



## Hard Work Backstory

Whoopi Goldberg was born in New York City in 1955, as Caryn Johnson. She spent the first years of her life in a public housing project in Manhattan. Over the course of a turbulent early life, she survived poverty, drug addiction, single motherhood and a stint on welfare to become one of America's most beloved entertainers.

Whoopi also struggled with dyslexia and, as a result, dropped out of high school. "I knew I wasn't stupid, and I knew I wasn't dumb. My mother told me that. Everybody told me I wasn't stupid or dumb. If you read to me, I could tell you everything that you read. They didn't know what it was. They knew I wasn't lazy, but what was it?" When she was an adult, she finally found the reason for her reading struggles - dyslexia. As Whoopi once recounted, "I learned from a guy who was running a program and he had written a sentence on a board. And I said to him, 'You know, I can't read that.' And he said, 'Why not?' And I said, 'Because it doesn't make any sense to me.' So he said, 'Well, whatever you see, write exactly what you see underneath.' And so, he brought me to letters by coordinating what I saw to something called an A, or a B, or a C, or a D, and that was pretty cool."

She said it still takes effort, but time and hard work has made it easier for her to read.

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