

Feeling Different

During my early school years, I observed other notions, feelings and experiences that convinced me, little by little, that I was different than others. For example, although I was considered a bright, even brilliant student, I found myself wondering if I were not mentally retarded. I suffered this painful doubt because, while I found it very easy to remember the readings our teacher specifically assigned us, nevertheless I found it very hard to keep up with other children in and out of school. The conversations drifted toward facts that I had not been explicitly assigned to remember. As I moved into adolescence, the problem intensified, and I found it even harder to sustain an interest in, and thus to learn about, the outside world—the world of main streets and side streets, the world of newspapers and books not assigned in school. The world of boys flirting with girls, and girls buying cosmetics and standing in front of the mirror applying lipstick as if they were applying their future. The subject wasn't covered in class, so I didn't know about it. . . . As time went on, I came to feel more and more like I was from another planet and knew nothing about life on earth. (pp. 24–26)