

Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close

By Jonathan Safran Foer

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Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close (ELIC) tells the story of a nine-year-old boy named Oskar, whose father died in the September 11th terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers. After breaking a vase, Oskar finds an envelope labeled “Black” with a key inside. Oskar sets out to find the owner of the key by attempting to visit everyone in New York with the last name Black. Oskar’s journey is told through multiple viewpoints, including his own and his grandfather’s. Oskar’s grandfather depicts his grandson’s journey by sharing his own experiences living in Germany in WWII and expressing parallels between the two. This secondary storyline is told primarily in the form of unsent letters to his son.

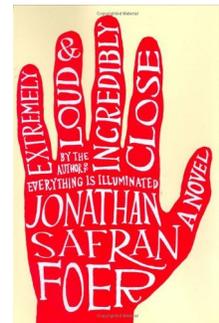


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Coming of Age: Oskar begins his journey in an interesting state; he has the textbook knowledge of a young adult combined with the wisdom and forethought of his real age of nine. As his search for the key’s owner progresses, Oskar matures. He becomes more agreeable, and he comes to appreciate the love that his mother has for him. His journey through New York City mirrors the journey inside his own mind, in which he is attempting to find his true self.

Denial versus Acceptance: The theme of denial in Foer’s novel is constructed through the implementation of repeated phrases and dialogue between characters. Denial is achieved primarily through Oskar and his grandfather’s refusal to confront grief. For both characters, this denial catalyzes a journey of self discovery, which culminates in Oskar’s acceptance of his father’s death. This acceptance depicts both growth and maturity in the characters, as they come to terms with their individual hardships.

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Love: Foer binds the main characters together as they navigate the complexities of their grief. He does so while maintaining the all-enveloping theme of love. Throughout the novel, Foer introduces the idea that everyone has a love for someone in their heart. The characters discover that this love is significantly more complicated when the person is alive and that the loss of someone you love is severely devastating. The character’s subsequent actions develop the plot of the novel.

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