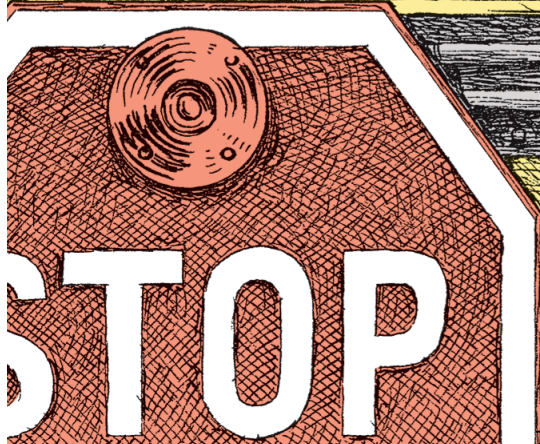
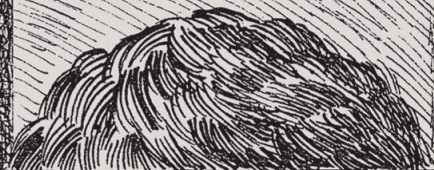


# PAUL <sup>AND</sup> HIS BEAST

Find me inside  
the Beast.  
I am the soul.



Sarah Stup

# **Praise for Sarah Stup's writings**

*"I will never fully understand autism,  
regardless of how much I read and how much  
I want to know. But Sarah Stup has gotten me  
as close as I have ever come."*

Donald N. Cardinal, Ph.D.  
Dean, School of Education  
Chapman University

*"Sarah helps us see autism as  
sometimes impossible, sometimes beautiful,  
and always complex."*

Paula Kluth, Ph.D.,  
Consultant, Teacher, Author  
Advocate, and Independent Scholar

*"Sarah's writings reach beyond autism to all of us  
and our shared human desire to belong."*

Aaron Stephens, Deputy Director  
The Arc of Frederick County  
Maryland



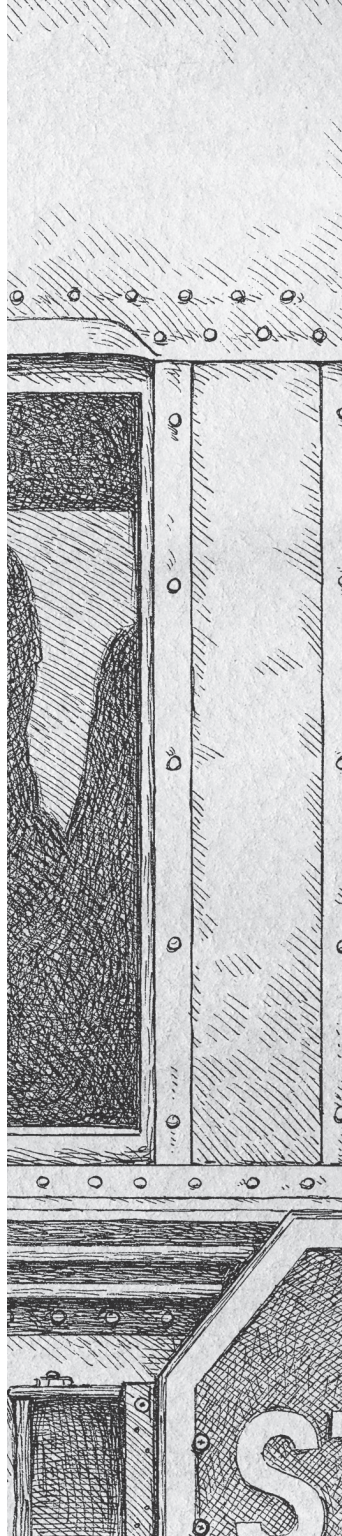
## Why this book is important

- **Draws readers into the world of autism** — a world best described by Sarah Stup, a writer with autism — so they can better understand how people with autism experience the world and why they act and react the way they do.
- **Bridges the gap** of misunderstanding and fear that exists between young people with and without autism. Disability bullying is rampant, particularly within this age group. Indeed, those with disabilities are three times more likely to be victims of bullying than their nondisabled peers.
- **Breaks the mold!** According to a study in the journal of “Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities,” characters with disabilities in young people’s books tend to be supporting players only; they are used to boost the emotional growth of major characters while they themselves go unchanged.
- **Includes a “Reader’s Guide”** to spur conversation about new approaches to community inclusion and acceptance.
- **Bonus “Common Core Standards Alignment Guide”** for teachers, along with other supplemental materials, is available as a free download at [SarahStup.com](http://SarahStup.com).

# PAUL AND HIS BEAST

by Sarah Stup

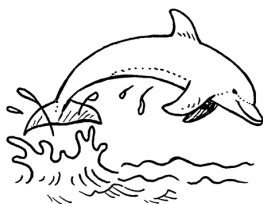
Illustrated by Laurie A. Conley







STOP



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To order copies online of *Paul and His Beast*, download the "Common Core Standards Alignment Guide" for teachers, learn about Sarah Stup and her other books, watch videos and get extras, visit SarahStup.com.

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To my parents, Darryl and Judy Stup,  
who love me and always thought I could win at life.

*Autism is part Beast and part human with people trying to tame the naughty animal. The Beast has talent but can't always put on a good show. The Beast scares you and the human is sad and lonely. Love my Beast. Beast keeps me safe. Find me inside the Beast. I am the soul.*

— Sarah Stup



## Chapter 1



# A lost puzzle piece

**V**oices flew back and forth like angry birds, echoing and vibrating in Paul Stephens' ears. The clamor hurt his whole body. Sixth graders called out their math homework answers as they tried to drown each other out. Miss Topper quickly wrote their responses on the board. Their voices garbled in Paul's ears as her marker squeaked and the clock ticked. Fluorescent lights flickered and textbook pages flipped, making Paul feel jumpy . . . and desperate. Reluctantly, he opened himself to his Beast. And the Beast rescued him.

The Beast made Paul's fingernail scratch across the print on his textbook page, and almost immediately

Paul could breathe better. As the sights and sounds began to fade for Paul, he bent the page corners for even more relief. Even though he was surrounded by his classmates, Paul and his Beast were alone. Paul was “unavailable,” but peaceful.

When the classroom gradually came back into Paul’s focus, he noticed Miss Topper standing tall and slim in front of his desk. Her brows were folded down, and her head was cocked to one side. She had black, curly hair and cheeks that blushed red whenever she was angry.

“Paul! Please stop playing with your book. You need to be more careful with school property.”

Even though Miss Topper’s words were not spoken loudly, they bombarded Paul because of his sensitive hearing. Because of his disability — autism.

Paul tried to read Miss Topper’s face. *Faces always mess me up*, Paul thought. But he forced himself to look. Miss Topper pinched her lips together and took a deep breath. Because Paul didn’t look away as quickly as he usually did, he saw shadows and shiny spots forming on Miss Topper’s cheeks and forehead. The shadows and spots started to dart about and spin and caused the classroom to move about for Paul. It





tilted first one way and then another. His stomach felt queasy. He leaned forward, extending his hands across his desktop, and then he rose slightly from his chair, thinking he could grab hold of the movement and get some control. When Paul's brown eyes shifted away from Miss Topper's glittery face, he felt steady enough to notice all the kids turning in his direction, which clued him they were staring. *Now I'm a freak show!*

Paul wished to be "normal." To fit in. To matter. To be thought of as real. And maybe even fun.

One reason he had asked to be transferred to Beacon Middle School from Harbor Special School, his old school for students with disabilities, was because he wanted to learn more facts. He loved to learn. His secret hope, though, was to become more normal-acting and less weird. Would he make it here at Beacon? His speech therapist at Harbor Special School had predicted he wouldn't. That hurt. But his mother said he could try it here at Beacon Middle if that's what he wanted.

Arrangements were made for Paul to transfer into sixth grade for just the last six weeks of school. If he did well, he could stay at Beacon Middle. But he hadn't done as well as he had hoped, and now he had only this short time to prove himself.

Miss Topper returned to the front of the class carrying her pointing stick as usual and straightening the sleeves of her bulky sweater. Paul thought the geometric pattern decorating her sweater made a great path for his eyes where he felt sure there would be no surprises to upset him. Over and over he followed the peaceful paths, but then . . . a missing button! *This sweater can no longer be trusted*, he thought. As Paul looked away, he noticed that kids were still staring at him.

Then students bent over their desks, trying to solve the extra-credit brain teaser that Miss Topper had written on the board. Paul glanced at the numbers on the board: “Solve  $4x + 3y = 9$ ;  $5x + 3y = 5$ .” Almost immediately the result came to him, and he quickly scribbled the answer in his composition book.

Math was easy for Paul. He and his dad often competed at math at home, and Paul had won ever since he was about ten years old. *The kids have the same problem as Dad — they are slowed down by having to go through each step to get to their answers. Not me!* For Paul, the numbers had color and energy that slid about forming new colors: They fit like puzzle pieces.

Paul managed to raise his hand, hoping that giving his answer would stop the scrawling pencil and clicking

calculator sounds. But Miss Topper was checking the clock instead. Paul then detected the smell of laundry soap coming from the shirt fabric that covered his raised arm. Paul liked to explore interesting smells because they did not echo as sounds did or move about as when he looked at things. The Beast lowered Paul's arm, and the soap smell stole away Paul's interest. Now the answers being called out by the class were muffled. The next sound Paul was aware of was Miss Topper's voice from behind him, piercing into his Beast's quiet world of smell.

"That's correct, Paul," she said, as she looked over his shoulder and clapped her hands together. "Your answer is  $x = -4$ ,  $y = 8.33$ . Wonderful! Why didn't you raise your hand?"

Paul scrunched his nose deep into his shirt sleeve. Although he knew he was supposed to stop, his Beast overrode his intentions and drove him to keep it up. A touch on his shoulder startled him. It was Miss Topper . . . again.

"Paul, you need a tissue."

Paul's muscles stiffened, and he went back to nose rubbing. When there was disapproval, Paul's Beast — the behaviors of autism itself — protected him by allowing



his compulsions to rule. But Paul wanted his Beast out of Beacon Middle. Regular kids had no Beasts.

Miss Topper checked her watch and walked quickly to the front of the room. She wrote out the steps for the brain teaser and Paul's answer for the class to review. Then she clapped her hands.

"Class, it's nearly time for dismissal. Pack up your belongings and remember that tomorrow we will not meet here in class, but in the gym where Principal Bentley will tell us about tryouts for the Annual Beacon Middle School Playoffs."

Kids chatted as they filed out in little groups. Paul left the room last, as always. As he walked down the hallway lined with lockers, he and his Beast touched each and every combination lock. Fay, a perky, lanky girl with long layered hair, who sat up front in Paul's math class, came up to him.



"Hey!" Fay said, startling Paul. He then moved a few steps away, thinking he must be in the way of her locker.

"Hey!" Fay repeated. "Great answer, Paul! You're still a math genius." Fay flashed him a smile before giving her long, shiny hair a toss and galloping toward



the bus exit. Paul always looked and listened for Fay. Her presence lifted him out of that place where he kept close track of his own senses.

Although Fay belonged to the normal world, Paul felt her huge, blue eyes that penetrated deep into his soul — beyond the autism! On a few occasions Paul's Beast had impulsively touched her fiery red hair. But recoiling from this social breach didn't seem to occur to Fay. She just laughed softly. Paul loved the flowery smell of her hair that lingered on his hands.

Her scent overwhelmingly pleased him, but the new, unexplainable feeling it gave him was unsettling.

Last semester when Paul was a student at Harbor, the separate school for kids with disabilities, Fay had visited his classroom. She had been helping the students as a peer tutor. Paul's classmates loved her, but no one more than Paul. Fay was impressed with Paul's ability in math, and she often asked for his help when she encountered a difficult problem on her own homework from regular school.

Paul planted himself in dreams of being normal when she used his help. For the first time he exceeded what was expected. And for the first time he was in love.