

“ I remember thinking that I would never learn how to read, but Bookshare put me in my own world, and I found out that this is how everybody feels when they read. ”

—EMERY LOWER, SIXTH GRADE STUDENT



CHALLENGE

Emery is a sixth grade student from Garland, Texas. When she was younger, she thought she would never learn how to read. “I remember getting so angry at myself because I would read something and not have any idea what it meant. Other kids were reading stories, and I thought, maybe I’m just not good enough,” said Emery. “It’s painful to watch that frustration in your child. There were tears, crying, yelling, and laying her head on the table,” said Mac, Emery’s father.

SOLUTION

When Emery was seven years old, her parents took her to the Texas Scottish Rite Hospital, a pediatric hospital specializing in learning disorders, to be evaluated. She was diagnosed with dyslexia, and the staff gave her information about special education law, 504 plans, and a free Bookshare account. Bookshare, a Benetech initiative, is the world’s largest library of accessible ebooks. Emery uses a reading app that highlights the words as she listens to the narration, which taught her how to track sentences and decode words. Emery customizes her reading experience by adjusting the font size, colors, highlighting, voices, and narration speed.

IMPACT

Bookshare has literally changed Emery’s life. With the support of her family and dyslexia resources like Bookshare, Emery’s reading and school experience improved significantly. It taught her brain how to track words and read coherently and fluidly. She realized that there are stories behind strings of words. Emery has scored at a master reading level every year she has taken the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR). It helped her build so much confidence in herself that she entered a school contest called Ready Writing, sponsored by the University Interscholastic League, for the first time. Students are given two hours to write an essay based on one of two prompts. Emery’s story was about her special brain, and it was commended by the judges. Writing that story was a hundred and eighty degrees from where she was before her diagnosis. “She loves to read, and that cannot be attributed to anything but Bookshare,” says Brandy, Emery’s mom.

Watch the video with Emery’s story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7GurO03VIQ>

Benetech is a nonprofit that empowers communities through software for social good. Our work transforms how people with disabilities read and learn, makes it safer for human rights defenders to pursue truth and justice, and connects people to the services they need to live and prosper. We’re constantly pursuing the next big social impact.