

Movie Review: My left foot

Shari N Allen, PharmD, BCPP¹

Mebanga Ojong, PharmD Candidate 2014²

¹Assistant Professor of Pharmacy Practice, Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, School of Pharmacy

²Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine School of Pharmacy

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STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

“[My Left Foot](#)” is a true story based on the life of Irish painter, poet and author Christy Brown. The story is told from his perspective through flashbacks. His perspective is a first person perspective which allows the audience to get an in depth account of what life is like through the eyes of someone with a disability.

Christy Brown was born with cerebral palsy on June 5th 1932 in Dublin, Ireland to a large poor Irish family. His condition made him crippled and inaudible; his only vocal ability was speaking in rasping sounds. And so for the first 10 years of his life, Christy was misdiagnosed as being mentally disabled. His mother seemed to be the only one who believed that her son was able to understand and comprehend what’s going on around him.

In his earlier childhood, Christy struggled to communicate with his family. This struggle is illustrated when Christy is watching his older brothers trying to complete their math homework. Christy attempts to use his left foot to aid his brothers by answering the math questions. His family interprets his writing on the chalkboard as scribbles. This angers his father and he abruptly removes the chalk from his left foot and instructs his mother and siblings not to fill Christy’s head with false hope.

Around the age of 10, while his brothers are working on math problems, Christy used his left foot to write out the word mother. This caused his family to be overjoyed and to realize that Christy is not mentally disabled. Christy began to paint and write to express his emotions. As he aged, Christy started to realize that he was not like the rest of the family especially his brothers. This realization caused Christy to become an introvert and isolate himself despite his brothers’ every effort to include him in their everyday activities. To show their support, in one scene, Christy is seen playing the goalie in a soccer game as well as participating in a game of “spin the bottle”. However

the feeling of being isolated seemed to be worsened by rejection in the scene when after receiving a kiss from one of the ladies during the game of “spin the bottle”, Christy gets a crush. He drew the lady a picture and wrote her a love letter. However the love letter/picture was returned to Christy. This caused him to become deeply saddened and leads him to consider committing suicide. In order to cope with being handicapped, being different from the rest of the family and the rejection, Christy starts to drink heavily. Like many other psychiatric patients or patients with disabilities, Christy self-medicated with alcohol to try and cope with his feeling of despair and depression.

Later in his teenage years, Christy was introduced to Dr. Eileen Cole, a physician who specialized in children with cerebral palsy. Dr. Cole provided Christy with speech therapy. This allowed Christy to improve his speech and be able to better communicate with others. Dr. Cole saw the special talent in his paintings and set Christy up with a gallery. This paved the way for Christy to become the painter and author he is famously known for today. The movie ends with Christy finding love with one of the nurses that cared for him.

FACULTY PERSPECTIVE

My Left Foot is an autobiography, made into a movie chronicling the life of author, poet, and painter Christy Brown. The movie switches back and forth between Christy’s adult life and his life growing up. From the surface, My Left Foot, is strictly about how Christy Brown adapted to life with cerebral palsy, and how he used his left foot in order to do some of the activities that we may take for granted. My Left Foot touches on more than Christy’s congenital disorder. It touches on topics that are common to us all such as parental relationships, alcoholism, acceptance, depression, and love.

Christy Brown was born in Dublin, Ireland to a large working class family. While you may think that most

parents would be overjoyed at the birth of their child, it is evident that Christy Brown's father may feel otherwise. Christy was born with cerebral palsy, leaving him with only control over his left foot. Growing up Christy was somewhat of an outsider to his family and friends. Christy ate and sat on the floor while watching his siblings and parents have meals at the family dinner table. Christy did not receive much formal training in school. Instead he watched, from the floor, his siblings do their schoolwork. Christy is trapped in his own body. He is intelligent and talented but because of his deformity he also overlooked. Christy's father in particular does not see the potential that Christy has. He sees him as a burden. Throughout the movie it becomes clear that Mr. Brown may have issues with himself. He was laid off from work and not able to provide like he would want to for his family. Mr. Brown results to drinking alcohol and taking his anger out on not only Christy but all of his children. When Christy was younger he was unable to speak very well but through his actions the viewer is able to see that Christy despises his father. It was Christy's mother who was his biggest supporter.

Throughout Christy's childhood and adolescence he wants to be accepted like most people do. He wants to experience love like his brothers. He wants others to accept him. At one point Christy attempts suicide. While Christy does learn to use his left foot out of necessity, if given the opportunity Christy would like to live a "normal" life. In his teenage years Christy meets Dr. Eileen Cole who specializes in cerebral palsy. Dr. Cole sees the potential in Christy. She encourages his painting, teaches him how to speak and control his muscles. After working closely with Dr. Cole in Christy's late teen years and early twenties, he realizes that he loves Dr. Cole. This feeling is not reciprocated by Dr. Cole and Christy once again feels rejected.

Like his father Christy also had a frequent craving for alcohol and also like his father Christy had issues with himself. This would be compensated by his attitude towards others. Upon first meeting Christy he was not very kind and was quick to anger, like father like son. Christy did go on to become a successful author, poet, and painter and he did eventually find love. By the end of the movie the viewer is able to see that Christy Brown is just as normal and you and I.

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