

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close by Jonathan Safran Foer details the narrative of Oskar Schell, a nine-year-old boy whose father died in the attacks on the World Trade Centers, as he travels the boroughs of New York City to hunt down the last remaining mystery his late father left for him- a key he found at the bottom of a vase that supposedly unlocks some lock somewhere in the city.

Distraction in Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close

Oskar's entire journey chronicles the little boy as he attempts to distract himself from his father's death in search for the missing lock. Images throughout the book represent these ideas in vivid colors and detailed photographs, including pages with pictures of clues Oskar finds, pictures of the locks and keys, and letters with distracting scribbles covering them. For example, one of the images to the right depicts a notepad that Oskar finds in an office supply store that he interprets as a clue in his quest. This page is seemingly shoved in the middle of the book on page 49, but the fact that Foer decided to incorporate this picture into the narrative tells the reader that it is an important part of Oskar's conscience and is something that is very much on his mind, tying back to his quest for the key to distract himself. Furthermore, Oskar's writing style illustrates the mind of a child who is attempting to cope with loss as sentences in the book such as "What about a teakettle? What if the spout opened and closed when the steam came out, so it would become a mouth" (Foer 1), the seemingly unconnected, red herring sentences being Oskar's attempt to distract himself from his father's death. Most of the images included in the book, whether they be of birds, keys, locks, falling men, neanderthals, windows, or skeletons all serve the primary purpose of distracting the reader, and cluing them into how Oskar is attempting to distract himself.

-Elise Newhouse



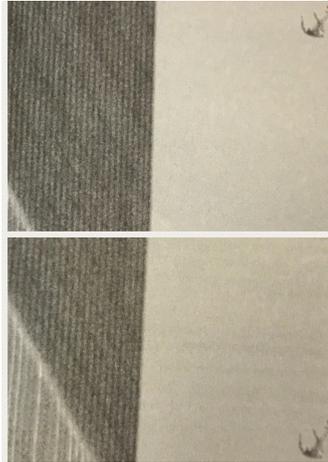
lope in my pocket, where the future home had been. I heard your grandfather's voice as I walked away, he was still at the door. I almost forgot. When your mother found me in the bakery on Broadway, I wanted to tell her everything, maybe if I'd been able to, we could have lived differently, maybe I'd be there with you now instead of here. Maybe if I had said, "I lost a baby," if I'd said, "I'm so afraid of losing something I love that I refuse to love anything," maybe that would have made the impossible possible. Maybe, but I couldn't do it. I had buried too much too deeply inside me. And here I am, instead of there. I'm sitting in this library, thousands of miles from my life, writing another letter. I know I won't be able to send, no matter how hard I try, and how much I want to. How did that boy make love behind that shed become this man writing this letter at this table?

I love you,
Your father

Tragedy in Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close is a novel that, at its most basic level, is about coping with tragedy. The theme of tragedy stems from Oskar's dad dying in the attacks on the World Trade Center, in New York, on September 11th, 2001. In the novel, each character has his or her own way of coping with tragedy. For example, Oskar self-harms and dedicates himself at any cost to find the missing lock, his mother isolates herself, and his grandmother struggles withdrawal from the past of her husband. The grandfather is another key character that deals with tragedy. The love of his life Anna, the one whom he initially plans to marry, dies in the firebombing of Dresden, causing him to never being able to speak properly as he once did. There were two visuals in the novel that represented tragedy. Throughout the novel, Oskar's motivation for finding the missing lock is to have closure of his father's death. He initially knew his dad died in the attacks on September 11th, but he will never know how. He references back to the visual of a man falling of the side of the building to represent his father's death to provide him with some sort of closure. Through tragedy all the characters are pulled together, although they are all going in separate directions. Jonathan Safran Foer, does an excellent job giving the audience insight on how tragedy boldly effects an individual such as Oskar.

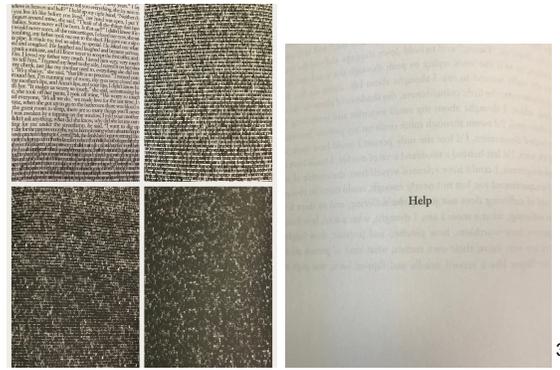
-Cierra Short



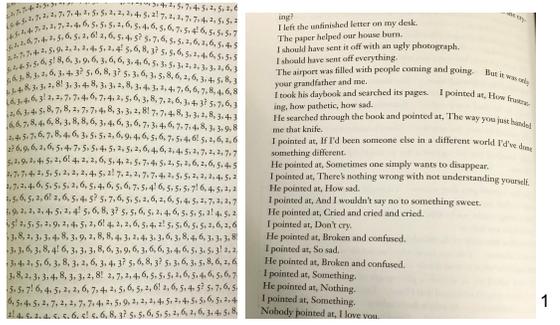
Language in Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close

The utilization of language and lack thereof gives us a view into the life of Oskar and everybody around him. In the beginning of the book Oskar tells us what the last message from his father was. This last message was broken up, and lacking in the words that Oskar wanted to hear. This lack of language from his father begins the stress and pain for Oskar because he will never know what his father truly said or what he ever wanted to say. The same also works with his grandparents, as they never got any closure from the attacks also, so they are going through a similar pain and tragedy. In one of the first letters we read from his grandfather, we learn that his grandfather couldn't speak. What was so powerful about this was that he knew language, but he physically couldn't speak. Instead of speaking what his grandfather ended up doing was writing one word or sentence on a page of a journal and would use that to communicate³, he eventually got the words Yes and No tattooed on his hands. Another powerful contrast between the grandparents is how the Grandfather uses continuous sentences² with no pause in comparison to the Grandmother who indents after almost every 5-10 words¹. The letters are a tremendous use of written language to Thomas (Oskar's Father) from his parents that show the pain in the stylistic format of the writing and use of pictures in this book. The use of pictures truly captures the phrase "pictures are worth a thousand words". Oskar's life leads him to tandem and how as his own person he feels this lack of language leaves him questioning everything and searching for something that may not even be there.

-Brigid Lindley



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ink, I ripped a page from the book. I wrote, "Mrs. Schell," he said, "There is no Mrs. Schell." I wrote, "There is," he said, "Believe me, there is no Mrs. Schell in this building," but I'd heard her voice once if there was a Mrs. Schell in this building, but I'd heard her voice once, could she have moved and kept the number, how would I know? I needed a phone book. I wrote "31D" and showed it to the doorman. "Mrs. Schmidt," I took back my book and wrote, "I had her name on the door." I lived in the guest room, she left me meals by the door. I left the footstools and sometimes I thought I heard the rim of a glass against the door. I found my daybooks from before I left, they were in the body of the grandfather clock, I'd have thought she would have thrown them away. I found the book from the afternoon we met and the book from after we got married, I found first Nothing Place, and the last walked around the reservoir, I found pictures of banisters and sinks in places, on top of one of the stacks was the book from the first time I saw. "I haven't always been silent, I used to talk and talk and talk." "I don't know if she began to feel sorry for me, or sorry for herself started paying me short visits, she wouldn't say anything at first, up the room, brush cobwebs from the corners, vacuum the cushions, the picture frames, and then one day, as she dusted the book she said, "I can forgive you for leaving, but not for coming back and then it was as if nothing had been said, she replaced a light

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All photos taken from Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close by Jonathan Safran Foer

Works Cited

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