

Free character analysis of oskar schell essay example

[Family](#), [Father](#)



Oskar Schell is a nine year old character created by Jonathan Safran Foer's novel "Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close." At times he is somewhat of an unrealistic character because his understanding of things seems to be well beyond that of a nine year old. But at other times, his young age becomes apparent and obviously. The novel centers around mission being undertaken by Oscar, which in a lot of ways is a way for him to distract himself from the death of his father in the 9/11 terrorist attacks of the World Trade Towers in New York City, the setting of the novel. The choices he make might not makes sense outside of the context of understanding his character and past. Within the context of the story though, Oskar Schell is a believable character if he is understood within the context of his external and internal environment.

When readers are introduced to Oskar Schell, it is obvious that he is different from not only most nine-year-olds, but also most people. As will be argued in this character analysis, it seems obvious that Oskar has the condition known as attention deficit disorder which makes it difficult for him to concentrate on any subject for a long period of time. He is an over-thinker and considers things that most "normal" people would not think about. There is a thread of humor and playfulness stitching his musings together.

On the first page Oskar is talking about his desire to train his anus to be able to speak when it talks. He ponders that, "If I wanted it to be extremely hilarious, I'd train it to say, 'Wasn't Me!' every time I made an incredibly bad fart." (Foer, 1). These sorts of musing continue throughout the novel.

Research online suggest that many people consider Oskar to be an autistic character. If this is indeed true, he is a very functional case of autism, which

is a spectrum disorder across which people who have it have different levels of functionality. Rather than calling him autistic, it seems more accurate to interpret him as a character which such a rich interior mental life that he is content to explore his own contemplations rather than interact with others in the world. He is driven by his goals with ferocity. He has a rich imagination, and this is what makes him an attractive character to narrate the novel. He leaves readers wondering what he will think up next. He has an interesting array of interests. He refers to himself at different turns as an atheist, a scientist, inventor, adventurer, and has a love of the French language. His curiosity with the world is profound, and this is what's leads to him discovering a key in his fathers pocket in an envelope upon which the words " black" are written. This discovery leads to the over-arching narrative of the text. This leads him on an obsessive search throughout the New York City in which he visits everyone he can find with the last name Black around New York City to see if he can find anyone who knew his father or figure out the function of the key.

Not many nine year olds would be allowed to travel around New York City on their on, and few would be capable of doing this. Oskar is wildly independent and this does not seem to faze him. Though one could say that his mother is neglectful of him to allow her son to do this, the other way to see this is to understand that the loss of Oskar's father was difficult, and he has not fully dealt with this loss and his quest to find out about the key and as an extension his father, is his way of expressing the loss.

Another argument against the thinking that Oskar is autistic comes about when one gets to the heart of his quest, and tries to understand his reasons

for undertaking it. The purpose and story behind the key is only important on the surface level. What is really important is for him to get to know more about his father. Since he has lost him he has lost his ability to communicate and learn from him. Every new detail about his father is like a treasure, since he will not be there to make more memories with Oskar. So what the mission is really about is about Oskar searching for love and belonging. He has lost a father, but the mission creates a community for him all throughout the city. It gives him something to do to occupy his overactive mind and the city and mission become like a substitute father for him.

His mission also allows him to do everything. At times Oskar's inability to concentrate on a single subject is positive, he is a young boy with many interests. At other times, this is oppressive to Oskar, because he realizes that he only has one life to live and cannot be and do and see everything that he wants to do. As an atheist, he also does not believe that after this life there is anything else. At one point he muses, " Sometimes I can hear my bones straining under the weight of all the lives I'm not living." By visiting people all of the city, he is able to in a small way live multiple lives since he is able to experience a wide cross section of the city and gain access to small windows into their life. Oskar may have been intelligent at the beginning of the book, but at the end he could more accurately be called wise.

Each person that he visits teaches him something new and often times he finds himself getting involved in other's narratives. The name for this is compassion, which is another argument against the perception that Oskar is autistic. Through the loss of his father he has gained a unique connection to

a city, which in many ways is paternal. What is important for Oskar's growth is not the success of his mission, but the journey and what it teaches him.