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Walk Two Moons, Sharon Creech

Sharon Creech:

Don't judge a man until you've walked two moons in his moccasins. This is the advice given to Salamanca Tree Hiddle when she was dealing with the disappearance of her mother, and this is the advice I've taken for myself to help me get over my mother's abandonment. When I first read *Walk Two Moons*, I understood that Sal's mother had simply left her to start a new life, and so I felt intense anger towards the girl because she insisted on traveling from Ohio to Idaho just to bring her mother back. I simply could not comprehend why a young girl would want to go to such great lengths to bring back a woman whom she knew would never return. In the midst of reading I realized that I was judging Salamanca too harshly. My own mother abandoned me before I was even seven years old. The only reason I remember her as much as I do is because she was indecisive as to whether or not I should be a part of her life, and as a result constantly appeared and disappeared from my life for the next few years.

Walk Two Moons has affected me like no other book has. When I read it, I became one with Salamanca; I lived her joy and I felt her pain. I cried for the first time while ever reading a book when I realized that her mother had been dead all along and I fumed with rage when I thought about Sal dragging her grandparents on a multi-state trip that was doomed from the start. Once again, however, it dawned on me that I was judging Sal without completely understanding her situation. The trip to her mother's grave was necessary for Sal to move on with her life; she had to see for herself that her mother was not coming back.

Once I finished reading, I began to think of this book in terms of my own life; I realized that I needed some sort of closure from my mother so I could advance in life as well. For too long I bore a heavy heart full of anger and bitterness. I resented my mother for leaving me like she did and refused her even the slightest chance of redemption. When she called I never spoke with her, when she sent something I simply threw it away. I was quick to judge her, but not quick enough to judge myself. It was easy for me to find fault with her because she had found it easy to move on with her life; she completely wiped out my existence and replaced me with a new husband and a new child—the boy she always wanted.

Regardless of whether or not Salamanca is based on a real person, she helped me see that if a young girl could easily forgive someone and not judge them based on their actions, then I should be able to do so as well. We don't speak of her in my

house, but on the rare occasions that we do, I instinctively fill with rage and fury. It takes a while before I calm down and am able to think clearly about everything she has done, but once I do, I try to be lenient. I don't know my mother's life and I honestly don't think I ever will but I try to understand what it must have been like for her to helplessly watch her life go by. What my mother did was both wrong and hurtful; her actions have left their mark on me and they will not disappear anytime soon. I find it tremendously difficult to let people get close to me because I fear they will abandon me as well. But even if I do allow people access to both my mind and to my heart I eventually push them away because I still have that fear of being deserted.

In a way I know that my mother made me the insecure person I am today. I try not to blame her, however, because I know that when she made her decisions she did not have this end in mind. Everyone wants to live the life they want and occasionally people get hurt. Your story helped me to overcome some of the issues I still struggled with as a result of my mother's abandonment. I know now that I can blame neither her nor myself for all that has happened in both our lives but I can make a change for the better. Letting go of the past is the key for a more contented future and wallowing in the past and all its sorrows will only hinder you from progressing. No one is in any position to pass judgment on another person; doing so does nothing but makes others want to judge you. Salamanca was clever enough to realize this and because she deeply affected my way of thinking, so was I. Perhaps the many other readers of *Walk Two Moons* will realize that they should never judge a man before they have walked two moons in his moccasins.

Sincerely,
Vanessa Vasquez

My name is Vanessa Vasquez and I am seventeen years old. Being the middle child in a family with five children, I often find the need to escape from the everyday squabbles I wage with my siblings. The method that has thus far worked best for me is reading. For me, books are the portal to worlds otherwise unimaginable, but they also serve to teach me life lessons. The most important lesson that I have learned so far is that it is my duty to help others. I have taken this lesson to heart and hope that with my entire future before me, I will make a difference in the lives of others.