I had already read the other Christy Brown book and it didn't have much new information. It is interesting overall, but if you read one book you really don't need to read the other one. Between the two I would recommend this because it has more information on his marriage and end of his life.

My daughter has cerebral palsy. She is just five years old and has been in therapy since she was 6 months old. I loved this story from an inside view. People see individuals in wheelchairs differently, sometimes dumb. That's simply not true, and this book is proof of just that.

I watched the movie first. Then I read the book, to know more about how the character think. I like to way he would not just treat himself cripple and do nothing. It is a very encouraging story, very

suitable to be read by modern people, to let them know that even cripple can do a lot of things.

This book had me in tears and laughter. It's an amazing insight into a life I could never truly understand.

One of the most inspiring books I've ever read. It vanquishes any problems I could possibly have.

Interesting book

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