
Book Report: Dear Evan Hansen By Val Emmich, Steven Levenson, Benj Pasek And Justin Paul

Book Report

Dear Evan Hansen

Authors: Val Emmich, Steven Levenson, Benj Pasek and Justin Paul

Genre: Dear Evan Hansen is a Non-Fiction, Coming-of-age novel inspired by the hit Broadway show Dear Evan Hansen.

Topics: Brothers and Sisters, Friendship, High School, Misfits and Underdogs

Publisher: Poppy

Publication date: October 9, 2018

Publisher's recommended age: 12 - 18

Original Number of pages: 368

The Setting

Although in the novel it is never stated where Dear Evan Hansen is set, it most likely takes place in New York.

Firstly In Dear Evan Hansen, they talk about “breaking in a glove” and Baseball is generally played in America and Toronto, Canada.

Secondly, pot is legal in this novel. There are 11 states where pot is legal, plus Toronto

Thirdly, when Evan Brakes his arm he says he broke it in, Ellison Park. Ellison Park is in New York.

In conclusion, Dear Evan Hansen takes place during the 21st century in New York.

The Characters

Mark Evan Hansen:

Imprint Mark Evan Hansen is the main character (he passes by the name Evan). He is the son of Heidi Hansen. He has social anxiety, which appears as part of his character throughout the book. In this novel, he is on a quest to find the acceptance and love, he has never had. Through this tough journey, he discovers the consequences of risking it all for the chance “to be found”.

Connor Murphy:

Connor Murphy or the 'freak' as he is known at school is a catalyst ('A catalyst character, is the character in a story who causes the protagonist, to move toward some kind of action or transformation'.) Connor Murphy was 17 years old, the older brother of Zoe Murphy and the son of Cynthia and Larry Murphy. Connor had depression and anxiety but was unable to get help because he didn't get the positive attention he needed. Although his mother tried to help him, he fought with both his parents and sister Zoe. Their complicated relationships created a very stressful environment and later cost Connor's life.

Zoe Murphy:

Zoe Murphy is the youngest child of Cynthia and Larry Murphy and Connor Murphy's sister. The novel mentions that she plays in her school jazz band and constantly apologizes to anyone that her brother is rude to. As her brother is always getting himself into trouble she feels the pressure keep up her reputation of being the 'good child' in her family and is probably the main reason that she keeps most of her struggles to herself.

Other Characters: Cynthia Murphy, Larry Murphy, Heidi Hansen, Jared Kleinman, Alana Beck etc.

The Plot

Dear Evan Hansen is the story of a high school student Evan Hansen who deals with social anxiety and yearns to belong. When a classmate commits suicide, all of a sudden Evan Hansen who usually goes by unnoticed finds himself at the centre of this tragedy. In an attempt to comfort Connor's family, Evan pretends that he was best friends with Murphy's son. He invents a fake email account to prove their friendship, and when a fake suicide note goes viral, Evan finds himself the face of a video about loneliness and friendship.

As this is happening, Evan is drawn so deep into the lie that he doesn't know how to get out of the mess and finds that he has 'been found' and is no longer invisible to the people around him.

Eventually, Evan is forced to make a decision between truthfully giving up the fantasy he's created and going back to his regular life, or risk taking the bullet and lose everything he's ever wanted.

The Techniques Used

Dear Evan Hansen explores the idea of Loneliness. Loneliness is a common issue in schools and teenagers. The authors are able to successfully convey empathy for one such child. The authors use powerful tactile imagery to convey the feelings of Evan. The frustration and boredom of Evan are expressed in the line 'I sit up and lift my hand off the floor, the dust from so many sneakers clinging to my moist palms. People walk by, stepping around me, some offering unhelpful commentary, but its doesn't matter. I cant hear them. I can't move, either. I don't want to. Why should I?'

Violence and isolation are what Evan experiences and observes at school. It's not a welcoming place for him and the tactile imagery of his hand, (which should be someone else's hand

extended in friendship in a nurturing school environment) covered in dust emphasises his feelings of being dislocated and lesser than other students. Floors symbolize being at the bottom and Evan is being portrayed as someone who cannot lift himself off the floor and breach the metaphorical walls of silence that gradually been built around him by students who will not reach out the hand of friendship and his own inability to attempt friendship because of the harsh environment he has observed and whose behaviours he now repeats in a cycle of isolation which has caused him social anxiety and depression. The authors are most certainly able to raise empathy for Evan, a child who hasn't been given the chance to belong and to live like other students and thus mimics the exclusionary behaviours that he has observed and experienced as a high school student which cause him to feel lonely and isolated.

My Reaction

I think that all teenagers should read this book because it explores all kinds of important and relevant issues that teenagers face on an everyday base, such as anxiety, bullying, and suicide. I think that this book could help a lot of teenagers who maybe don't have anyone to talk to overcome all sorts of personal issues so that they don't come to the same ending as Connor, and to help people have empathy for others.

I originally found out about Dear Evan Hansen after having to use the music from the musical for a performance. I then went to see the musical in New York which I enjoyed so much I decided to read the novel. I think this book is appropriate for a school setting and a home setting and would recommend this novel to people of most ages.