



OCDANIEL

Wesley King

GRADES 3-7 / ENGLISH

THEMES Obsessive Compulsive Disorder • Anxiety Disorder
Mental Illness • Adventure • Mystery

THE STORY

From the author of *Incredible Space Raiders from Space!* comes a brand-new coming-of-age story about a boy whose life revolves around hiding his obsessive compulsive disorder—until he gets a mysterious note that changes everything.

BOOK SUMMARY

Daniel spends football practice perfectly arranging water cups—and hoping no one notices. Actually, he spends most of his time hoping no one notices his strange habits—he calls them Zaps: avoiding writing the number four, for example, or flipping a light switch on and off dozens of times over. He hopes no one notices that he's crazy, especially his best friend Max, and Raya, the prettiest girl in school. With great voice and grand adventure, this book is about feeling different and finding those who understand.



AUTHOR PROFILE

WESLEY KING is the author of *The Incredible Space Raiders from Space!*, which *Publishers Weekly* called “a well-drafted coming-of-age story” that “will keep [readers] turning pages.” King’s first book, *The Vindico* and its sequel, *The Feros*, were both Junior Library Guild selections. *The Vindico* also won a Red Maple Award, a kid’s choice award that involved the participation of more than 250,000 kids in Wesley’s home province of Ontario, Canada.

WEB RESOURCES

- Author Website: <http://wesleyking.com/>
- Publisher Website - Book: <http://books.simonandschuster.ca/OCDaniel/Wesley-King/9781481455312>
- Publisher Website - author: <http://authors.simonandschuster.ca/Wesley-King/452907296>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Wesley King’s interview on Global Toronto: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBGsN75zS-I>
- Mindshift App from the Anxiety Disorders Association of British Columbia: <https://www.anxietybc.com/resources/mindshift-app>
- International OCD Foundation’s Resources for kids: <https://kids.iocdf.org/>
- Reachout.com.au’s “Heads Up: Skills for Life Teacher Resource” <http://au.professionals.reachout.com/headsup-skills-for-life-resource>

READING COMPREHENSION

- Both Daniel and Sara struggled with mental illness. What made Daniel socially accepted while Sara remained an outcast?
- How does Daniel's book *The Last Kid on Earth* compare to his real life? Do you think writing the book helped Daniel to deal with his real-life events? How?
- Describe Raya. How did her relationship with Daniel unfold throughout the book? Why do you think she was so accepting of Daniel?
- Describe Daniel's Routines. What would happen if he failed to perform his Routines?

DISCUSS

- Why do you think Sara decided to approach Daniel for help when she would not even speak to anyone else?
- Throughout the book, Daniel and Sara face particularly difficult challenges in their lives. What kinds of resources can you think of that are in place for children who may need extra support to deal with difficult problems?
- Sometimes people we know have mental health issues we may or may not be aware of. What can individuals do to be more kind and sensitive to those dealing with mental illness?

“**Daniel's pain and confusion at what he comes to realize is OCD is memorably portrayed in this moving story of self-acceptance.**”

—Publishers Weekly

SUGGESTED READINGS

FROM THE SAME AUTHOR

- (For Gr. 3 to 7) *Incredible Space Raiders from Space!* (2016)
<http://books.simonandschuster.ca/The-Incredible-Space-Raiders-from-Space!/Wesley-King/9781481423205>
- (For Gr. 5 to 7) *The Vindico* (2013)
<http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/308979/the-vindico-by-wesley-king/>
- (For Gr. 7 & up) *The Feros* (2014)
<http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/308980/the-feros-by-wesley-king/9780147511362/>
- (For Gr. 3 to 7) *Dragons vs Drones* (2016)
<http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/316952/dragons-vs-drones-by-wesley-king/9781595147974/>

BY OTHER ARTISTS FROM WORDFEST 2016

- (For Gr. 7 & up) *Saving Montgomery Sole* (2016) by Mariko Tamaki
<http://penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/392187/saving-montgomery-sole#9780670070015>
- (For Gr. 3 to 7) *Notes from the - Life of a Total Genius* (2016) by Stacey Matson
<http://www.staceymatson.com/news/notes-from-the-life-of-a-total-genius>
- (For Gr. 7 & up) *Exit, pursued by a bear* (2016) by E.K. Johnston
<http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/529826/exit-pursued-by-a-bear-by-ek-johnston/9781101994580/>
- (For Gr. 6 & up – French) *Cahokia* (2016) by Camille Bouchard
<http://www.editionsboreal.qc.ca/catalogue/livres/cahokia-2494.html>

OTHER BOOKS AND MOVIES ON RELATED SUBJECT

- (For Gr. 8 & up) *The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B* (2013) by Teresa Toten
<http://penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/221676/unlikely-hero-room-13b#9780385678346>
- (For Gr. 7 to 12) *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2004) by Mark Haddon
<http://penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/73405/curious-incident-dog-night-time#9780385659802>
- (For Gr. 7 & up) *Crazy* (2014) by Linda Vigen Phillips
<http://www.eerdmans.com/Products/5437/crazy.aspx>
- (For Gr. 3 to 7) *What to Do When Your Brain Gets Stuck: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming OCD* (2007) by Dawn Huebner
<http://www.dawnhuebnerphd.com/OvercomingOCD.aspx>

ACTIVITIES

A WRITING ACTIVITY - *THE LAST KID ON EARTH*

Daniel's book "The Last Kid on Earth" helps him to confront and work through some of his issues. Writing can be cathartic for many people. Write a story or keep a journal for two weeks to see if you find any value for yourself.

A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY - *MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM ACTIVITY*

This activity is a great introduction to explore students' values and beliefs in relation to mental health and to then explore the dynamic nature of mental health. (See Activity Description for instructions. The accompanying 'Continuum Cards' can be accessed on ReachOut.com's "Destigmatizing mental health difficulties" page.)

Source: ReachOut.com (n.d.). *Destigmatizing mental health difficulties*. Retrieved from <http://au.professionals.reachout.com/destigmatizing-mental-health-difficulties>.

“King creates convincing characters and writes engaging dialogue, and whether or not readers identify fully with Daniel, they will see parts of themselves in this vulnerable protagonist. Clues dropped in the first part of the book may lead readers to expect a conventional sort of happy ending, but the story’s conclusion is more complex and satisfying. Written from Daniel’s point of view, this perceptive first person narrative is sometimes painful, sometimes amusing, and always rewarding.”

—Booklist

CURRICULUM CONNECTION

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

GRADE 4:

- Connect the thoughts and actions of characters portrayed in oral, print and other media texts to personal and classroom experiences (2.2)

GRADE 5:

- Describe ways that personal experiences and prior knowledge contribute to understanding new ideas and information (2.1)

GRADE 6:

- Identify, and explain in own words, the interrelationship of the main ideas and supporting details (2.1)

GRADE 8:

- Discuss various ways characters are developed and the reasons for and plausibility of character change (2.2)

GRADE 9:

- Identify explicit and implicit ideas and information in texts; listen and respond to various interpretations of the same text (2.1)

HEALTH AND LIFE SKILLS:

- R - 4.1 Recognize that individuals can have a positive and negative influence on the feelings of others.
- R-5.4 Practise effective communication skills; e.g., active listening, perception checks.
- R-7.2 Analyze the need for short-term and long-term support for emotional concerns; e.g., family, friends, schools, professionals.
- R-8.1 Describe characteristics of persistent negative feeling states; e.g., depression, mood disorders.
- R-8.7 Develop and demonstrate strategies for promoting peaceful relationships; e.g., find common ground in conflicts.
- R-9.1 Identify appropriate strategies to foster positive feelings/attitudes.

Mental Health as a Continuum

This activity is a great introduction to explore students' values and beliefs in relation to mental health and to then explore the dynamic nature of mental health.

Preparation

- Print off the Mental Health Continuum Cards and if possible laminate them in order to allow them to be re-used with other classes.
- Set up the continuum across the classroom with ***Mentally well*** at one end and ***Mentally unwell*** at the other end.

Activity 1

- Distribute the cards amongst students - ensure that you have at least one card per student.
- Explain to students that each card includes a term that is used to describe a person in relation to their mental health.
- Instruct students to take their card and place it along the continuum where they believe it fits e.g. if someone is described as "*Life of the party*" would they be closer to the ***Mentally well*** end, closer to the ***Mentally unwell*** end or somewhere in between.
- Once all of the cards have been placed along the continuum, ask students to walk up and down the continuum and have a look at where others have placed the terms.
- Ask students to identify any card which they think could be placed somewhere else along the continuum. Ask students to pick up the card and explain their reasons why they believe it should be in a different place along the continuum.

Key messages to discuss

1. Often students will place the *Life of the party* card at the ***Mentally well*** end of the continuum, however, research shows that excessive partying, dangerous alcohol use and sexual promiscuity are indicators that the young person is having mental health difficulties. This behaviour if it is ongoing, should be a flag for teachers, parents and friends that the young person is not coping.
2. Students will normally place those terms that describe mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, PMS etc at the ***Mentally unwell*** end of the continuum. It is important to emphasise that just because someone has been diagnosed with a mental illness does not necessarily mean they are mentally unwell. The majority of people who are diagnosed, receive professional help and maintain their treatment regime can be ***mentally well***. You can use the analogy that it is just like a person suffering from asthma - if that person takes their medication as prescribed and lives a healthy lifestyle they can manage their asthma and it will have little or no impact on their physical health. It is exactly the same for a person who is diagnosed with a mental illness.
3. Feeling blue, feeling flat, feeling down, grieving, upset etc are all naturally reactions to a variety of situations and are all part of the natural fluctuations that occur in relation to people's mental wellbeing. However, if someone is feeling flat, blue, down or grieving for an extended period of time (more than two weeks) then this is when it starts to become a concern. It is important to remember that one in five students in your class will experience a depressive episode before they are 18 and prolonged feelings such as these are an early indicator of possible depression.

Activity 2

- Ask students to refer back to the Mental Health Continuum and ask them to think about where they fit at this minute - **don't ask them to move there or share**. Now ask them to think about where they would have fit last week and then last year. Discuss whether their position changed. It is important to ensure students understand that our mental health and wellbeing fluctuates constantly.
- Ask them to think now about the influence the following situations may have on their mental wellness:

What if ...

- they lost a close friend?
- their pet died?
- they got a great exam result?
- a family member had financial concerns?
- they were worried about a friend being depressed?

Ask them to think about what some of the factors are that may cause a person to move up or down the continuum.

Discuss the sorts of strategies that young people may use to cope with one of these situations. Ask students to think of who they may be able to turn to if one of these situations happened to them - Do they have a support network? Do they know where they can go for help?

Key message to discuss

1. After undertaking these activities some students may feel the need to find out more as they may be concerned about a friend or family member. It is really important to provide students with a place to go to find out more. ReachOut.com (Insert link) has information about a range of mental health disorders as well as powerful personal stories from young people who have either experienced a tough time themselves or have supported a friend or family member with a mental illness.