

Educator Discussion Guide

HIGHLY ILLOGICAL BEHAVIOR

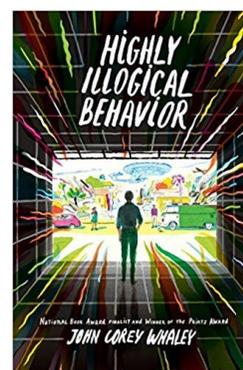
By John Corey Whaley

Louisiana Teen Readers' Choice Award Nominee 2018-2019
Grades 9-12

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ABOUT THE BOOK

After a breakdown at school two years ago, Solomon Reed is content to remain inside his parents' house for the rest of his life and watch the world go by. Lisa Praytor, an ambitious high school student who dreams of studying psychology, sees Solomon as her ticket to the scholarship that will get her out of town for good. Befriending Solomon to earn his trust seems like the logical choice, but when her boyfriend Clark joins them, Lisa's scholarship may not be the only thing hanging in the balance. *Highly Illogical Behavior* is a story about friendship, love, and life decisions that brings new light on how psychological disorders are viewed in a culture of normalcy.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Corey Whaley has a master's degree in Secondary English Education from Louisiana Tech University. Having grown up in Springhill, Louisiana, he began writing as a child and dreamed about writing full time for the five years that he was a public school teacher. He currently lives in California where he is a successful writer of contemporary realistic novels for young adults. His first novel, *Where Things Come Back*, won him the Printz Award in 2012. His second book, *NOGGIN*, was a California Book Awards Young Adult Finalist in 2014 and a finalist for the National Book Award for Young People's Literature in the same year.

Biographical information taken from the author's website at

<http://johncoreywhaley.com>

Accessed 26 September 2017.

BOOK AWARDS

The Kirkus Prize 2016 Nominee, Young Readers
SLJ's Best Books of 2016, Young Adult
National Public Radio's Guide to 2016 Great Reads
NPR Best Book of 2016
A Bustle Best YA Book of 2016
A Mashable Best YA Book of 2016
A PopCrush Best YA Book of 2016
A Paste Best YA Book of 2016

A Chicago Public Library Best Teen Fiction of 2016
2017 Rainbow Book List, Young Adult Fiction
YALSA 2017 Best Fiction for Young Adults
Los Angeles Public Library, Best of 2016: Teen Books
YALSA 2017 Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers, Fiction
Booklist Carte Blanche: Columinist's Choice 2016
People Magazine, Summer's Best Books of 2016

PREREADING ACTIVITIES

Agoraphobia

Ask your students to think about all of the phobias that they have heard about. Illicit from them a list of phobias and discuss what each one of them means. Ask them about people they have met or read about that have different phobias and what this might mean for them and the people who love them (their friends, family, etc.) After introducing agoraphobia, encourage students to work in groups to research agoraphobia online and write down any questions, stories, and new understandings they find. Allow students time to work together and then share their research with other groups. According to WebMD: "It's not unusual to worry sometimes. But when your fears keep you from getting out into the world, and you avoid places because you think you'll feel trapped and not be able to get help, you may have agoraphobia." Site accessed 10/14/2017.

Trust

Ask students to think about the word trust. What makes a person trustworthy? How do you gain a person's trust? Do they think they are trustworthy? Is it important to be trustworthy? Give the students 2 minutes to write down what the word trust means to them. Then encourage students to share their thoughts and begin to make a class word map for trust. You will use this map while reading the book as students discuss each character and whether they are trustworthy.

Explanation of what a Word Map is, http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/word_maps

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Solomon has not left his house in a very long time. Describe his daily life and why he has not left his house in years.
2. Solomon's parents put him in therapy. Describe this process and what each outcome is. Do you agree with their decision to discontinue therapy? Why or why not?
3. Both Solomon and Lisa see the world very differently. Describe the difference between how Lisa takes on the world and how Solomon sees it. Are there any specific circumstances that lead each of them to this way of thinking?
4. Describe Solomon's relationship with his parents. Use specific details from the book.
5. Do you agree with Lisa's plan to get into college? What would you have done differently?
6. Solomon's grandmother is very special to him. Describe their relationship and use specific details from the book. In what ways does his grandmother help him?
7. Why is Solomon's mother so eager for him to accept Lisa's offer? What could it mean that he is willing to see another person outside of his family?
8. Describe Lisa and Clark's relationship using specific examples from the book. How does Lisa show if she really cares for Clark?
9. Both Lisa and Clark develop special friendships with Solomon. Describe these friendships and determine which one is the better friend. Prove your answer using specific details from the book.

10. Solomon's holodeck room is very special to him. How does this room help him overcome his fears? Why do you think this room works for him?
11. What do you do to relax when you are feeling stressed? Why do you think doing this helps you as Solomon's holodeck helps him?
12. Compare and contrast Lisa's relationship with her mother and Solomon's relationship with his parents. Why do you think these relationships work the way that they are? Use specific details from the book.
13. Think about the relationship between Solomon and Clark. They help each other realize so much about each other. Describe their relationship using specific details from the book. What do they learn from each other and what do they teach each other?
14. If you were in Clark's position, would you tell Solomon about Lisa's plan for her scholarship essay? Why or why not?
15. What kind of friend is Janis? Why do you think she reacts so strongly to Lisa spending so much time with Solomon? How do you think you would react in the same position with your best friend?
16. What circumstances lead to Lisa's fear that Clark is falling in love with Solomon? Why do you think she is so ready to believe her friend's statements rather than Clark's?
17. In chapter 23, Solomon talks about feeling guilty for his fear and lists several reasons. List at least two reasons he feels guilty, referring specifically to the text. Why is he thinking about this at this particular point in the story?
18. Solomon faces a gigantic fear by stepping outside into the backyard and then by leaving the house to go see his grandmother in the hospital. Think about a time when you have had to overcome fear to complete a job, do someone a favor, etc. Were you able to do it? How did you feel afterward?
19. Think about the title of the book. What does the title tell you about each character?
20. Would you want to be friends with Solomon, Lisa, or Clark? Pick one character and use specific details from the story to explain why you would (or would not) want to befriend them.

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

English:

Have students discuss Lisa's motivation to get to know Solomon. Ask them to write the essay that they think she would have written to get into Woodlawn in Baltimore, Maryland. The essay was to be titled *My Personal Experience with Mental Illness*. Make sure each student writes the essay in first person as if he or she is Lisa.

Math:

Discuss how people use math in real life. Explain that one way math is used every day is when measurements are needed before work is done on a house or in a yard. Discuss how architects, designers, and others use scale drawings to present their ideas to clients. Tell the students to imagine they were asked to build a pool in a grassy area around the school. Divide students into groups. Have them research pools online to get ideas for different shapes. Have them pick a spot and decide how big a pool they would build. Ask them to measure their chosen spot and design the pool to fit within the area. They will present the finished design and scale drawing to the class.

Possible websites to use to research pools:

- http://premierpoolsandspas.com/design-your-pool-online/?utm_source=NewOrleans_PPC&utm_medium=PPC&utm_campaign=DYP&gclid=EA1aIQobChMIxof0gP6g1wIVkQFpCh3fUgOfEAAAYAiAAEgLxqfD_BwE
- <https://www.mydreampool.com/plan-budget/>
- <https://www.azurepools.co.uk/how-much-room-do-i-need>

Technology:

Show students some examples of book trailers online. Discuss what makes a good book trailer. Divide students into groups and ask them to create their own book trailers to introduce *Highly Illogical Behavior* to next year's class. Tell them to be creative but not to give anything away. The following websites will help students get started with their book trailer:

- <http://www.booktrailersforreaders.com/How+to+make+a+book+trailer>
- <https://thewritelife.com/free-apps-for-book-trailer/>

Art:

Have students use paint, colored pencils, pastels, or collage to create a poster to advertise the book in the school library. Tell them to be creative and don't give anything away.

Social Studies:

Solomon's grandmother moved from Louisiana to Los Angeles, California. Tell students that they will plan a road trip from their hometown to Los Angeles, California. They cannot drive it all in one day. They will have to eat and spend the night along the way. Divide students into groups and have them plan their trip. Their plan can be a labeled map, written directions, or a combination of both. The following websites might be able to help you:

- <https://roadtrippers.com>
- <http://tripmaker.randmcnally.com>
- <https://www.myscenicdrives.com/road-trip-planner>

Health and Physical Education:

Discuss the importance of physical fitness and the fact that Solomon was homeschooled and did not leave the house for years. Discuss what students think he did to keep in shape. Divide students into groups and task each group with creating an exercise program for him. Would they suggest the use of videos? Would they suggest weight training? Would they suggest exercises that could be done without any props at all? Have each group present their program to the class by having the class do the exercises.

Vocabulary:

Chronically	Mundane	Sustainable
Demeanor	Hyperventilating	Mediocre
Affirmative	Procrastinate	Nonchalant
Mesmerized	Phlebotomist	Appalled
Deus ex machina	Agoraphobia	Nostalgic
Reinvigorate	Reciprocate	Assertiveness

RELATED WEBSITES

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

<https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/specific-phobias>

Official Website for the Anxiety and Depression Association of America

The College Board

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/essays>

College Board website with tips to help write college application essays

California Board of Psychology

http://www.psychology.ca.gov/laws_regs/index.shtml

Website including laws, regulations, and recent practices for treating patients

Star Trek Official Website

http://www.startrek.com/database_article/holodeck

Official description of the Star Trek Holodeck