

2007

THOUSAND OAKS
READS

ONE CITY ONE BOOK

2007

A Citywide Book Club: **September 15 - October 14**

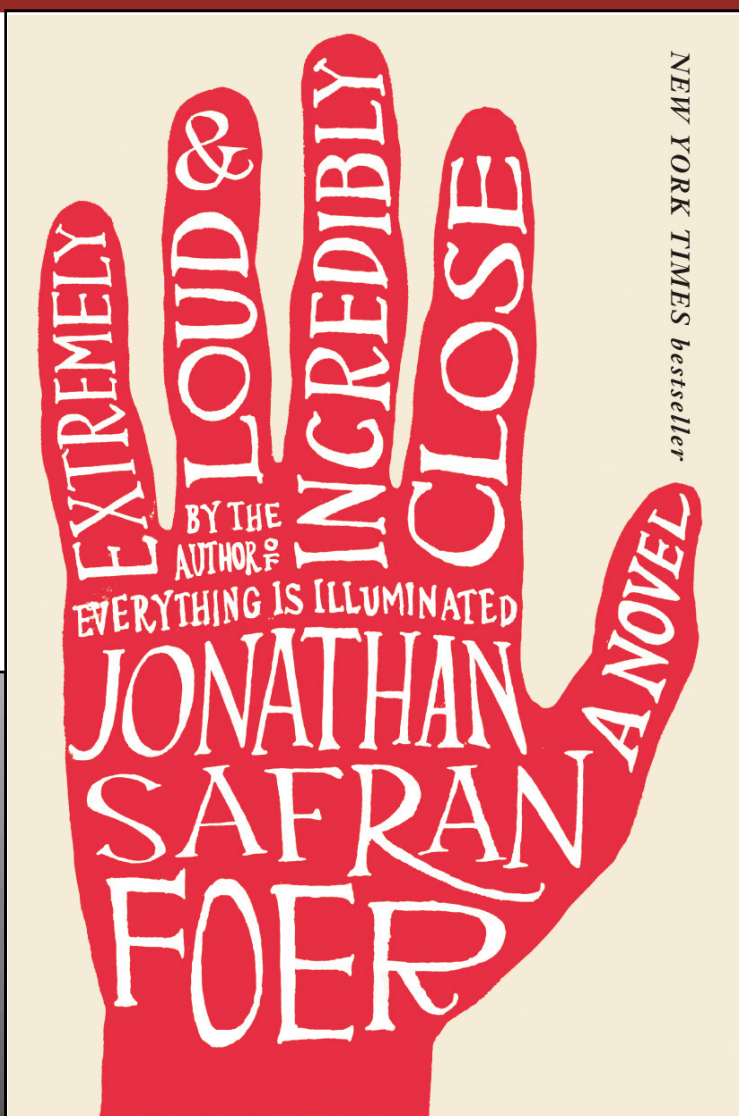
**Extremely Loud
& Incredibly Close**

A novel by Jonathan Safran Foer

JOIN US for
community book discussions
and other free events.



Jonathan Safran Foer



For more information, visit the
Thousand Oaks Reads website at
www.thousandoaksreads.org
or visit the Grant R. Brimhall Library or the
Newbury Park Branch Library.

Welcome!

Welcome to **Thousand Oaks Reads**, a citywide reading club brought to you by the Thousand Oaks Library. The concept of a community-wide reading program is not new. Cities across the country have found that large numbers of people reading and discussing the same book provides many opportunities for sharing ideas, meeting new people and celebrating reading.

The 2007 Thousand Oaks Reads selection is the novel ***Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*** by Jonathan Safran Foer. The book's universal themes of love, loss and survival are skillfully woven together through the voices of a child and his grandparents. The book is available at the Grant R. Brimhall Library and the Newbury Park Branch, as well as local bookstores.

The month-long celebration of the book will be filled with a wide variety of special events, including an afternoon with the author. There will be many opportunities for people to come together to talk about the book at community discussion groups held throughout the city.

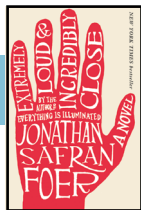
Plan on getting involved in this multi-faceted program that celebrates literature and builds community connections.

S. R. Brogden

Stephen R. Brogden, Director of Library Services

About the Book:

Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close by Jonathan Safran Foer



Precocious nine-year-old Oskar Schell is an inventor, Francophile, tambourine player, Shakespearean actor, jeweler, and pacifist. Too often he is weighed down by "heavy boots," his term for the grief he feels at losing his beloved father on the "worst day," 9/11. When Oskar discovers a key that belonged to his father, he is determined to find the missing lock. His quest takes him through the five boroughs of New York where he encounters an odd assortment of characters, each a survivor in his and her own way.

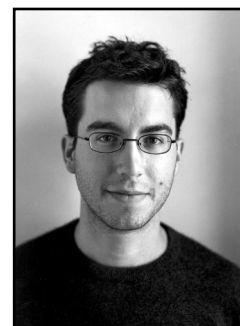
Oskar's close relationship with his grandmother and the mysterious renter in her apartment propel the book's secondary plot, which is developed through a series of letters interspersed throughout the book. The letters travel into history, relaying tragic accounts of victims of the World War II Dresden bombings, tales of love, loss and ultimately, survival.

Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close is an imaginative, creative novel offering a delicate mixture of humor, compassion and wisdom. The juxtaposing of the present with the past, the young with the old, reveals how history-making world events can ignite personal struggles to make sense of one's world.

This is Jonathan Safran Foer's second novel, following his award-winning ***Everything is Illuminated***. ***Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*** was a national bestseller, named a 2005 best book of the year by *Los Angeles Times*, an American Library Association Notable Book and one of *School Library Journal's* best adult books for high school students. Film options have been acquired by Scott Rudin Productions.

"My intention was to create something that was believable... someone whose journey you wanted to be along for."

Jonathan Safran Foer



About the Author:

Jonathan Safran Foer

Jonathan Safran Foer was born in 1977, the second of three sons, and grew up in Washington, D.C. He entered Princeton University in 1995, and quickly discovered his passion for creative writing, earning the Creative Writing Thesis prize in each of his undergraduate years. In a sculpture class, he became enthralled with the dioramas of assemblage artist Joseph Cornell (1903-1972). Foer combined both of his passions by soliciting work from other writers also interested in Cornell's art, which he then edited and published in a slim volume, ***A Convergence of Birds***, in 2001.

During one summer between semesters at Princeton, Foer traveled to Ukraine to research his family's history. Although his stay was very brief -- only a few days -- he found many of the themes that later inspired him as he began work on his first novel.

The resulting book, ***Everything is Illuminated***, launched a publishers' bidding war, eliciting advance praise from writers Russell Banks and Joyce Carol Oates, both Foer's former writing professors. The book became an immediate bestseller, and a film version was released in 2005, starring Elijah Wood.

The success of his first novel made it possible for Mr. Foer to resign his day job as an office receptionist and pursue writing his second novel, ***Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close***, full time. In addition to his two novels, Foer has written opinion and review articles for *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Washington Post* and has contributed articles and fiction to many magazines including *Paris Review* and *The New Yorker*.

In the spring of 2007, the British literary periodical, *Granta*, declared Jonathan Safran Foer one of the decade's "Best of Young American Novelists."

Foer, his wife Nicole Krauss, author of ***The History of Love*** (2005), and their young son Sasha live in Brooklyn, N.Y. It is not unusual to spot Jonathan Safran Foer writing in libraries, coffee shops and other common spaces. "There's something about being out in public and open to the accidents of the world that can be very useful in writing," he told *BookPage*. "I like keeping the environments fresh; it somehow keeps the imagination fresh."

For more information about the author and his work, visit the Thousand Oaks Reads website www.thousandoaksreads.org

Discussion Questions

1. Some American critics have compared Oskar as a character with other precocious juvenile narrators in literature, such as Holden Caulfield and Huckleberry Finn. In his review of the book, critic and novelist Michel Faber asks, "Aren't we accustomed to suspending disbelief for an unnaturally articulate pre-adult voice?" Was Oskar a convincing narrator? Why or why not?
2. Throughout the novel, Foer suggests commonalities between 9/11 and other man-made tragedies such as the bombings of Hiroshima and Dresden. Do you find these linkages convincing? Why or why not?
3. Many of the characters Oskar encounters are experiencing loss and longing. How does Oskar help some of these characters change over the course of the book?
4. Oskar's father tells him the story of New York's "sixth borough" which floated away to Antarctica and whose residents are literally frozen in time. Why do you think this story appears when it does in the book? How does it contribute to our understanding of Oskar and his father?
5. One reviewer writes, "The book — which includes a number of photographs and some eccentric typography — ends with what is undoubtedly the most beautiful and heartbreaking flip book in all of literature." What was your reaction to the graphic elements and the final series of photographs at the book's conclusion?

More discussion questions are available on the Thousand Oaks Reads website www.thousandoaksreads.org.

Selected questions courtesy of Talking Volumes program, a partnership of The Loft Literary Center, the Minneapolis Star Tribune, and Minnesota Public Radio.

Related Resources

Jonathan Safran Foer's website:
www.jonathansafranfoer.com

Photographic views of early to middle twentieth-century Dresden, Germany:
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/dres/dresphot.html>

Dresden, 13th February, A Framework for Remembering:
<http://tinyurl.com/2yu8zn>

The September 11 Digital Archive:
<http://www.911digitalarchive.org/>

September 11, 2001 Documentary Project, from the American Memory Project of the Library of Congress:
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/911_archive/

Professor Stephen Hawking's website:
<http://www.hawking.org.uk/>

Thousand Oaks Reads website:
www.thousandoaksreads.org

*When we open
a book together...*



*We close it
in greater harmony.*

Read-Alikes

Books with similar themes and/or style.

Windows on the World by Frederic Beigbeder —

A gritty and moving "minute-by-minute" fictional account of the famous "Windows on the World" restaurant's final moments.

Falling Man by Don DeLillo —

Thought provoking book about the myriad ways, both big and small, that the 9/11 attacks impact our lives.

Everything is Illuminated by Jonathan Safran Foer —
A young writer exploring his family's past finds his future forever changed by his discoveries.

The Whole World Over by Julia Glass —

The value of family, friendship, sacrifice, and love are tested by the strain of tragedy.

History of Love by Nicole Krauss —

A poignant meditation upon the impact of loss, and the desire to remain connected with the world.

Shadow Baby by Alison McGhee —

Eleven-year-old Clara is struggling to find the truth about her missing father and grandfather and her dead twin sister.

The Good Life by Jay McInerney —

A "Ground Zero" soup kitchen provides the setting for several bitterly unhappy people to uncover deeper emotional truths about their lives.

The Writing on the Wall by Lynne Sharon Schwartz —

Wisdom born of a traumatic past and the September 11 attacks combine to offer one troubled person a new beginning.

The Zero by Jess Walter —

Brian Remy, a NYPD "first responder" to the World Trade Center attacks, takes the reader on a Kafkaesque tour of the post-9/11 emotional landscape.

Community Book Discussions

Book discussions about *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*
Open to the public. No registration is required.

Tuesday, September 18, 7:00 p.m.

Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf
1408 N. Moorpark Road, Thousand Oaks • (805) 494-8961

Saturday, September 22, 10:30 a.m.

Grant R. Brimhall Library
1401 E. Janss Road, Thousand Oaks • (805) 449-2660

Monday, September 24, 7:00 p.m.

Barnes & Noble Booksellers
160 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd. (The Promenade)
Thousand Oaks • (805) 446-2820

Thursday, September 27, 5:00 p.m.

Peet's Coffee
595 N. Moorpark Road, Thousand Oaks • (805) 497-8366

Saturday, September 29, 10:30 a.m.

Newbury Park Branch Library
2331 Borchard Road, Newbury Park • (805) 498-2139

Tuesday, October 2, 7:00 p.m.

Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf
1772 E. Ave. de los Arboles, Thousand Oaks • (805) 241-2499

Thursday, October 4, 7:00 p.m.

Grant R. Brimhall Library
1401 E. Janss Road, Thousand Oaks • (805) 449-2660

Monday, October 8, 7:00 p.m.

Newbury Park Branch Library
2331 Borchard Road, Newbury Park • (805) 498-2139

Wednesday, October 10, 7:00 p.m.

Borders
125 W. Thousand Oaks Boulevard
Thousand Oaks • (805) 497-8159

Saturday, October 13, 10:30 a.m.

Grant R. Brimhall Library
1401 E. Janss Road, Thousand Oaks • (805) 449-2660

Thousand Oaks Reads would not be possible without the generous support of the following local businesses and organizations.

 SAGE Publications

 STAR

 California Lutheran University

 Friends of the Thousand Oaks Library

 STAR IN EDUCATION FOUNDATION

 THOUSAND OAKS CIVIC ARTS PLAZA FOUNDATION

 Thousand Oaks Library

 BORDERS

 BARNES & NOBLE BOOKSELLERS

 NATIONAL CHARITY LEAGUE

 HYATT WESTLAKE PLAZA IN THOUSAND OAKS

 The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf

 Peet's Coffee & Tea

 THOUSAND OAKS LIBRARY
Grant R. Brimhall Library: 805-449-2660; Newbury Park Branch Library: 805-498-2139

Special Events

The Sage Series:

A celebration of the written word and creative expression.

All programs are free and open to the public.

•• Tickets are required for the Author Event on October 7 ••

Thousand Oaks Art Festival Saturday & Sunday, September 15 & 16, 10:00am - 5:00pm. Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza lawn, 2100 Thousand Oaks Blvd., 805-449-2660, ext. 258. Visit the Thousand Oaks Reads One City One Book booth and help create extremely colorful and incredibly cool murals for the library.

Film Screening: *Everything is Illuminated* Wednesday, September 19, 6:00pm. Grant R. Brimhall Library, 1401 E. Janss Road, Thousand Oaks. 805-449-2660. Based on the novel by Jonathan Safran Foer, *Everything is Illuminated* tells the story of a young man's quest to find the woman who saved his grandfather from the Nazis. Directed by Liev Schreiber and starring Elijah Wood. 106 minutes; rated PG-13.

CLU Faculty Panel Discussion Thursday, September 20, 7:30 - 9:00pm. California Lutheran University Lundring Events Center, 60 W. Olsen Road, Thousand Oaks. California Lutheran University professors respond to Foer's novel and discuss the implications of finding inner peace in the face of chaotic world events. Call the library for transportation information: 805-449-2660.

An Afternoon with Fern Davye - Liaisons in Literature:

Truth, Memory, Love, Death Saturday, September 29, 1:00pm. Grant R. Brimhall Library, 1401 E. Janss Road, Thousand Oaks. 805-449-2660. Ms. Davye captivates audiences as she navigates the rich relationships in great writing. Recommended for teens and adults.

Film Screening: *Parallel Lines* Saturday, October 6, 1:00pm. Grant R. Brimhall Library, 1401 E. Janss Road, Thousand Oaks. 805-449-2660. In the aftermath of September 11, Nina Davenport interviews strangers across the country, finding that despite their differences, many Americans dealt with the national trauma in similar ways. 98 minutes; not rated.

An Afternoon with Jonathan Safran Foer Sunday, October 7, 2:00pm. Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza Scherr Forum, 2100 Thousand Oaks Blvd. The award-winning author presents a reading and discussion followed by a book signing. Admission is free but tickets are required. Pick up free tickets at the Grant R. Brimhall Library (805-449-2660) or the Newbury Park Branch (805-498-2139), **beginning September 17.**

Book Arts Experience Saturday, October 13, Session One: 10:00am - 1:00pm; Session Two: 2:00 - 5:00pm. Grant R. Brimhall Library, 1401 E. Janss Road, Thousand Oaks. 805-449-2660. Create a handmade book reflecting the themes of *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*. This class is taught by California artist and teacher Marcia Moore. All materials and tools will be supplied. **Registration is required.** Recommended for teens and adults.

These programs are made possible through the generous contributions of the Friends of the Thousand Oaks Library and Sage Publications.