

Title: *The Unlikely Hero of Room 13b*

Author: Teresa Toten

Category: Different Abilities

Response Submitted By: Owen M., 9th Grade

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1. What is the main plot of this book?

This book, *The Unlikely Hero of Room Thirteen B*, is about a group of kids who all have OCD and are in group therapy to help them become more “normal”. In this group the main character, whose real name is Adam is given a superhero alias as part of a bonding exercise and refers to himself only as Batman. The other characters names are rarely said and, in some cases, never even mentioned except for Robyn who is Adams crush. The reason Adam chooses Batman as an alias is because Robyn chose Robin as her alias. Other characters are Wolverine, Ironman, Thor and Green Lantern. The book is about Adam as he tries to become a better functioning human in society. Adams Mother and Father are divorced, and his father married a recently widowed woman with a young son. His biological Mother is a doctor in a nearby hospital. You never learn about his stepmother or biological fathers’ professions. Throughout the book you also see that Adams Biological mother is a hoarder who keeps lying to Adam about starting to clean out the house, and after a certain point she starts receiving these horribly abusive letters, that suggest she go kill herself. Adams mom, only referred to as Mrs. Ross commands Adam to tell no one what’s going on, even his stepmom, stepbrother and father. After a couple weeks of these letters Adam is no longer able to enter his own house, as the opening ritual, a specific set of actions that would allow him to enter a room and make it so he would remain unharmed, cannot be completed properly. No matter how many times he tries he just can’t get in. so he goes to his dad’s house where he lives for a few months. Until one day he’s walking past his Mother’s house and he sees smoke coming out of one of the windows, he rushes to the door but can’t open it because he needs to complete his ritual. Throughout the book problems like this keep popping up, such as the time he needed to get into church but couldn’t because he needed to do the opening ritual and all his friends went on without him.

2. Which character did you most identify with and why?

I mostly identify with Thor because in the book he is described as this quite guy who looks all scary but the further you progress in the book the more you realize he just wants to help people

3. What do you believe is the main message of this book?

If you be yourself as opposed to what others want, you to be you will be much happier.

4. Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, or did it come across as too “preachy”?

No. I believe this came off as too little of the theme it showed up in the very end of the story and was only there if you read the characters body language, like a friend that you’ve known for years.

5. If two or more perspectives on an important topic were explored/presented in this book, which one did you agree with and why?

I don’t believe that there was any contradicting opinions or different perspectives about OCD in this book, there were different mental illnesses but otherwise everyone had the same view when it came to OCD.

6. *In what ways (if any) were your beliefs about the topic changed or reaffirmed through reading this book?*

I had no clue OCD was this severe I thought it was just a severe need to make sure everything was organized. The need for everything to be perfect in your mind and door rituals as well as needing everything to be in such an order all the time is more than I realized.

7. *What perspective, if any, do you think was missing from this book?*

This book is in the third person, so I think it has the views of everyone possible.

8. *Did this book encourage you to pursue any topic further through more reading, research, action, etc., and if so, how?*

This book did not lead me to research many topics besides some conditions, and symptoms of OCD.

9. *What type of reader (based on age, interests, perspectives, etc.) would you suggest this book to?*

I believe anyone from the ages 13 up would enjoy this book, but it depends on their maturity level.

10. *What other book(s) have you read that you think would make a good addition to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography, and why?*

I cant think of any books that would go well with this specific Novel.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Kylee K., 11th Grade

Date Reviewed: 9/4/2023

1. *What is the main plot of this book?*

The main plot of "The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B" follows the journey of Adam, a teenager struggling with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), as he navigates the complexities of family, friendships, and first love while attending group therapy sessions. Early in the book, Adam reflects on his condition, stating, "I am normal and I have OCD. I know the difference. I know the difference" (Zoe, 2015, p. 13). This quote encapsulates the central theme of the novel, highlighting Adam's desire for normalcy despite grappling with his mental health challenges, setting the stage for his emotional journey throughout the story.

2. *Which character did you most identify with and why?*

I most identified with Adam's character because of his ability to overcome the debilitating symptoms of OCD. There are also certain issues in my life that forces me to live on and overcome them.

3. *What do you believe is the main message of this book?*

The main message of "The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B" centers on the importance of acceptance, understanding, and unconditional love in overcoming personal challenges. As Adam grapples with his OCD, his therapist, Dr. Katz, imparts wisdom that resonates throughout the narrative: "Remember, Adam, you are not your OCD. You are much more than that" (Zoe, 2015, p. 122). This quote encapsulates the overarching theme of the novel, emphasizing the value of seeing beyond one's struggles to recognize the inherent worth and resilience within oneself.

4. *Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, or did it come across as too "preachy"?*

The main message of the book was effectively integrated into the story, conveyed through genuine character interactions and emotional depth rather than feeling overly preachy. Adam's

evolving relationship with his stepbrother, Sweetie, exemplifies this sentiment as they navigate familial tensions and personal insecurities together. Sweetie's comforting words to Adam, "It's okay, Adam. I'm here. You're not alone" (Zoe, 2015, p. 197), embody the message of support and solidarity without veering into didacticism, contributing to the narrative's authenticity.

5. If two or more perspectives on an important topic were explored/presented in this book, which one did you agree with and why?

In "The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B," the perspectives on mental illness and the stigma surrounding it are multifaceted, but I found myself aligning most with Dr. Katz's approach, which emphasizes empathy and understanding. Dr. Katz's assertion that "We need to talk about mental illness like we talk about the weather" (Zoe, 2015, p. 221) resonates deeply, advocating for open dialogue and destigmatization to foster greater awareness and acceptance.

6. In what ways (if any) were your beliefs about a topic changed or reaffirmed through reading this book?

Reading "The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B" reaffirmed my belief in the transformative power of empathy and human connection in overcoming adversity, particularly in the context of mental health struggles. Adam's journey highlights the importance of compassion and support from loved ones, challenging preconceived notions and fostering a deeper understanding of the complexities of mental illness.

7. What perspective, if any, do you think was missing from this book?

While "The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B" provides a nuanced portrayal of OCD and its impact on individuals and families, it could benefit from incorporating perspectives from a wider range of cultural backgrounds to address the intersectionality of mental health and identity.

8. Did this book encourage you to pursue any topics further through more reading, research, action, etc., and if so, how?

This book inspired me to delve deeper into the lived experiences of individuals with OCD and other mental health conditions, prompting further reading and research on strategies for coping and supporting loved ones facing similar challenges.

9. What type of reader (based on age, interests, perspectives, etc.) would you suggest this book to?

I would recommend "The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B" to readers of all ages who appreciate heartfelt coming-of-age stories with nuanced portrayals of mental health struggles and familial relationships. This book is particularly suitable for young adult audiences grappling with issues of identity and acceptance.

10. What other book(s) you have read that you think would make a good addition to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography, and why?

Another book that would complement "The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B" in exploring themes of mental health and resilience is "All the Bright Places" by Jennifer Niven. Like Zoe's novel, "All the Bright Places" delves into the complexities of mental illness with sensitivity and depth, offering a poignant portrayal of friendship, love, and the journey toward healing.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Kate G., 10th Grade

Date Reviewed: May 23, 2024

1. What is the main plot of this book?

In the book *The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B*, Adam Spencer Ross is a teenager with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). Adam is only comforted by numbers and rituals which help him cope with his fears and anxieties. He becomes fixated on the number 13 and believes that by performing certain rituals, he can keep his loved ones safe including his divorced parents and stepsiblings. Adam meets Robyn Plummer at his support group and he is drawn to her immediately. Robyn is dealing with her own struggles with anorexia and Adam becomes determined to help her.

2. Which character did you most identify with and why?

While I cannot identify with the challenges that both Adam and Robyn are dealing with, I think I am most like Adam. Like Adam, I always want to help those that I care about, despite whatever difficulties I might be working through. Adam clearly has a serious OCD issue that complicates his life but regardless, he wants to help Robyn through her struggle with anorexia. Similarly, I could see myself putting aside whatever issue I was having in order to be of help and support to a friend.

3. What do you believe is the main message of this book?

I think the main message of this book is the power of friendship and empathy towards others. The story highlights the importance of connection and understanding in dealing with mental health challenges through Adam and Robyn's friendship. While Adam confronts his OCD and Robyn confronts her anorexia, they find comfort and support in one another and are able to find strength and resilience to overcome their difficulties.

4. Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, or did it come across as too "preachy"?

I didn't find this message to be preachy at all. I think having main characters that were both a male and female gave the book a different feel. Often, when adolescents are faced with challenges, they find comfort in someone of the same sex as opposed to someone of the opposite sex. Having Adam and Robyn build a friendship and confide and rely on one another was unexpected and effectively integrated the main message into the story.

5. If two or more perspectives on an important topic were explored/presented in this book, which one did you agree with and why?

Different perspectives weren't explored in this book, but different struggles and how the characters were coping with them were. Adam's struggle with OCD provided insight into the challenges of managing intrusive thoughts, compulsions, and anxieties while Robyn's struggle with anorexia provided insight into the complexities of body image, self-esteem, and control. Both of these serious issues are challenges that many young adults can relate to and the book sheds light on the daily struggles, stigma, and misconceptions associated with both.

6. In what ways (if any) were your beliefs about a topic changed or reaffirmed through reading this book?

My beliefs about the internal struggles and external pressures faced by individuals dealing with mental health issues, as well as the importance of seeking help and support, was reaffirmed through reading this book. The book encourages compassion for these sensitive topics and awareness.

7. What perspective, if any, do you think was missing from this book?

The book focuses on the experiences of Adam and Robyn as they navigate their personal struggles, but it doesn't explore how their peers, neighbors, or society perceive and react to their conditions. Including the perspective of others in the community could offer insight into common misconceptions, stigma, or lack of awareness surrounding mental health. It could also highlight the importance of education and empathy, and how to foster a more supportive environment for individuals facing mental health challenges.

8. Did this book encourage you to pursue any topics further through more reading, research, action, etc., and if so, how?

As an ambassador for Morgan's Message, an organization that supports mental health awareness for student-athletes, this book encouraged me to research additional ways to help destigmatize mental health issues that young adults face.

9. What type of reader (based on age, interests, perspectives, etc.) would you suggest this book to?

I believe this book is best suited for young adults ages 13-18. Given the sensitive subject matter of OCD and anorexia, the book may resonate especially with readers who have personal experiences with mental health challenges or those who are seeking to understand them better.

10. What other book(s) have you read that you think would make a good addition to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography, and why?

I have not read "Finding Audrey" by Sophie Kinsella but it was recommended to me as another book that was similar to this one, so it might make a good addition to the Different Abilities category of the Perspectives Bibliography. "Finding Audrey" also explores themes of mental health, specifically anxiety disorder. Audrey struggles with severe social anxiety and depression following a traumatic incident at school.