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Professor Warner

ENGL-112B Sec 01

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*Every You, Every Me* Book Talk



(Image courtesy of Wikipedia)

*Every You, Every Me* by David Leviathan and photographs by Jonathan Farmer

**About the Author**

<http://www.davidlevithan.com/>



Levithan is a prolific author of young adult literature and has written many books over the years. Some of his books feature male, gay characters such as *Naomi and Ely's No Kiss List*, *Boy Meets Boy* and others. An interesting thing about the writing process of *Every You, Every Me* is that according to him on his website, he had worked with photographer Jonathan Farmer and the premise is that Levithan would craft the story around Farmer’s pictures and that Farmer had no idea what Levithan was writing, so that the photos were taken randomly. The book was also named after a song by a British rock band named Placebo similarly titled, “Every You Every Me.”

**Summary**

*Every You, Every Me* involves the main character, Evan trying to solve the mystery of who has been sending him pictures of himself and his best friend, Ariel. These pictures trigger memories of a past event involving Ariel that Evan feels guilty for and has been struggling with those thoughts ever since then. However, these pictures reveal a different side of Ariel, and makes Evan question if he truly did know everything about her or if there was something else that he was not aware about.

**Quotes**

“The rest of the walk to school, my mind returned to zeros and ones. ~~This 001110101110 is 011101100110 a 10011101 language 1111110000000~~. Focused on nothing, open to everything-it’s a state I fall into, where all my senses swap. My voice is blind, my hearing is mute, my sight is deaf. Art is science, mathematics is conversation, and music is something that bleeds. I am so far away that I’m inside myself. I barely notice colors unless I taste them. Not the yellows or the greens. I taste the deeper blues. The darker reds. ~~You see, I understand.~~” (11-12)

 This quote gives the reader a glimpse into the mind of Evan and it reveals how he thinks and sees the world. Both Ariel and him struggle with mental issues and thus are complex characters who do not think in the “traditional” or “normal” way of thinking. This appears visually with how many of his thoughts and memories appear crossed out and are replaced with what he actually thinks or says, such as times in mid conversation where he thinks one thing and says another thing. Other actions of his that highlight his mental issues and possible psychosis are times where he loses himself in his thoughts or screams out loud, even though he thought it was in his head. He also gets told many times that he needs to get help and many people do not understand his actions and behavior. However, this quote pretty effectively sets up for the reader the understanding of how he thinks and thus allows the reader to feel pity for him in social situations where he can not fully express himself due to everything going on in his head.

“*~~Heartless. Heartless.~~ Heartless*. You’d never called me that. Never. ~~But.~~ I was there for you. I was the one you trusted. ~~But.~~ I knew you. *~~‘You can’t know me.’~~* I did. *~~‘You know one me. Just like I know one you. But you can’t know every me, Evan. And I can’t know every you.’~~* I didn’t want this to be coming back. I didn’t want to be having these conversations in my head. *~~‘It’s not a conversation. You’re the only one here.’~~*” (155)

 This quote is important due to how it ties back to the central theme of the novel and the idea that people are complex beings and can not be fully understood. Everyone has a mask that they wear in every situation, whether or not they are aware of it, and everyone has many more sides to them that might not have been known when first meeting that person. Sometimes it is a positive thing, such as discovering someone really loves donating to charities or something along those lines. However, sometimes it can be more serious, such as someone hiding who they really are because they are too afraid of what others may think of them and whether or not they would still be accepted. This could be things such as coming out as LGBTQ+, struggling with mental illness or addiction, or assault. In the case with Ariel, due to being manic and possibly psychotic, she is so complicated that it is hard to decide what is truth and what is a phase or illusion, as even Evan and Jack, her ex boyfriend, struggle to decide. Even Evan, who is her best friend, goes along with what she thinks and says but is unsure when he should try to stop going along with it and help her, which he notes he realized this too late. This is common for people dealing with mental illness, which could have been brought on by multiple causes, who seem fine and maybe even happy at times until something gives and they can no longer win the fight against their demons. So it is important that even if it is impossible to know everything about a person, what matters is the effort to get to know as much about them as possible.

“‘Did you want her dead? That’s the choice. Alive or dead.’ ‘It’s not that simple.’ ‘Oh, yes it is. Dead is dead. For whatever reason. And in a choice between life and death, there is no other choice. It’s life or death, period. These guys chose life. Are you saying you’d have chosen death?’ ‘I’m telling you, it’s not that simple. You’re ignoring what she wanted.’ ‘She wanted help. Not death.’ *~~You were always changing your mind. I wanted you to have the opportunity to change your mind.~~* ‘She didn’t want help. She wanted freedom.’ *~~But death is not freedom. For a moment, it can look like freedom. But then it’s death. Anything. Something. Nothing.~~* I moved forward. *~~It almost felt like you were with me now.~~* ‘We did the right thing,’ I told Dana. I needed to say it out loud. ‘We knew her. Yes, she wanted freedom from her pain. But she didn’t want to die. There’s a difference.’ *~~Now I saw you nodding. All the moments you were happy. All the things you wouldn’t have wanted to lose.~~ ~~Maybe Dana loved you for your pain. I loved you for everything.~~*” (237-238)

 This quote is extremely powerful, as it is the moment that Evan finally accepts the choice that he and Jack had made and tackles difficult topics such as how to help someone who might not want help and how to love someone who might hate the person trying to help them. Oftentimes, people hesitate to help because they are not sure how to help and think that interfering could make things worse, even in life or death situations. However, this quote emphasizes that it is always important to try to help as the chance that the outcome ends up positive outweighs the risk that it will end up negative. If the person is at risk of dying, then most people agree that doing anything will ultimately result in a positive outcome a majority of the time, because the alternative would be death, as stated in the quote. So since the issue in the novel is mental illness related, it is always important to try to talk to the other person and help them, even if the action seems drastic. In Ariel’s case, she needed professional help and since it was clear she did not want any, eventually the only option left was to force her to get some help. Even though Evan has felt guilty over this ever since, he now understands after talking to Dana that what they did was the right choice and that it is better to lose her temporarily than to lose her forever. He knows that she may never forgive him but that risk is worth possibly having her in his life again one day. And finally, he now understands that he loves her too much to let her continue to suffer and so would rather be a traitor in her eyes if it meant getting her the help that she desperately needs.

**Thoughts on Teaching**

Overall, this book was fantastic and an entertaining read. This book would probably be best for eighth graders and beyond, as it deals heavily with mental illness. It is not explicit or too complex but is probably able to be fully enjoyed around that age range, especially since the characters are high schoolers, and so are more relatable to fellow highschool students. Teens should read this book as it allows them to see the perspective of someone who wanted to help their friend but is not sure if they made the right choice, which could be something that some teens might be dealing with. If taught in class, this book could be used during a lesson on the topic of mental health and how important it is to get help. It also shows that no one is truly alone and that there are people who are available to help and want the best outcome, even if it is going to be a very difficult healing process. When it comes to *Adolescents in the Search For Meaning: Tapping the Powerful Resource of Story*, the novel sort of fits into chapters four, five, and six. This is because Evan deals with mental illness and guilt over an action and he struggles to help his best friend, who is suffering from mental illness even more than he is, which are very real-life experiences. He also learns how to deal with the loss of his friend, as he simply just misses her so much but has to learn at the end of the book that it was the best choice to send her away so that she could possibly get help. And finally Evan’s struggle with a decision that he made that he was not entirely sure about until the end of the novel had consumed him throughout the novel and he felt like a traitor to Ariel.

**Text Complexity**

Dale-Chall

Dale-Chall Formula worksheet

Raw score 1.3011

Adjusted Score: (3.6365 + 1.3011)

Final Score: 4.9

New Dale-Chall Readability Index:

Grade level: Grades 4 - 5

ATOS

ATOS Level: 1.8

Word Count: 250

Average Word Length: 4

Average Sentence Length: 5.3

Average Vocabulary Level: 2.1

 Even though the book is easy to read and pretty simple when it comes to its vocabulary, the topics it discusses and the issues it presents make it not really for kids and young teens. It is definitely more for eighth graders and beyond, as many websites and descriptions label it as so.