

extremely loud & incredibly close

Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close: An In-Depth Exploration of the Novel and Its Cultural Impact

Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close is a poignant novel penned by American author Jonathan Safran Foer, published in 2005. This compelling work has garnered critical acclaim and a dedicated readership for its innovative narrative style, emotional depth, and exploration of grief, loss, and the search for meaning. The novel's title itself evokes a sense of overwhelming noise and profound subtlety, encapsulating the protagonist's tumultuous emotional journey. In this article, we delve into the themes, narrative structure, characters, adaptations, and cultural significance of *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, providing a comprehensive understanding of its place in contemporary literature.

Overview of the Novel

Plot Summary

The story centers around Oskar Schell, a nine-year-old boy who is grappling with the tragic loss of his father, Thomas Schell, who died in the September 11 attacks. Oskar discovers a mysterious black envelope among his father's belongings containing a key and a note with the word "Black." Driven by curiosity and his need to connect with his father, Oskar embarks on a nationwide quest across New York City to find the lock that matches the key.

Throughout his journey, Oskar encounters various individuals who have their own stories of loss and hope, creating a mosaic of human experience. Interwoven with Oskar's narrative is a series of letters, photographs, and flashbacks that deepen the reader's understanding of his character and emotional state.

Themes and Motifs

- **Grief and Loss:** The novel explores the profound impact of losing loved ones, especially through traumatic events like 9/11.
- **Communication and Connection:** Oskar's quest symbolizes a desire to bridge the emotional gaps caused by loss.
- **Innocence and Childhood:** The perspective of a young boy offers a unique lens on complex themes.
- **Memory and History:** The narrative examines how personal and collective

memories shape identities.

- **Chaos and Order:** The juxtaposition of the overwhelming noise of life with attempts to find meaning and order.

Narrative Structure and Literary Techniques

Nonlinear Narrative

Foer employs a nonlinear storytelling approach, weaving together Oskar's personal journey with flashbacks, photographs, and typographical experimentation. This structure reflects the chaotic nature of grief and the fragmented way memory functions.

Use of Visual Elements

The novel incorporates photographs, blank pages, and unconventional typography, transforming the reading experience into an interactive and immersive journey. These visual elements serve to deepen emotional resonance and symbolize the fractured psyche of the protagonist.

Multiple Perspectives

In addition to Oskar's narrative, the book features stories of other characters, including Oskar's grandparents, who each have their own histories of loss. This multiplicity enriches the narrative and emphasizes the universality of grief.

Character Analysis

Oskar Schell

As the protagonist, Oskar embodies innocence, curiosity, and complexity. His obsession with finding the lock that fits the key reflects his desire for closure and understanding. His interactions reveal a deep vulnerability and resilience.

Thomas Schell (Father)

Through flashbacks, readers gain insight into Thomas's life and relationship with Oskar. His death leaves a void that propels the narrative and underscores themes of loss and remembrance.

Grandparents and Other Characters

- **Ben:** Oskar's grandmother, who struggles with her own grief and offers a contrasting perspective on loss.
- **Walter:** Oskar's grandfather, whose mysterious past and connection to the events of 9/11 add layers to the story.
- **Other NYC Residents:** Each character Oskar meets embodies different facets of grief, hope, and healing.

Adaptations and Cultural Impact

Film Adaptation

The novel was adapted into a film in 2011, directed by Stephen Daldry and starring Tom Hanks and Sandra Bullock. The film received mixed reviews but was praised for its visual style and emotional depth. It brought the story to a broader audience and sparked discussions about the portrayal of 9/11 in popular media.

Critical Reception and Awards

- Winner of the 2006 U.S. National Book Award for Fiction
- Selected for Oprah's Book Club in 2006, boosting its popularity
- Recognized for its innovative narrative techniques and emotional impact

Influence on Literature and Popular Culture

Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close has influenced contemporary literature by demonstrating the power of multimedia storytelling and unconventional formats. Its themes of grief and healing continue to resonate, inspiring authors and artists to explore complex emotional landscapes in innovative ways.

SEO Optimization and Search Intent

When discussing *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, it is essential to incorporate relevant

keywords to enhance search engine visibility. Popular search terms include:

- Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close novel summary
- Jonathan Safran Foer book analysis
- Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close themes
- Film adaptation of Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close
- Best books about grief and loss

Additionally, optimizing for questions such as "What is the story behind Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close?" or "Why is Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close considered an important modern novel?" can help attract a broader audience seeking in-depth insights.

Conclusion

Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close stands as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of tragedy. Through its innovative narrative structure, emotional depth, and compelling characters, the novel invites readers to confront their own understanding of loss, memory, and hope. Its cultural impact extends beyond literature into film and popular discourse, cementing its place as a significant contemporary work. Whether explored as a literary masterpiece or a poignant reflection on grief, *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* continues to resonate with audiences worldwide, offering a powerful reminder of the complexity of human emotion and the enduring pursuit of connection amidst chaos.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main theme of 'Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close'?

The novel explores themes of grief, loss, memory, and the process of healing after the death of a loved one, particularly through the perspective of a young boy named Oskar.

Who is the author of 'Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close'?

The book was written by Jonathan Safran Foer.

How does the novel structure its narrative?

The novel employs a non-linear narrative, including photographs, handwritten notes, and multiple perspectives to deepen the storytelling and immerse readers in Oskar's emotional journey.

What role do the photographs play in the story?

Photographs are used to add visual depth, represent memories, and provide clues that help Oskar in his quest, making the story more immersive and authentic.

Has 'Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close' been adapted into a film?

Yes, the novel was adapted into a film released in 2011, directed by Stephen Daldry and starring Tom Hanks and Sandra Bullock.

What is the significance of the character Black in the novel?

Black is Oskar's loyal and comforting pet dog, symbolizing companionship and providing emotional support throughout his journey.

How has 'Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close' been received critically?

The novel received widespread acclaim for its innovative storytelling and emotional depth, though some critics have discussed its intense portrayal of grief and trauma.

What awards has 'Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close' won?

The book won the 2006 U.S. National Book Award for Young People's Literature and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2006.

Why is the title 'Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close' significant?

The title reflects the intense emotions and sensory experiences associated with trauma, particularly the overwhelming noise of grief and the closeness of loss experienced by Oskar.

Additional Resources

Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close: A Profound Journey Through Trauma, Loss, and Humanity

Introduction

Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* is a literary mosaic that explores the depths of grief, resilience, and the search for meaning in the aftermath of tragedy. Published in 2005, this novel has captivated readers worldwide with its innovative narrative style, emotional depth, and profound themes. It challenges readers to confront the complexities of loss and the enduring human spirit in the face of overwhelming tragedy.

This review delves into the multifaceted layers of the novel, examining its narrative structure, characters, themes, stylistic choices, and the emotional impact it imparts.

Overview of the Plot and Structure

The Central Narrative

At its core, *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* tells the story of a young boy, Oskar Schell, who embarks on a quest across New York City to find a lock that matches a mysterious key belonging to his deceased father. The novel is set against the backdrop of the September 11, 2001, attacks, which serve as a catalyst for Oskar's journey and inner turmoil.

Narrative Layers and Perspectives

One of the book's defining features is its layered narrative, which includes:

- Oskar's First-Person Narration: The primary voice, capturing his curiosity, fears, and emotional struggles.
- Faux Documents and Artifacts: Such as photographs, letters, and invented documents that deepen the story.
- Other Characters' Perspectives: Including Oskar's grandparents, who recount their own histories and losses, providing context and contrasting viewpoints.
- Imaginary and Symbolic Elements: Foer employs visual and textual devices to evoke emotion and symbolize themes like chaos, memory, and loss.

This multifaceted approach creates an immersive experience, emphasizing the chaos and complexity of grief.

Deep Dive into Main Characters

Oskar Schell

- Age and Personality: A precocious, inquisitive nine-year-old with a passion for inventing, puzzles, and exploration.
- Emotional Landscape: Oskar is grappling with his father's death and the trauma of 9/11, which manifests as anxiety, anger, and confusion.
- His Quest: The search for the lock that fits the key symbolizes his desire for closure and

understanding.

Thomas Schell (Oskar's Father)

- Role and Significance: His mysterious death during the 9/11 attacks profoundly impacts Oskar.
- Letters and Memories: Through his letters, the reader gains insight into his personality, love, and regrets.

The Grandparents (Ben and Abby)

- Their Stories: Offer historical and emotional context, revealing their own losses and resilience.
- Their Relationship: Their complex dynamic highlights themes of reconciliation, family, and memory.

Other Characters

The novel introduces numerous secondary characters, each embodying different facets of grief, hope, and human connection, such as:

- The mysterious "Renter" who occupies the Schells' apartment.
- Various New Yorkers who Oskar encounters on his journey.

Themes and Symbols

Grief and Trauma

At its heart, the novel is an exploration of grief—how it manifests, how it can be debilitating or transformative. Foer illustrates that grief is not linear but a complex, ongoing process.

Loss and Memory

Memory acts as both a burden and a source of comfort. The characters' memories serve as bridges to the past, yet also trap them in their pain.

Searching for Meaning

Oskar's journey symbolizes the universal human quest to find meaning amidst chaos. His obsession with puzzles mirrors our desire to understand life's inexplicable events.

Innocence and Experience

The novel juxtaposes childhood innocence with the harsh realities of loss, emphasizing how trauma can accelerate or complicate emotional growth.

Symbols

- The Key: Represents the hope for closure, understanding, and connection.

- The Puzzles and Riddles: Symbolize the complexity of life and the challenge of making sense of suffering.
- The City (New York): Acts as a living organism, a landscape of memories, tragedies, and resilience.

Stylistic and Literary Devices

Narrative Style

Foer employs a mix of prose, visual elements, and unconventional formatting to create an engaging and sometimes disorienting experience that mirrors the chaos of grief and memory.

Use of Visuals

The inclusion of photographs, blank pages, and unconventional typography serves to:

- Emphasize the fragmented nature of memory.
- Engage readers visually, prompting them to interpret symbols and clues.

Language and Tone

Foer's language oscillates between childlike wonder, poetic lyricism, and raw emotional intensity, capturing Oskar's voice authentically.

Interweaving Stories

The novel's structure, which alternates between different characters and timelines, emphasizes interconnectedness and the ripple effects of tragedy.

Emotional Impact and Critical Reception

Emotional Resonance

Readers often describe the novel as emotionally draining yet deeply rewarding. The portrayal of Oskar's grief feels authentic and empathetic, eliciting a visceral response.

Criticisms and Controversies

While widely acclaimed, the novel has faced some criticism:

- Overly Sentimental: Some critics argue that the novel's emotional intensity borders on sentimentality.
- Fragmented Narrative: Its unconventional structure may challenge traditional readers.
- Representation of Trauma: Critics have debated whether the portrayal of 9/11 and grief is respectful or exploitative.

Awards and Recognition

The novel was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2006 and has enjoyed commercial success, resonating with audiences worldwide.

Thematic Significance in Contemporary Literature

Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close is often compared to other works that grapple with trauma and loss, such as:

- *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini
- *A Grief Observed* by C.S. Lewis
- *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold

Its innovative narrative and emotional honesty have cemented its place in the canon of modern trauma literature.

Personal Reflection and Enduring Legacy

The novel's enduring appeal lies in its honest portrayal of a child's perspective on tragedy and the universal human desire for connection and understanding. It reminds readers that even amidst chaos and grief, moments of beauty, hope, and human resilience can emerge.

Foer's work challenges us to confront our own wounds and to recognize the profound interconnectedness of human experiences.

Conclusion

Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close is a powerful testament to the resilience of the human spirit. Through its layered narrative, complex characters, and profound themes, it offers a compelling exploration of grief, memory, and the search for meaning in a fractured world. While its unconventional style may not appeal to all, its emotional depth and thought-provoking content make it a significant work that continues to resonate long after the final page.

For readers willing to engage deeply with its intricate structure and emotional landscape, the novel provides a transformative experience—challenging, heartbreaking, and ultimately hopeful.

[Extremely Loud Incredibly Close](#)

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2005 Oskar Schell, the nine-year-old son of a man killed in the World Trade Center attacks, searches the five boroughs of New York City for a lock that fits a black key his father left behind.

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extremely loud incredibly close: Trauma in Jonathan Safran Foer's "Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close" Michelle Klein, 2016-08-08 Seminar paper from the year 2015 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Literature, grade: 2,0, University of Koblenz-Landau (Anglistik), course: 20th Century Novels, language: English, abstract: Trauma seems to me being an essential topic to discuss in school as everybody sooner or later has to deal with loss or already dealt with it in the past. As every student can identify with this potential challenge, it is important for them to get to know different ways of dealing with trauma. Foer's story even reveals that coping with trauma is able to bring people from different races and ages together. Even if people's trauma is caused by different events there will be a connection between these people. Moreover, it would be possible to teach this topic interdisciplinary and interdisciplinary in ethics or religious education classes. As everyone could be affected by trauma I determined this topic for my planned lesson. The reason for choosing the subtopics namely 'inventing' and 'heavy boots' referring to Oskar; Grandfather Schell's 'aphasia' and 'the doorknobs' and finally, 'supressing' and 'the feeling of being needed' with regard to Grandmother Schell reveal concreteness for the main topic. I decided to teach the topic by group work to facilitate the exchange of experiences without the danger to be exposed in front of the class. I thought this is the best way, as the students can talk about how they perceived the character and his or her ability to deal with the trauma they have gone through. The team work is followed by a presentation and discussion of this work to ensure all students have reached the same level of knowledge. Moreover, it is important have the ability to emphasise with this character and change their perspectives or contribute their own experiences with loss to explain the others why somebody could show such behaviour. I will analyse the topic by a characterisation following by a psychoanalytic approach. For one it is important to get to know why people are behaving differently after experiencing loss and second, it is illuminating for the students to become aware that trauma can be responsible for the person concerned being left with an altered personality. The lesson I have planned relates to both, characterisation and psychoanalytic approaches. After the lesson the students should have general knowledge about trauma and its effects. Furthermore, it should be clear that trauma can only be overcome by going through two phases, which build up upon each other.

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literature project, trust Novels for Students for all of your research needs.

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extremely loud incredibly close: *Memory, Intermediality, and Literature* Sara Tanderup Linkis, 2019-04-16 If readers of Sara Tanderup Linkis' *Something to hold on to ...* open the book in the expectation of entering a niche of literature and literary studies, they will leave it after having encountered a new highway in literature. Here, the traditional theme of memory and the most recent use of digital media merge into a new understanding of the role of the book in the contemporary media landscape and of vicissitudes of memorial processes literature, which also offers a broader perspective on literature in human history. Spurred by Sara Tanderup Linkis' sharp eye the readings of texts are lucid, engaging and offers so many ideas that teachers will renew their curricula, and readers will open the internet for more or rush to the library. — Svend Erik Larsen, professor emeritus *Memory, Intermediality, and Literature* investigates how selected literary works use intermedial strategies to represent and perform cultural memory. Drawing on the theoretical perspectives of cultural memory studies, this engaging, reader-friendly monograph examines new materialism and intermediality studies, analyzing works by Alexander Kluge, W.G. Sebald, Jonathan Safran Foer, Anne Carson, Mette Hegnhøj, William Joyce, J.J. Abrams and Doug Dorst. The works emerge out of different traditions and genres, ranging from neo-avant-garde montages through photo-novels and book objects to apps and children's stories. In this new monograph, Sara Tanderup Linkis presents an interdisciplinary and comparative approach, reading the works together, across genres and decades, and combining the perspectives of memory studies and materialist and media-oriented analysis. This approach makes it possible to argue that the works not only use intermedial strategies to represent memory, but also to remember literature, reflecting on the changing status and function of literature as a mediator of cultural memory in the age of new media. Thus, the works may be read as reactions to modern media culture, suggesting the ways in which literature and memory are affected by new media and technologies – photography and television as well as iPads and social media.

extremely loud incredibly close: *Reflecting 9/11* Heather Pope, Victoria Bryan, 2016-06-22 In over fifteen years, the cultural and artistic response to 9/11 has been wide-ranging in form and function. As the turbulent post-9/11 years have unfolded – years that have been shaped and characterized by the War on Terror, the Patriot Act, the Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, 7/7, Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo Bay – these texts have been commemorative and heroic, have attempted to work through collective and individual traumas, and have struggled with trying to represent the “terrorist other.” Many of these earlier domestic, heroic and traumatic works have so often been read as limitations in narrative. This collection, however, challenges the language of limitation and provides re-readings of earlier work, but also traces the emergence of a new paradigm for discussing the artistic responses to 9/11 – one that frames these narratives as dialogic, self-conscious and self-reflexive interventions in the responses to the attacks, the initial representations of the attacks, and the ever-shifting social and geopolitical continuities of the 9/11 decade. These texts widen the conversation about the lasting impacts of 9/11, and incorporate strands of discussion on American exceptionalism and imperialism, torture, and otherness, whilst still remaining invested in the personal and collective traumas of the attacks. The authors included here ask crucial questions about the way 9/11 is being historicized: will it, for example, be read as a moment of rupture or epoch? Will it inevitably be attached to the War on Terror or the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan? As they trace the emergent patterns of reflexivity, politicization and dissent, the contributions here are also implicitly invested in asking how far they extend.

extremely loud incredibly close: *9/11 Culture* Jeffrey Melnick, 2011-09-15 *9/11 Culture* serves as a timely and accessible introduction to the complexities of American culture in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. Gives balanced examinations of a broad catalogue of artifacts from film, music, photography, literary fiction, and other popular arts Investigates the ways that 9/11 has exerted a shaping force on a wide range of practices, from the politics of femininity to the poetics of

redemption Includes pedagogical material to assist understanding and teaching, including film and discographies, and a useful teachers' preface

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extremely loud incredibly close: *Apocalyptic Visions in 21st Century Films* Elizabeth A. Ford, Deborah C. Mitchell, 2018-07-11 The apocalypse on the big screen has expanded beyond the familiar end-of-the-world movies. Romantic comedies, teen adventures and even children's films frequently feature apocalyptic imagery--disintegrating cities, extreme weather events, extinctions, rogue military forces, epidemics, zombie armies and worlds colliding. Using sophisticated CGI effects, filmmakers are depicting the end of the world ever more stunningly. The authors explore the phenomenon of the cinematic apocalypse and its origins in both our anxieties and our real-world events, and they identify some flashes of hope in the desolate landscape.

extremely loud incredibly close: *The City Since 9/11* Keith Wilhite, 2016-03-04 Charting the intersection of aesthetic representation and the material conditions of urban space, *The City Since 9/11* posits that the contemporary metropolis provides a significant context for reassessing theoretical concerns related to narrative, identity, home, and personal precarity. In the years since the September 11 attacks, writers and filmmakers have explored urban spaces as contested sites—shaped by the prevailing discourses of neoliberalism, homeland security, and the war on terror, but also haunted by an absence in the landscape that registers loss and prefigures future menace. In works of literature, film, and television, the city emerges as a paradoxical space of permanence and vulnerability and a convergence point for anxieties about globalization, structural inequality, and apocalyptic violence. Building on previous scholarship addressing trauma and the spectacle of terror, the contributors also draw upon works of philosophy, urban studies, and postmodern geography to theorize how literary and visual representations expose the persistent conflicts that arise as cities rebuild in the shadow of past ruins. Their essays advance new lines of argument that clarify art's role in contemporary debates about spatial practices, gentrification, cosmopolitanism, memory and history, nostalgia, the uncanny and the abject, postmodern virtuality, the politics of realism, and the economic and social life of cities. The book offers fresh readings of familiar post-9/11 novels, such as Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, but it also considers works by Teju Cole, Joseph O'Neill, Silver Krieger, Colum McCann, Ronald Sukenick, Jonathan Lethem, Thomas Pynchon, Colson Whitehead, Paul Auster, William Gibson, Amitav Ghosh, and Katherine Boo. In addition, *The City Since 9/11* includes essays on the films *Children of Men*, *Hugo*, and the adaptation of *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, chapters on the television series *The Bridge*, *The Killing*, and *The Wire*, and an analysis of Michael Arad's *Reflecting Absence* and the 9/11 Memorial.

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gets a bad rap these days. Our culture rewards those who troll the hardest and who snark the most. At times it seems like there's no place anymore for optimism, integrity, and good old-fashioned respect. Enter America's Dad: Tom Hanks. Whether he's buying espresso machines for the White House Press Corps, rewarding a jovial cab driver with a night out on Broadway, or extolling the virtues of using a typewriter, Hanks lives a passionate, joyful life and pays it forward to others. Gavin Edwards, the New York Times bestselling author of *The Tao of Bill Murray*, takes readers on a tour behind the scenes of Hanks's life: from his less-than-idyllic childhood, rocky first marriage, and career wipeouts to the pinnacle of his acting career and domestic bliss with the love of his life, Rita Wilson. As he did for Bill Murray, Edwards distills Hanks's life story into ten commandments that beautifully encapsulate his All-American philosophy. Contemplating the life, the achievements, and the obsessions of Mr. Tom Hanks may or may not give you the road map you need to find your way. But at the very least, it'll show you how niceness can be a worthy destination.

extremely loud incredibly close: *9/11 Gothic* Danel Olson, 2021-09-21 Published to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of the World Trade Center attacks, *9/11 Gothic: Decrypting Ghosts and Trauma in New York City's Terrorism Novels* returns to the ruins and anguish of 9/11 to pose a question not yet addressed by scholarship. Two time World Fantasy Award-winning writer Danel Olson asks how, why, and where New York City novels capture the terror of the Al-Qaeda mass murders through a supernatural lens. This book explores ghostly presences from the world's largest crime scene in novels by Don DeLillo, Jonathan Safran Foer, Lynne Sharon Schwartz, Griffin Hansbury, and Patrick McGrath—all of whom have been called writers of Gotham. Arguing how theories on trauma and the Gothic can combine to explain ghostly encounters civilian survivors experience in fiction, Olson shares what those eerie meetings express about grief, guilt, love, memory, sex, and suicidal urges. This book also explores why and how paths to recovery open for these ghost-visited survivors in the fiction of catastrophe from the early twenty-first century.

extremely loud incredibly close: *The "Other" In 9/11 Literature* Lenore Bell, 2017-02-28 This book breaks the assumption that the racial tension the in 9/11 novels lies solely in the dynamic between "Americans" and "terrorists." It also interrogates post-9/11 constructions of whiteness and the treatment of African-American characters.

extremely loud incredibly close: *Literature and Terrorism* , 2012-01-01 The years following the attacks of September 11, 2001 have seen the publication of a wide range of scientific analyses of terrorism. Literary studies seem to lag curiously behind this general shift of academic interest. The present volume sets out to fill this gap. It does so in the conviction that the study of literature has much to offer to the transdisciplinary investigation of terror, not only with respect to the present post-9/11 situation but also with respect to earlier historical contexts. Literary texts are media of cultural self-reflection, and as such they have always played a crucial role in the discursive response to terror, both contributing to and resisting dominant conceptions of the causes, motivations, dynamics, and aftermath of terrorist violence. By bringing together experts from various fields and by combining case studies of works from diverse periods and national literatures, the volume *Literature and Terrorism* chooses a diachronic and comparative perspective. It is interested in the specific cultural work performed by narrative and dramatic literature in the face of terrorism, focusing on literature's ambivalent relationship to other, competing modes of discourse.

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cultural theory into concise introductions to the historical background, the themes, the formal strategies, and the reception of influential literary texts, and they do so in a jargon-free language accessible to readers on all levels of qualification.

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