

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: Laura Risaliti

School: Liberty High School

Book Title: *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*

Genre: Fiction

Author: Jonathan Safran Foer

Pages: 368

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Copyright: 2005

In a brief rationale, please provide the following information relative to the book you would like added to the school's book collection for classroom use. You may attach additional pages as needed.

Book Summary and Summary Citation: (suggested resources include book flap summaries, review summaries from publisher, book vendors, etc.)

“Jonathan Safran Foer emerged as one of the most original writers of his generation with his best-selling debut novel, *Everything Is Illuminated*. Now, with humor, tenderness, and awe, he confronts the traumas of our recent history. What he discovers is solace in that most human quality, imagination. Meet Oskar Schell, an inventor, Francophile, tambourine player, Shakespearean actor, jeweler, pacifist, correspondent with Stephen Hawking and Ringo Starr. He is nine years old. And he is on an urgent, secret search through the five boroughs of New York. His mission is to find the lock that fits a mysterious key belonging to his father, who died in the World Trade Center on 9/11.

An inspired innocent, Oskar is alternately endearing, exasperating, and hilarious as he careens from Central Park to Coney Island to Harlem on his search. Along the way he is always dreaming up inventions to keep those he loves safe from harm. What about a birdseed shirt to let you fly away? What if you could actually hear everyone's heartbeat? His goal is hopeful, but the past speaks a loud warning in stories of those who've lost loved ones before. As Oskar roams New York, he encounters a motley assortment of humanity who are all survivors in their own way. He befriends a 103-year-old war reporter, a tour guide who never leaves the Empire State Building, and lovers enraptured or scorned. Ultimately, Oskar ends his journey where it began, at his father's grave. But now he is accompanied by the silent stranger who has been renting the spare room of his grandmother's apartment. They are there to dig up his father's empty coffin.”

Provide an instructional rationale for the use of this title, including specific reference to the OLSD curriculum blueprints and/or State standards.

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close will serve as a gateway for instruction and assessment pertaining to Reading Literature and Writing (specifically, narrative writing). Priority standards for this unit are listed below:

Unit Title: Identity and Narrative

Essential Questions: Who am I? What has shaped my identity? What is my story? What makes us human? How does trauma/grief shape us? What role do human connections play in the shaping of our identity?

Priority Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2

Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)

Include two professional review of this title: (a suggested list of resources for identifying professional reviews is shown below. Reviews may be “cut and pasted” (with citation) into the form or printed reviews may be attached to the form). Reviews should suggest an appropriate grade-level or grade-band.

Review #1

“This is meaningful book deals with loss, war, and terrorism, and mature readers who take it on will be rewarded with original characters and an engaging quest. Author Jonathan Safran Foer has a marvelous ability to express emotions and tell stories from different points of view: those of a 9-year-old boy who may be on the autism spectrum, an elderly grandmother who survived the bombing of Dresden, a Japanese man who lost his daughter in Hiroshima, and more. These characters are well-drawn and relatable, and sometimes funny to observe.

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close is grim but not relentlessly so -- except when it should be. The events are painful, and it's particularly sad to experience young Oskar's grief and confusion. Written for adults but sometimes assigned in high school, this novel is best for older teens ready for a serious read.”
-Common Sense Media

Review #2

“The search for the lock that fits a mysterious key dovetails with related and parallel quests in this (literally) beautifully designed second from the gifted young author (*Everything Is Illuminated*, 2002).

The searcher is nine-year-old Oskar Schell, an inventive prodigy who (albeit modeled on the protagonist of Grass's *The Tin Drum*) employs his considerable intellect with refreshing originality in the aftermath of his father Thomas's death following the bombing of the World Trade Center. That key, unidentified except for the word "black" on the envelope containing it, impels Oskar to seek out every New Yorker bearing the surname Black, involving him with a reclusive centenarian former war correspondent, and eventually the nameless elderly recluse who rents a room in his paternal grandma's nearby apartment. Meanwhile, unmailed letters from a likewise unidentified "Thomas" reveal their author's loneliness and guilt, while stretching backward to wartime Germany and a horrific precursor of the 9/11 atrocity: the firebombing of Dresden. In a riveting narrative animated both by Oskar's ingenuous assumption of adult responsibility and understanding (interestingly, he's "playing Yorick" in a school production of *Hamlet*) and the letter-writer's meaningful silences, Foer sprinkles his tricky text with interpolated illustrations that render both objects of Oskar's many interests and the word and memories of a survivor who has forsworn speech, determined to avoid the pain of loving too deeply. The story climaxes as Oskar discovers what the key fits, and also the meaning of his life (all our lives, actually), in a long-awaited letter from astrophysicist Stephen Hawking.

Much more is revealed as this brilliant fiction works thrilling variations on, and consolations for, its plangent message: that "in the end, everyone loses everyone." Yes, but look what Foer has found."
-Kirkus

What alternate text(s) could also fulfill the instructional requirements?

Title: *The Catcher in the Rye*

Author: J.D. Salinger

Title: *Tuesdays with Morrie*

Author: Mitch Albom

Title: *Night*

Author: Elie Wiesel

Title: *Paper Towns*

Author: John Green

Document any potentially controversial content:

"Parents need to know that *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, by Jonathan Safran Foer (*Everything Is Illuminated*), describes the grieving process of a family that's lost a loved one in the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Most especially, this is the story of Oskar Schell, a precocious 9-year-old with highly advanced scientific curiosity but a child's limited ability to process loss. Oskar is a social misfit who exhibits repetitive behaviors that have led some readers to think he's on the autism spectrum. In fact, in the [film adaptation](#) of the novel, Oskar tells another character that he was tested for Asperger's syndrome but nothing "definitive" was determined. Though most of the novel focuses on Oskar's quest for a lock he thinks will reveal hidden details about his beloved father, the book also digs into various characters' memories of 9/11, as well as the Dresden bombing during World War II, which shaped the lives of Oskar's grandparents. There are also passages from an interview with a man who watched his daughter die after the bombing of Hiroshima. These accounts of violence are graphic and sorrowful. Oskar also has violent fantasies of hurting people who make him feel small and misunderstood. The novel includes rare cursing (a few uses of "f—k," one "sons of bitches") and some sexual content, including children's playground talk about "blow jobs," "hand jobs," and private parts, and more adult scenes where a young couple, and then an older couple, make love. It's best suited for mature teens. However, it's worth noting that the novel has more humorous and lighthearted moments than the movie version does." *Common Sense Media*

Keeping in mind the age, academic level, and maturity of the intended reader, what is the suggested classroom use: (check all that apply)

Gifted/Accelerated

Regular

At Risk

GRADE LEVEL(S): 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Reading Level of this Title (if applicable):

Suggested Professional Literacy Review Sources:

School Library Journal

Horn Book

Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates)

Library Journal

Book Links

Publisher's Weekly

Booklist

Kirkus Review

Wilson Library Catalog

English Journal (and other resources of the National Council of Teachers of English)

The Reading Teacher (International Reading Association)

Literature for Today's Young Adults

Signatures:

Teacher: _____

Date: _____

Department Head: _____

Date: _____

Building Administrator: _____

Date: _____

Curriculum Supervisor: _____

Date: _____