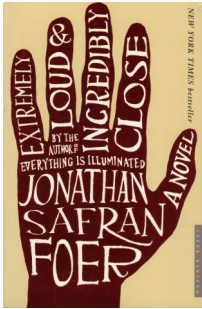




ELPL Lit Kits



Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close

by Jonathan Safran Foer

Oskar Schell is an inventor, Francophile, tambourine player, Shakespearean actor, jeweler, pacifist. He is nine years old. And he is on an urgent, secret search through the five boroughs of New York to find the lock that fits a mysterious key belonging to his father, who died in the attacks on the World Trade Center.

About the Author: 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.

Discussion Questions:

1. Talk about Oskar—an unusually precious child. Do you find him sympathetic or annoying? Or both?
2. For Shakespeare buffs: Oskar "plays Yorick" (the long dead jester whose skull Hamlet holds in his hand!) in a school production. What is the significance of that role? (See *Hamlet*: Act V, Scene I, Line 188).
3. Jonathan Safran Foer has said that he writes about characters and their miscommunications: some characters think they're saying a lot but say nothing; others say nothing but end up saying a lot. Which characters fall into which category in *Extremely Loud*? What might Foer be saying about our ability to communicate deep-seated emotions?
4. Some critics have wondered where Oskar's mother is and how the child is left alone to wander the streets of New York alone at night. Is that a relevant comment? Do you see this book as a work of realism (in which case the mother's role would matter) ... or as more of a fable, on the order, say, of *Life of Pi*? If the latter, what is *Extremely Loud* a fable of? (Like *Pi*, Oskar seems to be a quester—but of what?)

5. Do you find the illustrations, scribbling, over-written texts, etc. a meaningful, integral part of the work? Or do you find them distracting and gimmicky? Why are they there?
6. How do both main plot and subplot (Oskar's grandfather and the bombing of Dresden) interweave with one another?