

'The Goldfish Boy' Book Review

"Twelve-year-old Matthew is trapped in his bedroom by crippling OCD, spending most of his time staring out of a window watching the inhabitants of Chestnut Close go about their business. Until the day a toddler staying next door goes missing and Matthew finds himself at the centre of the mystery. Every one of his neighbours is a suspect, so Matthew must turn detective to unravel the disappearance of Teddy, whilst facing his fears along the way- with the help of a brilliant cast of characters"

I don't think I've ever been able to relate to a fictional character as much as I could to Matthew, in *The Goldfish Boy*. It was like reading my own battle with OCD except without the missing next door neighbour's grandson. Before I even get into the review of the book properly, I want you guys to order this book. Whether you suffer from OCD, mental health problems or not. It's one of the best portrayals of OCD I have ever read, and it needs to be read by everyone.

Without giving any spoilers, the main character of the book is a 12-year-old boy called Matthew, who suffers from crippling OCD, which makes him practically housebound. One day his next door neighbour's grandson, who he watches from his bedroom window, goes missing. The investigation to solve the mystery of where he's gone commences.

Not only do you follow Matthew's journey of finding out what's happened to his neighbour's grandson. You also follow his personal journey and battle against OCD. You get a very clear insight into the physical and emotional distress that OCD can cause their sufferers. You start to understand what it really means to have OCD and the true distressing and debilitating nature of the intrusive thoughts.

When I was first asked if I wanted to read this book I was a little bit sceptical because it's labelled as being a children's book. Now, unfortunately, I'm definitely not a child anymore *Sad face*. But I was pleasantly surprised when I was reading. This book can easily be enjoyed by children and adults, sufferers and non-sufferers alike. So don't let the fact it's a fictional children's book put you off.

I was mostly worried that because it was a children's book, it wouldn't tackle OCD amazingly well. It wouldn't portray OCD in an accurate way that could help educate non-sufferers what it means to suffer from the illness. But by God was I proved wrong!?! Lisa did an excellent job of describing OCD in a way that truly shows the torment and struggles sufferers go through on a daily basis.

Although, Matthews compulsions and intrusive thoughts do mainly focus on contamination, which can be seen as the most stereotypical form of OCD. It's evident in this book the amount of research and effort that went into understanding OCD to ensure this book was not contributing to the existing stigma and discrimination that surrounds mental health and OCD, in particular.

My own compulsions and intrusive thoughts are so similar to Matthews, it was honestly so helpful and refreshing to read, as a sufferer from OCD. It made me feel less alone, less scared and anxious about what the future has to hold and recovery in particular. Although Matthew was only a fictional character, in my mind he was so real. Every time I put the book down, I couldn't wait to start reading it again, to see what progress Matthew was making.

OCD and mental health, although prominent themes in the book were weaved in really nicely between the mystery that surrounded the missing boy. It genuinely had me hooked right to the end. Lisa did a fantastic job in not giving anything away too soon, whether if that was about the potential suspects for the missing boy or more personal issues around Mathews OCD, such as how he ended up in being so caught in the mercy of OCD.

Matthew is such a heartwarming character. I loved how we got a real insight into how OCD affects every single aspect of his life including his friendships and relationships with other children his age as well as his parents. You really get to know Matthew in the story, and I know this may sound pretty lame, but when I finished the book I wanted to know how his recovery was going. Which kind of just shows how good Lisa is at developing exceptionally relatable characters.

Because of the way in which OCD is so perfectly portrayed and represented in this book, I honestly think it's a must for all non-sufferers to read. It can be daunting trying to understand mental illness. However, through the aid of reading fantastically written fictional books like *The GoldFish Boy*, that daunting prospect of trying to get your head around a mental illness, can be made significantly easier.

This is Lisa's first debut novel, and I'm beyond impressed. If this is what her first book is like, I'm already excited to read any of her future releases. If you haven't gathered already, I can't sing this book enough praise, I honestly can't. I hope I have encouraged you all to go out and order *The GoldFish Boy* now.

By Nicole Woodward