



# The Stones Applaud: How Cystic Fibrosis Shaped My Childhood

*Teresa Anne Mullin*

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Teresa Mullin was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis at four years of age, but it was not until she was nine that she learned most children with the disease were not expected to live to adulthood. What had been a nuisance soon became a force that molded her childhood, youth, and future. In *The Stones Applaud*, Mullin writes of absences from school, serving as a poster child, frequent hospitalizations, medical treatments, and most painful the isolation that came with cystic fibrosis, an inherited condition that damages the lungs and affects the digestive system. With dry humor and sharp insights, Mullin describes her battles with the disease, teachers, fellow students, and even medical professionals who tried to hold her back from experiencing life. Alternately funny, frank, poignant, and gripping, *The Stones Applaud* reveals the talented young writer's fierce determination to live, thrive, and persevere. Whether writing about the joy of being accepted to prep school and Harvard University, the tragedies of others deaths, or the pain of a broken friendship, Mullin never resorts to sentimentality or courts pity. The result is a powerful self-portrait of a young woman who bravely faced death while living life, who fought for every breath and every experience, and who challenges others to carry on the fight for dignity and independence for those with chronic illness. Before she died, Mullin visited Ireland and witnessed cold Atlantic waves beat against the cliffs. Inevitably, the cliffs will not withstand the unrelenting waves, but still they persevere and only the stones applaud. Mullin selected that metaphor from a poem by Gerald Dawe as the title of her memoir. She saw herself and others impacted by cystic fibrosis as the stone cliffs, standing resolute and strong in the face of a battle they suspect they will never win.

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