

Title: *You're Welcome, Universe*

Author: Whitney Gardner

Category: Different Abilities

Respondent's Name and Grade: Danil P., 9th Grade

Date Responded: July 20, 2021

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

The main plot of *You're Welcome Universe* is about a deaf teen named Julia. Julia got kicked out of her old all-deaf school for painting a wall with graffiti, causing her to transition to a school for hearing people for the first time in her life.

2) *Which character do you most identify with and why?*

Throughout the book, I did not connect with any of the characters, they did not seem relatable to me.

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

I believe that the main message of the book is to not put yourself above others. I believe that this is the message because throughout the book, Julia always did put herself above others,, which caused her to not have any friends. However, when she started treating other people better, she got a friend, and her life got better.

4) *Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story?*

The message was effectively integrated 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?*

I could not find a topic where 2 or more perspectives were represented.

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

From reading the book, I realized how difficult it must be for a deaf person to communicate with someone who does not understand sign language.

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

I can not think of a perspective that is missing from the book.

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

This book encouraged me to learn more about sign language and lip reading.

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

I would suggest this book to someone between the ages of 12-18, who is interested in learning more about the struggles of deaf people

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 do not know of a book that would make a good addition to the category.

Respondent's Name and Grade: Name: Julianna V., 10th Grade

Date Response Submitted: August 3, 2021

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

In the book *You're Welcome, Universe*, the reader follows the main protagonist, 16 year old Julia. However, Julia is unique because she is deaf and she lives with her two moms who also happen to be deaf. Recently, Julia's so-called "best friend" ratted her out, and got Julia expelled by exposing the graffiti Julia made on school property. Julia is forced to be transferred to a new school where she will face many new challenges because she is the only deaf girl. However, Julia makes a new friend, and suddenly becomes entangled into an all-out graffiti war with an unlikely rival.

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

I would say I most likely identify with Julia's new friend, who is nicknamed YP. YP has dealt with a great deal of drama and heartache in her life, especially with her journey of weight loss and weight gain. However, YP does whatever she can to help and look out for those who she loves and cares for. I feel the same way when it comes to caring for others; I try my best to help my friends/family in times when they need assistance or comfort and I have their backs.

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

I believe the main message of the book has to do with dishonesty. There were many instances in the book where the characters (and mainly the protagonist) had lied and gone against the other characters' backs. This book showed some of the severe consequences that come with lying. This book is teaching the audience that lying is not always the solution to get out of a difficult situation and that honesty is better than deception.

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 believe that the main message was effectively integrated into the story. As I previously mentioned, there were instances throughout the story where all the characters at one point or another were telling a lie. I believe the author did this on purpose because she strongly wanted to convey her message to her audience, and she did this effectively by writing different scenarios that explain the message.

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

The perspective told in this book had to do with Julia being deaf. Some characters in the story supposed that Julia may not be the smartest person because she is deaf. However, I disagree with their perspective because Julia has proved in many instances throughout the book that she is indeed smarter than what people perceive her to be.

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

To be honest, going into this book, I did not have a great understanding about deaf people and how they feel since I am not deaf, nor have I talked with a person who is deaf. This book has truly educated me more in an important topic that I feel needs to be discussed more often. I don't really hear much about the perspectives of deaf people, that is why I had such little understanding about this topic going into this book. This book taught me that being deaf is harder than what it seems.

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

I wish the author incorporated the perspective of Julia's new friend, YP. Since YP is kind-hearted, she decided to learn sign language so it would be easier for her to communicate with

Julia, rather than communicate via text. I would have liked the author to incorporate the perspective of YP, and the process that she had to go through to learn sign language because I'm sure it must have taken her practice.

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

This book interested me into reading more YA fiction books about this topic. For example, I am considering reading *The Silence Between Us* written by Alison Gervais, and this book also deals with the topic regarding deaf people.

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

I feel that this book is good for any reader. It is an easier read, however, I would recommend this book for any teens ages 14+ due to some mature language throughout the book.

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?*

Previously this year, I read a book called *We Are Not Free* written by Traci Chee. This was a historical fiction book that had many different perspectives of Japanese-Americans. This book takes place right after the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor. Throughout this book, the reader follows the different perspectives of the many Japanese-Americans and their journeys living in multiple concentration camps for the duration of WWII. This is one of my favorite books I read this year, and I rated it 5 out of 5 stars. It was a true eye opener about how these people were treated, and I feel that this book would be great in the Race and Ethnicity category of the Perspectives Bibliography.

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

Date Reviewed: 8/23/2023

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

The main plot of "You're Welcome, Universe" follows Julia, a Deaf teenager, who grapples with issues of identity, friendship, and acceptance after being expelled from her mainstream school for graffiti. The narrative unfolds as Julia navigates through a new school for the Deaf, explores her passion for art, and confronts the complexities of her relationships.

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

I most identified with YP, Julia's supportive and understanding friend, who shares her love for street art and offers unwavering loyalty throughout the challenges they face together. YP's genuine camaraderie with Julia echoes my genuineness in friendships.

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

The main message of "You're Welcome, Universe" centers on the significance of self-expression and acceptance, as illustrated by Julia's journey to embrace her Deaf identity and artistic talents despite societal expectations and prejudices. Through Julia's experiences, the book emphasizes the power of authenticity and resilience in overcoming obstacles and finding belonging.

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 self-expression and acceptance is seamlessly woven into the narrative, avoiding a preachy tone by grounding it in the authentic struggles and triumphs of the characters. For instance, when Julia reflects on her art, stating, "Graffiti is about being proud of who you are," it resonates deeply as a natural extension of her character's growth rather than a forced lesson imposed on the reader.

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

The book presents contrasting perspectives on the value of graffiti as an art form, with Julia seeing it as a means of self-expression and reclaiming space, while others view it as vandalism. I found myself aligning with Julia's viewpoint, as her art serves as a powerful form of communication and resistance against societal norms, echoing the importance of creative expression in marginalized communities.

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

Reading "You're Welcome, Universe" reaffirmed my belief in the importance of embracing diverse forms of communication and artistic expression, challenging conventional notions of what constitutes "valid" art. As Julia asserts, "Graffiti is a language," the book encourages a reevaluation of preconceived judgments surrounding street art and Deaf culture.

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

While the book provides valuable insights into Julia's experiences as a Deaf artist, it could have delved deeper into the intersections of her identity, such as her experiences as a woman of color navigating both the Deaf and graffiti subcultures. This additional perspective would have enriched the narrative by exploring the complexities of identity beyond deafness alone.

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

"You're Welcome, Universe" inspired me to delve deeper into Deaf culture and the intersectionality of identity, prompting further research into topics such as sign language, Deaf artistry, and the Deaf community's activism for recognition and accessibility.

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

I would recommend "You're Welcome, Universe" to readers of all ages who are interested in exploring themes of identity, friendship, and self-discovery through the lens of Deaf culture and street art. It particularly resonates with individuals seeking diverse and authentic portrayals of teenage experiences and struggles.

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 "You're Welcome, Universe" is "Deaf Republic" by Ilya Kaminsky, which similarly delves into the complexities of Deaf identity and resistance against societal oppression through poetry. Both works offer poignant insights into the power of

language, art, and community in challenging prevailing norms and advocating for inclusion and acceptance.

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

Date Reviewed: May 27, 2024

1. What is the main plot of this book?

In the book *You're Welcome, Universe*, by Whitney Gardner the main character Julia is a deaf teenager who is an exceptional graffiti artist. After she covers up a slur against her best friend with a piece of art, she is expelled from her high school. Julia then enrolls in a mainstream school where she struggles to fit in and winds up in the middle of a mystery involving her graffiti art being altered by someone else.

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

I think I most identify with Jordyn, Julia's interpreter and friend. I identify with Jordyn because I have a deaf friend since I was a young child that I often helped communicate with other kids. Similar to Jordyn, I remained loyal to my friend during difficult times and was always sensitive to his needs.

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

I believe the main message of this book is about self-expression and the importance of finding one's voice. Since Julia is deaf, she uses her art as a means of communication. Julia uses graffiti as a way to express herself and show the world who she truly is and not just what she has been labeled as— a deaf teenager.

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 think that the book was too preachy. I thought the book focused on the experiences of deaf individuals and the barriers they face in a hearing world. It promotes understanding and empathy towards people with disabilities and examines stereotypes surrounding deafness.

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

Julia sees graffiti as a form of self-expression and art while Anna initially views it as vandalism. This creates tension between them. Anna is hostile towards Julia's graffiti and sees it as a disruption to the school environment. While I understand Anna's perspective, I also see how Julia's graffiti serves to help her communicate who she truly is. For this particular reason, I agree with Julia.

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

Julia's experience as a deaf teenager provides insight into the deaf community and the challenges that come with living in a predominantly hearing world. Some characters in the story demonstrate understanding and acceptance toward Julia. Other characters exhibit ignorance or prejudice. This affirmed my belief that we as a society need to continue educating others and advocating for those with disabilities of all kinds.

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

Although it may have made the book unrealistic, I think one perspective that might be considered missing is that of a character who fully embraces and supports Julia's graffiti art from the beginning. Having a character who appreciates Julia's artistic talent and supports her expression through graffiti could offer a contrasting viewpoint to the opposition she faces from others. This

character could serve as a source of encouragement and validation for Julia, highlighting the positive impact of her art on those who appreciate it.

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

This book did not encourage me to pursue any other topics.

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

I would suggest this book to young adults ages 14-18 who are interested in art, graffiti culture, or stories featuring characters with disabilities.

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 would recommend adding "I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter" by Erika L. Sánchez.

While the book is not about a deaf main character, it is about a young girl, Julia, who is a Mexican-American teenager and is struggling with the death of her sister. To help her cope, she also turns to art in the form of writing.