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As I've been stressing here recently, mental health awareness is really important. One of the best ways to bring awareness is to have proper representation in our culture in media. Neal Shusterman's representation in Challenger Deep was exceptionally well done. Before we even get to the meat of this review, I'm going to immediately recommend that you read it. It takes a lot these days to get me absorbed in a book, so I was impressed by the amount of pull this book had on me. The narrative in Challenger Deep is rich, as the reader follows Caden Bosch into the development and diagnosis of schizophrenia. The book is broken up into short chapters that go back and forth between two narratives. In the first narrative, he is the resident artist on a ship headed for Challenger Deep, the deepest point on earth. In the other, the reader follows him through his day to day life: his schoolwork, interactions with friends, his conversations with his family. Shusterman's narrative never really gives the reader a full grasp on what is going on. The fragmented moments of description and truth drew me in (seriously, I read this book in two days!). The masterful imagery makes the world Caden lives in come to life and intrigues the reader just as much as the crew of the ship is intrigued with Challenger Deep. One of the more unique points of the book is Shusterman's inclusion of his son's, Brendan Shusterman's, artwork. A lot of the book is based on Brendan's experiences with mental illness (more on that here, but there are spoilers) and many of the images were created during his struggle with his own illness (you can see the color versions here). This connection makes Caden's struggles even more real for the reader. As someone who suffers from anxiety, I could easily relate to some of his anxious thoughts and the weird feelings that mental health issues can bring. I'm not going to even include a rating scale for this book, since it is way off the charts. If you are interested in young adult fiction, this should be on your must read list. If you or someone you know has dealt with mental health issues, this may be a good book for you. Even if these aren't your usual reading topics, the novel can stand alone. The surrealness of it is amazing! It's going to be hard to find another book this summer that I like better. Until next time! The Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis (German Youth Literature Prize) (until 1981: Deutscher Jugendbuchpreis) is an annual award established in 1956 by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth to recognise outstanding works of children's literature. It is Germany's only state-funded literary award. In the past, authors from many countries have been recognised, including non-German speakers.The award is organized by the Arbeitskreis für Jugendliteratur, also called AKJ or Association for Children's and Youth Literature, which receives financial support, including prize money, from the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. Awards are given in five categories: Best Picture Book, Best Children's Book, Best Youth Book, Best Non-Fiction Book and Choice of the Youth Jury. Up to six nominations in each category are announced in March at the Leipzig Book Fair, and the awards are presented during the Frankfurt Book Fair by the Federal Minister of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. In each category, the winning author receives an 8000 euro cash prize, and a bronze statuette designed by Detlef Kraft representing Momo from the novel by Michael Ende. A special award, established in 1991, is also given every year to recognise long-term individual achievement for an author, illustrator or translator. These awards generally carry a cash prize of 10,000 euros.Since the award was established, many changes have been made. When the Deutscher Jugendbuchpreis (as the award was known until 1981) began in 1956, only two categories were recognised; Best Children's Book and Best Youth Book. In addition to these, a special prize was awarded every year in a different category. It was not until 1964 that the Best Picture Book and Best Non-fiction Book categories replaced this variable award. In 1991, to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the award, the Special Prize was reintroduced to recognise individual achievement for writers, illustrators and translators. The final category recognized today, awarded by the Jugendjury, was not introduced until 2003, when it was originally called the Young People's Prize (Preis der Jugendlichen).Awards are decided upon by two juries: the Kritikerjury (Critics' Jury) and the Jugendjury. The Kritikerjury decides the nominations and the majority of the prizes; the Jugendjury only decides the Jugendjury prize. The Kritikerjury is appointed by the Arbeitsgruppe für Jugendliteratur once every two years, although jury members can serve two consecutive terms. The jury consists of nine members: the chair, and eight specialist judges - two for each award category. The Jugendjury consists of the members of six German youth book clubs. It is also changed every two years, although some clubs serve consecutive terms. Another jury decides on the Special Prize to be awarded each year. See also Finalists for this award.The National Book Awards are a set of annual U.S. literary awards. At the final "National Book Awards Ceremony" everSee also Finalists for this award.The National Book Awards are a set of annual U.S. literary awards. At the final "National Book Awards Ceremony" every November, the National Book Foundation presents the NBAs and two lifetime achievement awards to people.The National Book Awards were established in 1936 by the American Booksellers Association, abandoned during World War II, and re-established by three book industry organizations in 1950. Non-U.S. authors and publishers were eligible for the pre-war awards. Now they are presented to U.S. authors for books published in the United States roughly during the award year.The nonprofit National Book Foundation was established in 1988 to administer and enhance the Book Awards and "move beyond [them] into the fields of education and literacy", primarily by sponsoring public appearances by writers. Its mission is "to celebrate the best of American literature, to expand its audience, and to enhance the cultural value of good writing in America."Site: www.nationalbook.org Most of the violence in Challenger Deep is imaginary, part of Caden's fantasy about traveling aboard a mysterious, magical ship. The vessel is attacked by carnivorous sea horses and endures a battle between a giant squid and a whale. The captain and his parrot each want Caden to kill the other; he eventually commits such an act. > Violence & Scariness Most of the violence in Challenger Deep is imaginary, part of Caden' Language is generally mild, with an instance or two each of "hell," "damn," "ass," and "bastard." > Language Language is generally mild, with an instance or two each of "hell," &q Mountain Dew and Jell-O are mentioned. Caden and his parents use Tylenol and Advil. Pharmaceuticals mentioned include Ativan, Geodon, Risperdal, and Seroquel. > Products & Purchases Mountain Dew and Jell-O are mentioned. Caden and his parents use Tylenol and Adv Caden develops a friendship with Callie, a fellow patient. They hold hands and cuddle together in bed one night. > Sex, Romance & Nudity Caden develops a friendship with Callie, a fellow patient. They hold hands and c Caden's parents become "tipsy" while vacationing in Las Vegas. Caden admits to drinking beer at parties. The sailors aboard the fantastical ship drink "cocktails" (which are probably medicine). At the hospital, Caden is put on a regimen of antidepressants and antipsychotics. > Drinking, Drugs & Smoking Caden's parents become "tipsy" while vacationing in Las Vegas. Cad Official Site: 2015 Had joint winners, No award 2003 due to committee reorganization.From January 1 through mid-FebruaOfficial Site: 2015 Had joint winners, No award 2003 due to committee reorganization.From January 1 through mid-February, schools and libraries across Rhode Island make ballots available to middle school and high school students who have read three books from a selected list of titles so they may vote for their favorite.Rhode Island was on the forefront of having a statewide book award for teens. Thanks to some cutting edge teachers and library media specialists connected with the Rhode Island Education Media Association (RIEMA), work to start such an award began in 1998. Over the course of two years, the group expanded to include some local young adult librarians from public libraries. The first chairperson of the RITBA committee was Joe Light, one of the media specialists at Westerly High School at the time.The first thing the initial award committee needed to do was design a series of goals and criteria to use to narrow the selection of titles for a nominee list. It was clear from the beginning the committee did not want to just select a title on its own. Instead, it would compile a list of nominees tweens and teens could read and judge. They opted to focus on timeliness, requiring the nominees to be printed within two years of the list's announcement.Since that first year, the list has grown and prospered. The Rhode Island Library Association joined RIEMA in sponsoring the award in 2002. Every year, the number of participating voters and school/library sites increases. The RI Teen Book Award has been deemed such a success that librarians and school library media specialists from the Bay State utilized it as a model for their own award. The Massachusetts Teen Choice Book Award is sponsored by the Massachusetts Library Association Youth Services Section and the Massachusetts School Library Association.The RITBA Committee welcomes any school or library that would like to participate in the election.---from the official site Challenger Deep by Neal Shusterman Published by HarperCollins on 4/21/15 Genres: Depression & Mental Illness, Social Issues, Special Needs, Young Adult Pages: 320 Source: Edelweiss My content rating: YA (Mental illness) My rating: Caden Bosch is on a ship that's headed for the deepest point on Earth: Challenger Deep, the southern part of the Marianas Trench. Caden Bosch is a brilliant high school student whose friends are starting to notice his odd behavior. Caden Bosch is designated the ship's artist in residence, to document the journey with images. Caden Bosch pretends to join the school track team but spends his days walking for miles, absorbed by the thoughts in his head. Caden Bosch is split between his allegiance to the captain and the allure of mutiny. Caden Bosch is torn. A captivating and powerful novel that lingers long beyond the last page, Challenger Deep is a heartfelt tour de force by one of today's most admired writers for teens. Challenger Deep is the type of book that you won't forget long after you've finished reading it. This book sheds light on mental illness in a way I have never seen done before (at least not so thoroughly and realistically) – putting you directly into the mind of the mentally ill character and taking you on an enlightening, but also somewhat perplexing journey through his illness. Normally, I start my reviews with what I loved, but I'm switching things up a little because I feel like I have to get the negative out of the way first, before I can get to what I really loved. So, stick with me here! The negatives: Prepare to be confounded. I had a hard time rating this book, to be honest. I kept hovering between four and four-and-a-half stars, even though I think it's brilliant in a lot of ways. Why? This book was very strange. In fact, it bordered on psychedelic in some places. Reading from Caden's perspective when he is having a psychotic episode is … well … psychotic. It kind of reminded me of listening to my dad's old drug-induced Pink Floyd albums (or maybe the Beatles' "I am the Walrus"). It was weird. And, honestly, I found myself wondering, if this had been any other author besides Neal Shusterman (who I have undying faith in), if I would have stuck it out at all because I just didn't get the twisted maritime world that Caden lived in – or the strange people around him – or just about anything that was happening. Did I kind of enjoy reading about this weird alternate reality? Yes, but I didn't understand it at all. At first. Until I got to about the mid-point of the book … which is when … What I LOVED: It all came together. See, I shouldn't have doubted, because Shusterman is truly brilliant, and every nuance of Caden's psychedelic alter-reality had a deeper meaning, had a connection to his real life (which we would see, alternating with chapters that took place in Caden's schizophrenia-induced life). Each strange character, all of the crazy things that they did and said, they all started to make sense once you hit that fifty percent mark in the book. And that's when I went from feeling like this book might just be a little too strange for me to realizing that all of the puzzle pieces were coming together. That's when the journey got really good. An honest portrayal of serious mental illness. As I mentioned in my discussion post Based on a True Story, this book had its basis in Shusterman's real-life experiences. His own son went through much of the same darkness that Caden went through in this book, and the realism of that shined through. (The illustrations are pictures that his son actually drew while he was suffering from his own mental illness.) It was obvious that Shusterman had created this broken and damaged character with a true sense of love and understanding of what a serious mental illness can do to a person. The book is strange, but that's because Shusterman so accurately portrays the POV of a character who's had a break from reality. Reading this book will help you understand that perspective more too. You can't help but put this book down with a deeper understanding of what someone with this type of mental illness truly feels and sees when they are in its grip. For that reason alone, I feel like this book is an astounding and important read! Challenger Deep can be a difficult, twisted and sometimes disturbing read, but it's also brilliant – full of depth and emotion. This is the type of book that explores the depths of the human psyche and shows us the resilience of the human spirit, demonstrating that, though mental illness can be devastating, hope is never lost. I give Challenger Deep 4.5/5 stars. ***Disclosure: I received this book from Edelweiss and the publisher in exchange for an honest review. No other compensation was given and all opinions are my own.*** About the Author Award-winning author Neal Shusterman grew up in Brooklyn, New York, where he began writing at an early age. After spending his junior and senior years of high school at the American School of Mexico City, Neal went on to UC Irvine, where he made his mark on the UCI swim team, and wrote a successful humor column. Within a year of graduating, he had his first book deal, and was hired to write a movie script. In the years since, Neal has made his mark as a successful novelist, screenwriter, and television writer. As a full-time writer, he claims to be his own hardest task-master, always at work creating new stories to tell. His books have received many awards from organizations such as the International Reading Association, and the American Library Association, as well as garnering a myriad of state and local awards across the country. Neal's talents range from film directing (two short films he directed won him the coveted CINE Golden Eagle Awards) to writing music and stage plays – including book and lyrical contributions to "American Twistory," which is currently played in several major cities. He has even tried his hand at creating Games, having developed three successful "How to Host a Mystery" game for teens, as well as seven "How to Host a Murder" games. As a screen and TV writer, Neal has written for the "Goosebumps" and "Animorphs" TV series, and wrote the Disney Channel Original Movie "Pixel Perfect". Currently Neal is developing an original TV series with his son, Jarrod, and adapting Tesla's Attic with co-writer Eric Elfman for TV as well. Wherever Neal goes, he quickly earns a reputation as a storyteller and dynamic speaker. Much of his fiction is traceable back to stories he tells to large audiences of children and teenagers — such as his novel The Eyes of Kid Midas. As a speaker, Neal is in constant demand at schools and conferences. Degrees in both psychology and drama give Neal a unique approach to writing. Neal's novels always deal with topics that appeal to adults as well as teens, weaving true-to-life characters into sensitive and riveting issues, and binding it all together with a unique and entertaining sense of humor. Author Links: We are part of a group of librarian friends who have had an ongoing bookclub running for the last several years. Each "season" (we're nerds) we pick a theme and each of us chooses a book within that theme for us all to read. Our current theme is "B-Sides," where we pick different books from previous authors that we read in the club. For this blog, we will post a joint review of each book we read for book club. We'll also post the next book coming up in book club. So feel free to read along with us or use our book selections and questions in your own book club! Book: "Challenger Deep" by Neal Shusterman Publishing Info: HarperCollins, April 2015 Where Did We Get This Book: The library! A-Side Book: "Scythe" by Neal Shusterman Book Description: A captivating novel about mental illness that lingers long beyond the last page, Challenger Deep is a heartfelt tour de force by New York Times bestselling author Neal Shusterman. Caden Bosch is on a ship that's headed for the deepest point on Earth: Challenger Deep, the southern part of the Marianas Trench. Caden Bosch is a brilliant high school student whose friends are starting to notice his odd behavior. Caden Bosch is designated the ship's artist in residence to document the journey with images. Caden Bosch pretends to join the school track team but spends his days walking for miles, absorbed by the thoughts in his head. Caden Bosch is split between his allegiance to the captain and the allure of mutiny. Caden Bosch is torn. Challenger Deep is a deeply powerful and personal novel from one of today's most admired writers for teens. Laurie Halse Anderson, award-winning author of Speak, calls Challenger Deep "a brilliant journey across the dark sea of the mind; frightening, sensitive, and powerful. Simply extraordinary." Kate's Thoughts I first read "Challenger Deep" a couple of years ago when it was getting a lot of press and hype for its themes of mental illness. Given that I went through some nasty battles with depression in high school and college, I was very interested to see what Neal Shusterman was going to do with it, especially since I knew that his own son was diagnosed with schizophrenia when he was a teen (and therein inspired this book). Reading it the first time was a very rewarding and somewhat personal experience, but reading it a second time gave me the chance to read it knowing what was coming and how all the symbolism was going to come together. One of the most striking things about "Challenger Deep" is how Shusterman frames it, in that it's a very disorienting read for the reader, giving him or her a sense of what constant disorientation may feel like for those who are struggling with mental illness. Shusterman is careful to not put any kind of mental disorder into a box, and does take care to mention that this one experience that Caden is having is not necessarily universal to all people who suffer from schizophrenia. The story is all from Caden's perspective, but you do kind of get insight into what those who are around him may be feeling based on their reactions and the decisions that they make. The parallels between what is going on in Caden's 'reality' and what is going on 'the ship' was very interesting to see, and it was powerful to be able to see the glimpses of reality within the hallucinations (the captain, the figurehead, etc). I also liked that Shusterman never felt condescending or cloying in his storytelling, and never got preachy about what Caden should or shouldn't do, or should or shouldn't feel. He presents a situation and lets the reader decide for themselves what conclusions to draw. He also doesn't wrap everything up in a neat little bow; you get the sense that things aren't over for Caden and that he will always have these struggles. As hard as that is to accept, it's also very realistic, as mental illness is for many people something they are going to have their entire lives, degrees of seriousness changing all the time. It's a realistic take, but it doesn't feel bleak or nihilistic. Given that this book is so personal for Shusterman and his family, I'm not surprised that he didn't approach it with easy answers or cut and dry solutions. I think that it's very important that teens can see this kind of story, so that they can either see themselves in a book, or they can gain some insight into something that those close to them may be dealing with. "Challenger Deep" is a poignant and powerful novel, and I'm pleased that we kicked off our B-Sides Book Club Theme with it! Serena's Thoughts I had never read anything by Shusterman until I picked up "Scythe" last summer. So all I knew was that I liked him as a dystopian, YA author. Tackling a tough subject like mental illness is another thing all together! But I should have had faith, as Shusterman once again blew me away with his sensitive, unflinching yet compassionate, tale. As Kate already touched on, one of the strongest aspects of this story is the subtle manner in which Shusterman depicts the slow, almost unnoticeable, descent into confusion and paranoia that Caden slips into. The reader, too, is unsure of what is happening, not only with the events on the ship, but the timeline between one section and another. It isn't until halfway through the story that I was able to begin to piece together these two disparate storylines. This perfectly aligns with the point at which Caden, too, begins to gain a bit of clarity, though he is by no means out of the woods. The ship itself, obviously, is an extensive metaphorical look into the world that Caden has projected around himself. However, for readers looking to gain more insight into what loved ones experiencing mental health challenges are going through, the author also sprinkles in some shockingly simple but apt comparisons that I found incredibly insightful and helpful. In this way, the book speaks not only to an "own experience" reader looking to see themselves and their challenges on the page, but also as a perfect portal for friends and family to understand a bit better what could be going on. As Kate said, Shusterman is careful to never imply that this is by any means a road map for all mental health experiences and that even any given diagnosis is not the same for every individual experiencing it. It is clear that Shusterman was writing from a very real place, having been the parent of a teenage boy who struggled with mental health. His son not only provided insights to help direct the creation of this story, but there are also images sprinkled throughout the story that Shusterman's son drew in the midst of his own crisis. Every time a new image appeared, I found myself taking quite a bit of time looking at it. Most were unclear, scribble-like creations that, while not clearly depicting a scene or object, spoke quite strongly to the swirl of emotions that its creator felt. Caden's own art and his use of it to not only express himself but what he sees in others was also a great lens through which to read his experiences. His family and friends first begin to note changes in him by the changes in his art, and Caden uses his artistic ability to get at deep truths of the other teens he meets who have their own struggles. I absolutely adored this story, and it was a great start to our new season of bookclub! Kate's Rating 8: A thoughtful and personal book that sensitively and carefully addresses mental illness, "Challenger Deep" is a poignant and important read for all ages. Serena's Rating 8: Shusterman masterfully tackles a complex and sensitive subject, creating a masterwork that will strike chords with not only those who have experienced mental illness, but by anyone who has been touched by it in their lives. Book Club Questions What did you think of the two narratives in this book, Caden's reality and his time on Challenger Deep? Did you enjoy both of them, or prefer one over the other? What does "Challenger Deep" mean in this story? What parts of that narrative could you see in Caden's 'reality', and in what ways did they manifest? What did you think about the drawings throughout the book? Do you think that they added to the story? Why or why not? Would you recommend this book to teens who are struggling with mental health issues? Why or why not? If not, who would you recommend this book to? By the time the story is wrapping up, it becomes clear that Caden isn't going to have the same friends in his life coming out of his experience as he did coming in? What did you think of this? Do you think it's realistic? Reader's Advisory "Challenger Deep" is included on the Goodreads lists "YA Including Mental Health Issues (2000-Present)", and "YA "Brain" Novels". Find "Challenger Deep" at your library using WorldCat! Next Book Club Pick: "Long Way Down" by Jason Reynolds The Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award, presented annually by ALAN, is an award in the United States for a book that exemplifies literary excellence, widespread appeal, and a positive approach to life in young adult literature. Named for Amelia Elizabeth Walden who was a pioneer in the field of Young Adult literature, it is presented annually to the author of a title selected by ALAN's Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award Committee.Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award Most of the violence in Challenger Deep is imaginary, part of Caden's fantasy about traveling aboard a mysterious, magical ship. The vessel is attacked by carnivorous sea horses and endures a battle between a giant squid and a whale. The captain and his parrot each want Caden to kill the other; he eventually commits such an act. > Violence & Scariness Most of the violence in Challenger Deep is imaginary, part of Caden' Language is generally mild, with an instance or two each of "hell," "damn," "ass," and "bastard." > Language Language is generally mild, with an instance or two each of "hell," &q Mountain Dew and Jell-O are mentioned. Caden and his parents use Tylenol and Advil. Pharmaceuticals mentioned include Ativan, Geodon, Risperdal, and Seroquel. > Products & Purchases Mountain Dew and Jell-O are mentioned. Caden and his parents use Tylenol and Adv Caden develops a friendship with Callie, a fellow patient. They hold hands and cuddle together in bed one night. > Sex, Romance & Nudity Caden develops a friendship with Callie, a fellow patient. They hold hands and c Caden's parents become "tipsy" while vacationing in Las Vegas. Caden admits to drinking beer at parties. The sailors aboard the fantastical ship drink "cocktails" (which are probably medicine). At the hospital, Caden is put on a regimen of antidepressants and antipsychotics. > Drinking, Drugs & Smoking Caden's parents become "tipsy" while vacationing in Las Vegas. Cad Neal Shusterman is one of our favourite authors, so it was a no brainer for us to dive into a book he's written about an often stigmatised mental health disorder. Joined by Leah from YA Book Chat, we discuss the experiences of delusions and hallucinations; hospital-based treatments of mental health disorders; and the role of families in recovery. Mental health topics covered: Schizophrenia, including the experiences of delusions and hallucinations; inpatient (hospital-based) treatment of mental health disorders; suicidal ideation and attempts; the role of families and carers; stigma and shame around psychosis. Listen to the podcast: Caden Bosch is on a ship that's headed for the deepest point on Earth: Challenger Deep, the southern part of the Marianas Trench. Caden Bosch is a brilliant high school student whose friends are starting to notice his odd behavior. Caden Bosch is designated the ship's artist in residence to document the journey with images. Caden Bosch pretends to join the school track team but spends his days walking for miles, absorbed by the thoughts in his head. Caden Bosch is split between his allegiance to the captain and the allure of mutiny. Caden Bosch is torn. Neal Shusterman is the New York Times best-selling author of over thirty novels for children, teens, and adults. He won the 2015 National Book Award for Young People's Literature for Challenger Deep-and his novel, Scythe, was a 2017 Michael L. Printz Honor book-and is in development with Universal Studios as a feature film. Neal has also received several awards and his talents range from film directing, to writing music and stage plays, and has even tried his hand at creating games. Neal lives in Jacksonville, Florida, but spends much of his time travelling the world speaking, and signing books for readers. Find Neal on his website. Meet Leah from YA Book Chat: Do you enjoy reading YA books? Are you dying to talk about them and hear what others think about your favorite books? Are you outside of the YA age bracket (like myself) but still enjoy them? Then this is the podcast for you! Join me and my friends, as we discuss our favorite YA books and authors! We'll chat spoiler-free at the start of each episode, just in case you haven't read the book yet. Then I'll give a warning before heading into our spoiler zone. I'll also have special episodes where I'll interview YA authors! I'll be discussing books by Victoria Aveyard, Holly Black, Neal Shusterman, Veronica Roth, Pierce Brown, Marissa Meyer, Suzanne Collins, Veronica Roth, Stephanie Garber, Melissa de la Cruz, and many more! You can find Leah on Buzzsprout, Instagram, and wherever you get your podcasts. Challenger Deep is a well-considered and compassionate portrayal of schizophrenia spectrum disorders. The chapters alternate between fantasy-like scenes of Caden being on a pirate ship headed for the Challenger Deep, the deepest known point of the seabed on Earth, and Caden's daily life as his symptoms of psychosis affect him more and more. This structure can be disorienting and hard to follow at first (which is intentional by the author), though later it all comes together. Overall, Neal Shusterman is a master of storytelling, and Challenger Deep provides an empathetic insight into a complex mental health disorder that is often stigmatised and misunderstood. What was your opinion of the structure of the book – the ship-based chapters, interspersed with Caden's more lucid chapters? Have you read any other books with depictions of inpatient psychiatric treatment? How did Challenger Deep compare? Did Caden's first-person perspective of psychosis challenge any assumptions you might have held about these experiences? Overall, did the book make you think differently about schizophrenia spectrum disorders? My Year of Rest and Relaxation by Ottesa Moshfegh Summary: Our narrator should be happy, shouldn't she? She's young, thin, pretty, a recent Columbia graduate, works an easy job at a hip art gallery, lives in an apartment on the Upper East Side of Manhattan paid for, like the rest of her needs, by her inheritance. But there is a dark and vacuous hole in her heart, and it isn't just the loss of her parents, or the way her Wall Street boyfriend treats her, or her sadomasochistic relationship with her best friend, Reva. It's the year 2000 in a city aglitter with wealth and possibility; what could be so terribly wrong?My Year of Rest and Relaxation is a powerful answer to that question. Through the story of a year spent under the influence of a truly mad combination of drugs designed to heal our heroine from her alienation from this world, Moshfegh shows us how reasonable, even necessary, alienation can be. Both tender and blackly funny, merciless and compassionate, it is a showcase for the gifts of one of our major writers working at the height of her powers. Gr 9 Up—Caden Bosch lives in two worlds. One is his real life with his family, his friends, and high school. There he is paranoid for no reason, thinks people are trying to kill him, and demonstrates obsessive compulsive behaviors. In his other world, he's part of the crew for a pirate captain on a voyage to the Challenger Deep, the ocean's deepest trench. There he's paranoid, wary of the mercurial captain and his mutinous parrot, and tries hard to interpret the mutterings of his fellow shipmates as they sail uncharted waters toward unknown dangers. Slowly, Caden's fantasy and paranoia begin to take over, until his parents have only one choice left. Shusterman's latest novel gives readers a look at teen mental illness from inside the mind of Caden Bosch. He is a credible and sympathetic character, and his retreat into his own flawed mind is fascinating, full of riddles and surrealism. Shusterman based the novel on his son's mental illness, and Brendan's input regarding his diagnosis of schizoaffective disorder and psychiatric care makes the novel ring true. Teens, especially fans of the author's other novels, will enjoy this book. VERDICT This affecting deep dive into the mind of a schizophrenic will captivate readers, engender empathy for those with mental illnesses, and offer much fodder for discussion.—Heather Miller Cover, Homewood Public Library, AL "A brilliant journey across the dark sea of mental illness; frightening, sensitive, and powerful. Simply extraordinary." — Laurie Halse Anderson, award-winning author of Speak★ "Haunting, unforgettable, and life-affirming all at once." — Booklist (starred review)★ "An adventure in perspective as well as plot, this unusual foray into schizophrenia should leave readers with a deeper understanding of the condition." — Kirkus Reviews (starred review)★ "Clearly written with love, the novel is moving; but it's also funny, with dry, insightful humor. Illustrations by the author's son Brendan, drawn during his own time in the depths of mental illness, haunt the story with scrambling, rambling lines, tremulousness, and intensity." — Horn Book (starred review)★ "Teens, especially fans of the author's other novels, will enjoy this book. This affecting deep dive into the mind of a schizophrenic will captivate readers, engender empathy for those with mental illnesses, and offer much fodder for discussion." — School Library Journal (starred review)★ "A powerful collaboration...[Caden's] story turns symptoms into lived reality in ways readers won't easily forget." — Publishers Weekly (starred review)"A thoroughly realistic story...Both male and female readers will find this compelling while acquiring a deeper compassion and understanding. " — Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA)"Shusterman does a masterful job...The intensity of living inside Caden's mind makes this a wrenching read." — Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books (starred review)"Moving, funny, and insightful, Challenger Deep is about a boy named Caden who's dealing with schizophrenia. Disorienting at times and emotionally poignant at others, this award-winning novel will make you ponder the complexities of mental illness." — Brightly Caden Bosch is on a ship that's headed for the deepest point on Earth: Challenger Deep, the southern part of the Marianas Trench.Caden Bosch is a brilliant high school student whose friends are starting to notice his odd behavior.Caden Bosch is designated the ship's artist in residence, to document the journey with images.Caden Bosch pretends to join the school track team but spends his days walking for miles, absorbed by the thoughts in his head.Caden Bosch is split between his allegiance to the captain and the allure of mutiny.Caden Bosch is torn.A captivating and powerful novel that lingers long beyond the last page, Challenger Deep is a heartfelt tour de force by one of today's most admired writers for teens. Neal Shusterman is the New York Times bestselling and award-winning author of more than fifty books, including Challenger Deep, which won the National Book Award; Scythe, a Michael L. Printz Honor Book; Dry, which he cowrote with his son, Jarrod Shusterman; Unwind, which won more than thirty domestic and international awards; Bruiser, which was on a dozen state lists; The Schwa Was Here, winner of the Boston Globe–Horn Book Award; and Game Changer, which debuted as an indie top-five best seller. He is the winner of the Margaret A. Edwards Award for the body of his work. You can visit him online at storyman.com. Free Verse Song Lyrics Sonnet Haiku Limerick Ballad Back Writers Workshop Regular Forums Back Program Links Program Reviews Back College Links College Reviews College Essays College Articles Back age 12+ Based on 14 kid reviews Challenger Deep by Neal Shusterman (Bought) - A captivating novel about mental illness that lingers long beyond the last page, Challenger Deep is a heartfelt tour de force by New York Times bestselling author Neal Shusterman. Caden Bosch is on a ship that's headed for the deepest point on Earth: Challenger Deep, the southern part of the Marianas Trench. Caden Bosch is a brilliant high school student whose friends are starting to notice his odd behavior. Caden Bosch is designated the ship's artist in residence to document the journey with images. Caden Bosch pretends to join the school track team but spends his days walking for miles, absorbed by the thoughts in his head. Caden Bosch is split between his allegiance to the captain and the allure of mutiny. Caden Bosch is torn. From Goodreads. Trigger Warning: This book features a suicide attempt, and problematic language when discussing suicide. Challenger Deep is an intense and difficult read, but one that is absolutely incredible. 15-year-old Caden Bosch is struggling with his mental health. There's Caden who goes about his everyday life, though now with paranoia, anxiety, delusions, voices, and more, and there's Caden who is on a pirate ship, following orders from the captain. We have chapters both of what's happening in real life, and chapters of what goes through his head, the belief he has about the pirate ship. For the reality side of things, the majority of the story takes place in a psychiatric hospital, and it's once those chapters start that we understand how the captain and the pirate ship came about. This book is tough, because the chapters on the pirate ship? They make no sense. No sense whatsoever. But at least Caden also knows nothing makes sense, and nothing is how it should be - the crow's nest that looks tiny as you climb to it, but once inside is actually huge and holds a bar; the tiny animals that scuttle around the ship that the swabbie keeps trying to get rid of that you think are rats, but then realise are actually brains; the malevolent captain who talks in riddles - not actual riddles, but he makes sense to only himself. Those chapters were just so confounding, and I was constantly thinking, "What the hell is going on?" It was all so weird and so strange, and I didn't enjoy those chapters at all. And yet... they were really powerful, because you know that these chapters aren't the story, that these chapters aren't real, but an insight into Caden's mind as his mental health spirals out of control. That's one thing that is really clever about these chapters; not only are they what Caden believes is happening, they're also a metaphor Caden's state of mind - the closer they get to Challenger Deep - the deepest part of the ocean, where it's rumoured there is treasure on the sea floor - the worse Caden's mental health is getting. That dive that's planned? Huge metaphor. But god, these chapters were so tough to read. But also really heartbreaking. Mean while, in the real world, Caden's mental illness/es have several symptoms. Quite a lot really. And it's so, so difficult to see him struggle as he does. He's not just dealing with one thing - like me, I deal with feeling anxious, and the panic attacks that can lead to - but multiple symptoms. Sometimes all at once. Like paranoia: 'I have never ditched school. Leaving school without permission gets you detention or worse. I'm not that kind of kid. But what choice do I have now? The signs are there. Everywhere, all around me. I know it's going to happen. I know it will be bad. I don't know what it's going to be or what direction it's going to come from, but I know it will bring misery and tears and pain. Horrible. Horrible. There are a lot of them now. Kids with evil designs. I pass them in the hall. It started with one, but it spread like a disease. Like a fungus. They send one another secret signals as they pass between classes. They're plotting--and since I know, I'm a target. The first of many. Or maybe it's not the kids. Maybe it's the teachers. There's no way to know for sure.[...]I am free but I'm not. Because I can feel the acid cloud following me. Something bad. Something bad. Not at school--no, what was I thinking? It was never at school. It was at home! That's where it's going to happen. To my mother, or my father, or my sister. A fire will trap them. A sniper will shoot them. A car will lose control and ram into our living room, only it won't be an accident. Or maybe it will. I can't be sure, all I can be sire of is that it's going to happen.' (p102-103)Delusions: 'There's this thing in my head that I have to purge onto the page before it changes the shape of my brain. Before the colorful lines cut into it like a cheese wire. My drawings have lost all sense of form. They are scribbles and suggestions, random, and yet not. I wonder if others will see the things in them that I see. These images have to mean something, don't they? Why else would they be so intense? Why would that silent voice be so adamant about getting them out?' (p47-48)What I think is dissociation, but could be completely wrong: 'My friends scarf down their lunches, and laugh about something I didn't hear. It's not like I'm intentionally zoning out, but somehow I can't land myself in the conversation. Their laughter feels so far away it's as if there's cotton in my ears. It's been happening more and more. It's like they're not even talking English--they're speaking that weird fake language the clowns speak in Cirque du Soleil. My friends are all conversing in Cirque-ish. Usually I'll play along. I'll join in the laughter so I can stay camouflaged and appear to be in step with those around me. But today I'm not in the mood to pretend.' (p49)To hearing voices: 'It's not like I can control these feelings. It's not like I mean to think these thoughts. They're just there, like ugly, unwanted birthday gifts that you can't give back. There are thoughts in my head, but they don't really feel like mine. They're almost like voices. They tell me things. Today, as I gaze out my bedroom window, the thought-voices tell me the people in a passing car want to hurt me. That the neighbour testing his sprinkler line isn't really looking for a leak. The hissing sprinklers are actually snakes in disguise, and he's training them to eat all the neighbourhood pets--which makes some twisted sense, because I've heard him complaining about barking dogs. The thought-voices are entertaining, too, because I never know what they are going to say. Sometimes they make me laugh and people wonder what I'm laughing at, but I don't want to tell them.' (p104-103)These are just a selection of examples, but these things happen so often. Caden barely gets a break. And that's when he's cognisant enough to be "in" the real world. But, as I've pointed out, sometimes he is right in there with the captain on the pirate ship. Now, this is one slight negative I have about the book. Once he gets to the psychiatric hospital, and he's about to be admitted, he makes a choice to believe something that isn't true: '...you being to wonder, Am I on the outside or the inside of that fish tank? Because the rules of "here" and "there" don't have a clear place in your head anymore. You are as much the objects around you as you are yourself. Maybe you are in the tank with them. The fish may be monsters, and you may be afloat on a doomed vessel--a pirate ship, perhaps--unaware of the breadth and the depth of the peril it sails upon. And you hold on to that, because no matter how frightening that is, it's better than the alternative. You know you can make that pirate ship as real as anything else, because there's no difference anymore between thought and reality.' (p132)And as we get to learn about the hospital, what happens there, the people - staff and patients - that are in the hospital, we can see the parallels between reality and Caden's internal life on the ship. What isn't quite clear to me is if he's able to separate the two? For the most part, it seems like he can; although there are parallels, there is the hospital, and there is the pirate ship, and never the two shall meet. But there comes a point as Caden's mental illness becomes worse, when, for a while, the two become merged. You start off reading a chapter that is on the ship, but then it switches to reality, or you'll have real life chapters, but he'll make comments related to the ship - something to do with the crew, or about the brains, or something relating to a conversation we've witnessed previously on the ship with the captain, but makes absolutely no sense in real life without the context. So for Caden, the two get confused. But does that mean he doesn't confuse them before this point, that he can keep them separate in his head? I don't know. And I suppose it doesn't really matter, and it makes sense that we don't know - Caden is hardly going to pause and speak to the reader and explain what's going on in his head, is he? It's just a niggle that I can easily ignore. There are other ways that Shusterman uses the fact that this is a story, a narrative, to demonstrate what is happening with Caden. For the most of the book, it's told in first person, both in real life and on the pirate ship. But there are points, as Caden is getting worse, when he talks about feeling outside of himself, that he's not in his head. And as that gets worse, the narration changes to second person. This is so powerful, because it illustrates how Caden is feeling in those moments; he doesn't feel inside himself, so it's "I" or "me" because it's not him, and to show this disconnect, the narration switches to "you" - as you can see in the last quote above. Speaking of how Caden is feeling, we do get to see him try to put it into words. When talking to his school counsellor, Ms. Sassel, when teachers at his school are becoming concerned about him and his behaviour, although he doesn't say it out loud, he tries to express how he's feeling through imagery and metaphor, and it's just so powerful.'"Caden, all I know is something is wrong. It could be lots of things, and, yes, drugs is one of those things, but only one. I'd like to hear from you what's going on, if you'd like to tell me." What's going on? I'm in the back of a roller coaster at the top of the climb, with the front rows already giving themselves over to gravity. I can hear those front riders screaming and know my own scream is only seconds away. I'm at the moment you hear the landing gear of a plane grind loudly into place, in that instant before your rational mind tells you it's just landing gear. I'm leaping off a cliff only to discover I can fly . . . and then realizing there's nowhere to land. Ever. That's what's going on.' (p78)Challenger Deep also has some quite interesting things to say about mental illness. I really loved this analogy for mental illness, relating it to the "check engine" light on a car. 'It's not like the car manufacturers are much help. I mean, with modern technology, you'd think our cars could diagnose themselves, but no, all there is on the dashboard is this moronic "check engine" light that comes on whenever there's anything wrong--which proves that automobiles are more organic than we think. They're obviously modeled on the human brain. There are many ways in which the "check brain" light illuminates, but here's the screwed-up part: the driver can't see it. It's like the light is positioned in the backseat cup holder, beneath an empty can of soda that's been there for a month. No one sees it but the passengers--and only if they're really looking for it, or when the light gets so bright and hot that it melts the can, and sets the whole car on fire.' (p107)Isn't that just so clever and actually pretty spot on? The book also looks at the stigma surrounding mental illness, especially when it comes to loved ones and their views on "getting better", as seen here in Caden's conversation with Callie, a patient who has been to the psychiatric hospital more than once. '"At home they expect you to be fixed," she says. "They say they understand, but the only people who really understand are the ones who've been to That Place, too. It's like a man telling a woman he knows what it feels like to give birth." She turns to me, forsaking her view for a moment. "You will never know that, so don't pretend that you do." "I don't. I mean I won't. But I do kind of know how it feels to be you." "I believe that. But you won't be with me at home. Just my parents and my sisters. They all think medicine should be magic, and they become mad at me when it's not."' (p181)What I found really interesting about Challenger Deep was how Caden never gets a diagnosis. In a conversation with Carlyle, the man who leads group therapy, we get hints at what he might have (Dr. Poirot is Caden's psychologist). 'Then he asks me if I'm aware of my diagnosis--because the doctors always leave it to parents to tell us. My parents have floated a few mental-illness buzzwords, but only in the vaguest way. "Nobody tells me anything," I finally admit. "At least not officially to my face." "Yeah, it's like that at first. Mainly because diagnoses change, but also because the words themselves carry so much baggage. Know what I mean?" I know exactly what he means. I had overheard Poirot talking to my parents. He was using words like psychosis and schizophrenic. Words that people feel they have to whisper, or not repeat at all. The Mental-Illness-That-Must-Not-Be-Named. "I've heard my parents say 'bipolar,' but I think that's just because it sounds like a nicer word."' (p212-213)But then Caden gets to the point where he doesn't feel he needs a diagnosis, because they don't really mean anything: 'There are many things I don't understand, but there's one thing I know: There is no such thing as a "correct" diagnosis. There are only symptoms and catchphrases for various collections of symptoms. Schizophrenia, schizoaffective, bipolar I, bipolar II, major depression, psychotic depression, obsessive/compulsive, and on and on. The labels mean nothing, because no two cases are ever exactly alike. Everyone presents differently, and responds to meds differently, and no prognosis can truly be predicted. We are, however, creatures of containment. We want all things in life packed into boxes that we can label. But just because we have the ability to label it, doesn't mean we really know what's in the box. It's kind of like religion. It gives us comfort to believe we have defined something that is, by its very nature, indefinable. As to whether or not we've gotten it right, well, it's all a matter of faith.' (p299)As someone who felt better about my mental illness once I knew what it was, what that meant, how it affected me the way it did, this is so interesting to me. Because knowing what's going on with me is part of what helps me get through it. I remember the uncertainty before I was given a definite diagnosis a very scary time. The thought of never knowing for definite what I had, being stuck with that uncertainty, stuck in limbo, is really terrifying to me. So maybe I do want a label for my box, and having some understanding of what inside my box, if I don't know everything. That helps me. But I find Caden's attitude of "I'm never really going to know what I've got, because you can never really be correct, and that's ok," interesting and confounding, but also really kind of inspiring - especially as the story is inspired by Shusterman's son Brendan Shusterman's experience of schizophrenia (so although there's never a specific diagnosis, I think we can assume Caden has schizophrenia? This article in which Shusterman discusses the decisions he made when approaching how to tell this story imply so). That isn't something I could have been ok with, and the fact that he is? That's something else. I should also point out that artwork is included throughout the story. I knew from t he beginning that the artwork was by Brendan Shusterman, but I thought the artwork was done for the book - Brendan doing illustrations to reflect Caden's state of mind - and sometimes I just didn't understand it. Some seemed to relate to what was happening in the story, but for most, I had no clue what they were supposed to represent. It wasn't until the end the author's note that I realised the artwork included is the artwork Brendan created during his own struggle with his mental illness. Knowing this, reading the second quote in this review makes me realise just how powerful the artwork is, how personal they are, and how wonderful it is that they have been shared with us. I do have one final thing to say about Challenger Deep, and it's about the language it uses. This isn't a criticism as such, but more me pointing out that this isn't really ok anymore - because not many people are aware. It's to do with how suicide is discussed. There's a moment in the book when a patient attempts suicide, and Caden is never told for definite whether this patient survived or not. It's implied that he has, but in the sense that saying otherwise could be detrimental to Caden's mental health. But he talks about those who "fail" to end their life. That's really negative language, because it implies failure; they didn't get it right. People who don't die after a suicide attempt don't fail, they survive. This kind of language can hurt those survivors. And it also feels like the book is almost judging those who attempt suicide but survive. 'People say a failed attempt is a cry for help. I guess that's true if the person meant to be unsuccessful. But then, I guess most failed attempts aren't entirely sincere, because, let's face it, if you want to off yourself, there are plenty of ways to make sure it works.' (p261)I know that's not what the book is meant to be saying - the book goes on to talk about if that's how far you're going to be heard, then something is going wrong somewhere in society, and that it's less a cry for help and more a cry to be taken seriously - but it's how it feels, how it reads. It made me very uncomfortable. Imagining someone who survived suicide, or someone who knew someone who died by suicide, read that, and how it would make them feel, troubles me. I think this whole section could have been dealt with better. (For more info on language you should and shouldn't use when discussing suicide, read Beyond Blue's article Language When Talking About Suicide, and Emily X. R. Pan's thread on the topic.) But overall, Challenger Deep is a deeply affecting, really powerful look at mental illness, one that makes you sit up and think. It's by no means an easy read, but it's one I think we all should. Published: 21st April 2015 Publisher: HarperTeen Neal Shusterman's Website -- If you enjoyed this post, feel free to follow me on: Bloglovin' | Twitter | Goodreads