

Extremely Loud And Incredibly Close Review



Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close Review: This poignant, heart-wrenching novel by Jonathan Safran Foer captures the essence of grief, loss, and the indomitable human spirit. Following the story of a young boy named Oskar Schell, who is on a quest to uncover the mystery behind a key left by his father who died in the September 11 attacks, the narrative unfolds in a unique and innovative style. Foer's work combines heartfelt prose with a distinctive visual presentation, making it an unforgettable literary experience. In this review, we will delve into the themes, characters, and overall impact of "Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close".

Overview of the Novel

Published in 2005, "Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close" is a novel that weaves together multiple narratives, blending Oskar's journey with the stories of his grandparents. This structural choice enhances the emotional depth of the book, allowing readers to understand the lingering effects of trauma and loss across generations.

Plot Summary

The novel opens with Oskar Schell, an intelligent and precocious nine-year-old boy who is deeply affected by the death of his father. Oskar discovers a mysterious key in his father's belongings, which leads him on an adventure throughout New York City, searching for the lock that the key fits. His quest becomes a metaphor for his desire to reconnect with his father and make sense of the chaotic world around him.

- Oskar's journey is not just a physical search; it's also an emotional exploration:
- He encounters various individuals, each with their own stories of loss and resilience.
- Through these interactions, Oskar learns more about himself and the nature of grief.

Thematic Exploration

“Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close” is rich with themes that resonate with readers of all ages. Below are some of the most significant themes explored in the novel:

Grief and Loss

At its core, the novel is a meditation on grief. Oskar’s quest represents not just a search for answers but a way to cope with the profound sense of loss that follows his father’s death. The narrative illustrates how grief can manifest in various ways, impacting not only the individual but also their relationships.

- Key points about grief in the novel include:
- The different ways characters cope with loss.
- The impact of September 11 on Oskar’s family and community.
- The connection between past traumas and present experiences.

Family and Relationships

The importance of family is another central theme. Oskar’s relationship with his mother and his grandparents highlights the complexities of familial bonds, especially in the wake of tragedy. Each character’s struggle to communicate their grief adds layers to the narrative.

- The portrayal of family dynamics includes:
- The tension between Oskar and his mother, who is also grappling with her loss.
- The stories of Oskar’s grandparents, which reflect the effects of their own losses during World War II.

Communication and Understanding

Foer highlights the challenges of communication in the face of grief. Oskar’s interactions with others often reveal the difficulty of expressing emotions and understanding one another. This theme is particularly poignant in a post-9/11 context, where national trauma complicates personal grief.

- Communication challenges in the novel:
- Oskar’s unique way of processing information and emotions.
- The barriers between Oskar and adults in his life.
- The significance of storytelling as a means of connection.

Character Analysis

The characters in “Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close” are vividly drawn, each contributing to the overarching themes of the novel. Here’s a closer look at the main characters:

Oskar Schell

Oskar is the heart of the story. His intelligence, curiosity, and emotional depth make him a relatable and compelling protagonist. His quest is both literal and metaphorical, as he seeks to understand his father and come to terms with his loss.

- Oskar’s defining traits:
- His inventive nature and love for science.
- His struggles with anxiety and social interactions.
- His determination to find answers, reflecting resilience amidst sorrow.

Oskar’s Mother

Oskar’s mother is a complex character whose own grief often complicates her relationship with Oskar. She represents the generational impact of trauma and the difficulties of moving forward after loss.

- Key aspects of her character:
- Her protective nature toward Oskar.
- The silent struggle she faces as a widow.
- Her attempts to maintain a semblance of normalcy in their lives.

Grandparents

Oskar’s grandparents provide a historical context to the narrative, as their experiences during the war echo the themes of loss and survival. Their stories are interspersed throughout the novel, enriching Oskar’s journey.

- Characteristics of the grandparents:
- Their own struggles with communication and trauma.
- The contrast between their experiences and Oskar’s.
- The way their history informs Oskar’s understanding of grief.

Writing Style and Structure

Jonathan Safran Foer employs a unique writing style that enhances the emotional

resonance of the story. The novel is characterized by:

- Visual Elements: The book includes photographs, illustrations, and unconventional page layouts that reflect Oskar's perspective and emotional state.
- Stream of Consciousness: Foer's narrative often flows in a stream-of-consciousness style, providing insight into Oskar's thoughts and feelings.
- Nonlinear Narrative: The intertwining stories of Oskar and his grandparents create a rich tapestry that explores the impact of trauma across generations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, "Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close" is a masterful exploration of grief, family, and the human condition. Jonathan Safran Foer's ability to weave together multiple narratives while employing innovative storytelling techniques makes this novel a profound experience. It challenges readers to reflect on their own understanding of loss and resilience in an increasingly complex world. Whether you are new to Foer's work or revisiting this poignant tale, it offers valuable insights into the depths of human emotion and the power of connection in the face of adversity.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the main themes explored in 'Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close'?

The novel explores themes of grief, loss, trauma, and the search for meaning in the aftermath of tragedy, particularly focusing on the impact of 9/11.

How does the narrative structure of 'Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close' enhance the story?

The narrative alternates between the perspectives of different characters, including Oskar and his grandparents, which enriches the emotional depth and complexity of the story.

What role does the character Oskar Schell play in the novel?

Oskar Schell is a young boy who embarks on a quest to find the lock that matches a mysterious key left by his deceased father, representing his journey through grief and healing.

How is the setting of New York City significant in the novel?

New York City serves as both a backdrop for the narrative and a symbol of resilience and trauma, reflecting the chaos and profound loss experienced after the 9/11 attacks.

What critical reception did 'Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close' receive upon its release?

The novel received mixed reviews, with some praising its innovative style and emotional depth, while others criticized its sentimentality and narrative choices.

How does the use of visual elements in the book impact the reader's experience?

The inclusion of photographs, illustrations, and varying typography creates a unique reading experience, emphasizing Oskar's emotional journey and adding layers to the storytelling.

What is the significance of the key in Oskar's quest?

The key symbolizes Oskar's search for closure and understanding, representing his desire to connect with his father's memory and make sense of his loss.

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