***Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close***

**Jonathon Safran Foer**

**As we read this novel together, your tasks are to write a 1-page reaction paper and prepare resonance commentary for each section. You may use the questions listed below to guide your writing.**

**Section 1 p. 1-107----September 24/25**

**Section 2 p. 108-211----October 16/17**

**Section 3 p. 212-end----November 7/8**

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**Questions**

1. Talk about Oskar—an unusually precocious 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?
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?
7. Describe Dr. Stephen Hawking's role in the novel.
8. Which Beatles reference makes the greatest impact in the novel? How would you explain their centrality in the Schell household?
9. How does Mr. A. R. Black's deafness contribute to the storyline?
10. Which of Oskar Schell's inventions would you most like to see implemented and how would it work?
11. Which of Oskar Schell's phobias seems the most debilitating and how?
12. What function does letter writing play in the novel? Do the various writing campaigns share a motivation?
13. What do Dresden, Hiroshima, and 9/11 share in common? How do they differ?
14. Consider visual literacy. How do the pictures serve as pieces of each character's journey?
15. Communication and language. Describe how characters do/do not communicate with each other.
16. Overcoming trauma. How is the novel a PTSD narrative? Do some research on recovery and trauma to aid in your discussion.
17. The narrators of the different chapters. Who is the most/least reliable? How are the narrators different and/or similar?
18. The hero's journey. Does Oskar fit the archetype?
19. What are we (the audience) meant to learn from the story?
20. Is this a story about 9-11, or is it much more?
21. Is Foer a *great* novelist?
22. The best questions will come from you. Think of your own question and answer.

Other resources you may like to see:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/22/books/22kaku.html>

*NY Times* book review

<http://www.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,1660644_1442567,00.html>

9-11 photos *Time*

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2011/09/pictures/110908-about-911-september-9-11-twin-world-trade-center-towers-indelible/>

9-11 photos *National Geographic*