

Every Day

David Levithan

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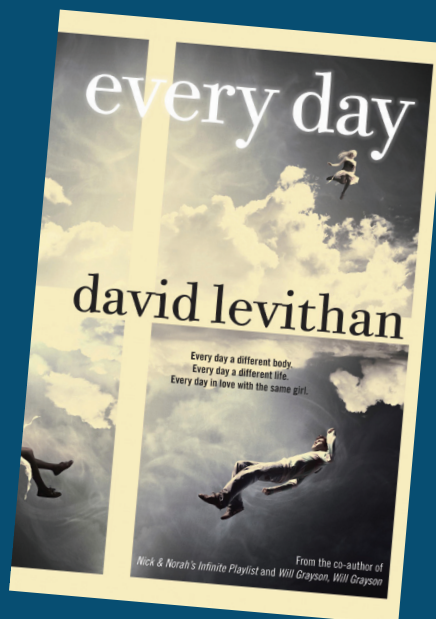
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Fiction, B paperback

Recommended for Middle/Upper Secondary

Resource Kit Contains:

- Praise
- Synopsis
- Author information
- Reading/journal questions
- Literary device analysis
- Character and theme analysis
- Discussion/debate questions
- Essay questions, writing activities and art activities



PRAISE

'Ah, the language of love; that's the concern of Levithan.' *Library Journal on The Lover's Dictionary*

'Touching, funny and very clever.' *Herald Sun on The Lover's Dictionary*

'...brilliant, funny and warm...' *Brisbane Sunday Mail on Will Grayson, Will Grayson*

'Two superstar authors pair up and really deliver the goods, dishing up a terrific high-energy tale of teen love, lust, intrigue, anger, pain, and friendship threaded with generous measures of comedy and savvy counsel.' *Booklist on Will Grayson, Will Grayson*

'Will have readers simultaneously laughing, crying and singing at the top of their lungs.' *Kirkus on Will Grayson, Will Grayson*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Levithan is an award-winning and *New York Times*-bestselling author of young adult books, including *Boy Meets Boy*, *Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist* (with Rachel Cohn) and *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* (with John Green), as well as a novel about adults, *The Lover's Dictionary*. He lives in New Jersey and spends his days in New York, editing and publishing other people's books. www.davidlevithan.com

SYNOPSIS

Every day, A wakes up in the body of a different teenager. Having been an interloper in other people's bodies since birth, A has learned not to interfere with their lives. Each day is spent simply passing the time, waiting for the day to end and the new one to begin. There's nothing to live for and no reason to try and change things—no way to make friends, to maintain a relationship, or to have a family.

All of this changes the day that A wakes up in the body of Justin and meets his girlfriend, Rhiannon. Something about Rhiannon connects with A and in one reckless moment, A decides to break the rules he/she has always lived by. Rhiannon and A skip school and spend a perfect day at the beach together. From that day forward, every day is a quest to get back to Rhiannon.

Some days, the body A inhabits is female, other days, male. Some days, A wakes up in the same town as Rhiannon, other days, hours away. In each of these bodies—of various genders, racial backgrounds, sexual orientations and looks—A continues to meet Rhiannon and form a relationship with her. As A confides in her, the two fall deeply—and hopelessly—in love. Because how can you love someone who destined to change every day?

A's life becomes even more complicated when he/she spends the day in Nathan Daldry's body. Caught up spending time with Rhiannon, A doesn't get Nathan home before being pulled out of Nathan's body at midnight. Nathan wakes up on the side of a freeway with no knowledge of how he got there, but with a strong sense that he has been possessed. At home, Nathan discovers A's private email address and begins to contact A, demanding answers about who A is and what A did to him.

Nathan organises a meeting for A with Reverend Poole, a preacher with a fanatical interest in stories of possession, who claims he can help A. But when A and the Reverend meet it becomes apparent that the Reverend has a different agenda. He seems to have an intimate knowledge of A's condition, and sinister ideas about how A could stay in the same body for longer than one day. Unable to envisage a future with Rhiannon with things the way they are, and with the new hope that others like him/her exist, A decides to run away. Before leaving, A sets Rhiannon up with Alexander, a boy

whose body he inhabits who A knows will treat her well and love her as he/she does.

By introducing the reader to a new character every day, David Levithan creates an engrossing page-turner, rich in issues that teenagers will relate to. A's gender and sexuality—and those of the bodies he/she inhabits—are examined with care and sensitivity. Themes of tolerance and acceptance run through the narrative, while serious topics like drug abuse, depression, love and relationships, are handled with insight and a light touch.

Every Day is a wonderful love story with a paranormal twist. It will appeal to teenagers and teachers alike, and is suitable for readers aged 14+.

READING / JOURNAL QUESTIONS

Keep a reading journal for your thoughts and ideas as you read *Every Day*. The following questions are best answered at the end of each chapter, but can also be considered after reading the entire novel. The questions can be answered in your journal or discussed in class.

Day 5994: Justin

- Write a list of the things you learn about A—what the 'rules' are for A's daily body switch, what A's abilities in each body are. Add to this list as you discover more about A throughout the book.
- Do you have a sense that A's 'true' gender is female or male? Reread the chapter and mark down specific evidence that influenced your view. Compare your thoughts with the class and discuss why you made a particular assumption.

Day 5996: Skylar Smith

- A tells a story about the time he/she broke a kid's leg while skiing. A wondered if the pain would follow him/her into the next body the following day, but instead of pain A felt 'the fierce, living weight of terrifying guilt'. (pg 49) Discuss how this sense of guilt has affected how A lives each day.

Day 5999: Nathan Daldry

- How is A changing the rules he/she lives by?
- What do you think the repercussions of this chapter will be?

Day 6000: Roger Wilson

- A says: 'We all have about 98 percent in common with each other...For whatever reason, we like to focus on the 2 percent that's different, and most of the conflict in the world comes from that' (pg 77). Do you agree with this assessment of religion, race and gender? Why do you think people focus on the '2 percent' that divides us, rather than on our similarities?

Day 6001: Margaret Weiss

- Discuss what the newspaper article about Nathan's 'possession' tells you about what it is like for the person being inhabited by A for the day.
- Nathan accuses A of being something demon-like—an evil force that possesses people. In what ways do you

agree with Nathan's assessment? In what ways do you disagree?

Day 6002: Megan Powell

- A tells Rhiannon the truth. How does Rhiannon's response add to what you already know about her character?
- How would you have responded if someone said the same thing to you?
- A introduces himself/herself for the first time, and tells Rhiannon why he/she chose the name 'A'. Do you think the name is an appropriate one? Why do you think the author picked it for his character?

Day 6003: James

- A explains to Rhiannon what his life has been like, and tells her that he loves her. Rhiannon says of love: 'I don't think you can know from the outside'. (pg 107) How does this comment relate to A's whole experience of life? Do you think A can know about emotions like love and commitment, given the circumstances?

Day 6004: Tom

- When A wakes up in the body of James' twin, Tom, it is the first time he/she has ever spent more than one day with the same family. But A doesn't fully question James about what he felt yesterday. What would you have done in the same circumstance?
- A responds to Nathan's email. Do you think this is a good idea? What do you think the repercussions will be?

Day 6007: Ashley Ashton

- Ashley is an incredibly attractive girl. Analyse A's comments about beauty and attractiveness, and discuss whether you agree that personal attractiveness changes someone's perception of the world (pg 150).

Day 6008: AJ

- Read page 171, where A realises he has the potential to commit the perfect crime. Imagine you lived like A, in a world where you can have no hope for the future, where you will never have a family, and where you will never have a career. How would you stay sane? What would stop you from becoming a criminal?

Day 6015: Rhiannon

- When A wakes up in Rhiannon's body, he is very careful not to invade her interior world any more than is necessary. Discuss the expression 'curiosity killed the cat' in this context, and whether you would have been able to ignore the temptation to investigate Rhiannon and her thoughts.

Day 6022: Michael

- Michael is due to go to Hawaii on the day A takes over his body. What does this chapter tell you about the body-travelling A does each day? Do you think the fact that this phenomenon isn't fully explained in the book adds or detracts from the story?
- Why do you think A is the way he/she is? Why do you think that A only ever wakes up in the body of someone roughly the same age as he/she is? Present your theory to the class.

Day 6024: Marc

• A attends the funeral of Marc's grandfather. How is this a crucial chapter in A's understanding of what his/her life means?

Day 6026: Lisa Marshall

• Rhiannon tells A that they can't have a romantic future together. 'And that's all it take for my fantasy to pop. That's all it takes for my fantasy to become another fool's dream' (pg 279). How do you feel about Rhiannon's decision?

Day 6028: Ainsley Mills

• Reverend Poole hints that there is a way to stay in the same body for longer than one day, but A senses danger. What do you think Reverend Poole means and wants? What do you think it would take to stop changing bodies?

• A is desperate to spend the future in a single body, to be with Rhiannon. With this in mind, why do you think A runs away from Reverend Poole without any answers? What would you have done?

• 'It can change everything. Or it can change nothing.' (pg 292) What decision do you think A will make? Why?

Day 6033: Alexander Lin

• Is this the ending you expected?

• Do you think A's plan for Alexander and Rhiannon will work out? Why or why not?

Day 6034: Katie

• Where do you think A will run to?

THEMES**Love**

'The moment you fall in love feels like it has centuries behind it...In your heart, in your bones, no matter how silly you know it is, you feel that everything has been leading to this, all the secret arrows were pointing here... you are just now arriving at the place you were always meant to be.' (pg 23)

- With the passage above as your starting-off point, find and record other references to romantic love in the novel.
- Using the quotes you have collected as a guide, discuss why David Levithan has a reputation for writing well about love. Do you think this reputation is deserved?
- Do you recognise the feelings he describes? Write your own description of love.

The author has said that the idea behind *Every Day* were the questions: 'What would it be like to be purely a self, with no set gender, race, family, or orientation of any kind?' and 'Could you really love someone who was so amorphous in body, yet consistent in self?'

- How has David Levithan sought to answer these questions in *Every Day*? Do you think it is possible to love someone who is always changing?

Relationships

'When I was younger, I craved friendship and closeness. I would make bonds without acknowledging how quickly and permanently they would break...But after a while, I had to stop. It was too heartbreaking to live with so many separations.' (pg 7)

- List the ways in which A has shut him/herself off from everyone before he meets Rhiannon.
- How does A change as the book progresses? Cite specific examples from the text where A demonstrates a growing connection with people.
- Examine the references A makes to families—parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters. Imagine you had no family of your own. How would it change you as a person?

'This is the hard part about having best friends that I feel no attachment to—I don't give them any benefit of the doubt. And being best friends is always about the benefit of the doubt.' (pg 33)

- Think about the nature of friendship. List the characteristics you most value in your friends. Discuss whether you think it is possible to experience a proper friendship in just one day.

Drug use

Waking up in the body of a different teenager every day, A comes into contact with drugs on a regular basis. Instead of shying away from the issue of teenage drug use, the author uses the characters in his story to examine both the motivations and repercussions of taking drugs.

- What does A mean by saying he/she has 'too many control issues' to take drugs? (pg 39)
- If you were in A's situation, with no repercussions for your actions, how would you feel about taking drugs? Would you feel any responsibility to the body you were in?
- Why do you think Owen likes to get stoned? What are some of the reasons that teenagers take drugs? Discuss these with the class.
- Read chapter Day 5998, the day A wakes up in the body of a drug-addicted teenager.
- How has the author described the battle against addiction?
- What gets A through the day? How do you feel at the end of this day?

Depression

On Day 6005, A wakes up in the body of Kelsey Cook. Kelsey is suffering from terrible depression. 'Her mind is an unquiet one, words and thoughts and impulses constantly crashing into each other.' (pg 120)

- Depression is variously referred to as the 'black dog' and a 'black cloud'. Explain these metaphors and the images they conjure.

- Examine how Kelsey's father deals with his daughter's depression—could he have dealt with it better.
- A is not sure whether it is his/her responsibility to stop Kelsey from committing suicide, but Rhiannon convinces him it is. Discuss the notion of responsibility in this instance, and what you would do if you were in A's shoes.

Gender issues

'Are you really not a boy or a girl?' (pg 205) Rhiannon asks.

- Do you feel that A is more female or male? Count the number of times A wakes up in the body of a male, and how many times A wakes up a girl. Does this have any bearing on how you perceive A?
- Does this ambiguity of gender matter to how you feel about the character of A?
- On Day 6023, A lives Vic's life for a day. Vic is a transgendered teen, born female but gendered male.
- How do the issues about A's own gender and A's experience of life in Vic's body affect your understanding about transgendered people?
- Do you empathise with Rhiannon, who struggles to adjust to A in a different body each day, or do you think that the external body shouldn't matter to love?
- A says: 'There are few things harder than being born into the wrong body' (pg 254). Consider this statement, and write about some of the difficulties you would face in everyday life if you felt you were born into the wrong body.

Homosexuality

On Day 6006, A wakes up as Hugo. He is going to a gay pride parade with his boyfriend, Austin.

'I have never fallen in love with a gender. I have fallen for individuals. I know this is hard for people to do, but I don't understand why it's so hard, when it's so obvious.' (pg 142)

- Research the history of the gay pride movement and the history of discrimination against same sex couples.
- Discuss why these attitudes were so prevalent in the past, and whether you think attitudes have changed. Consider current government legislation in your response.
- Organise a class debate on the issue of gay marriage.

Acceptance

The idea of tolerance and acceptance is a key theme of *Every Day*.

- Look at the ways that the author writes about people of all sexual orientations, appearances, ethnicities and religions throughout the book. Do you feel that David Levithan is trying to put forward a particular view or message?

- If you had to sum up the message in two sentences, what would it be?

Alienation

'Imagine being homesick, but without having a home.' (pg 105-106)

- Think about the ways that each of the characters is searching for connections. Is A's experience of always being alone really so different from how most people feel?

Personal Identity

'I'm never going to figure it out, any more than a normal person will figure out his or her own existence.' (pg 2)

- In what ways do you think the author uses the story of A to comment on the universal question of personal identity?
- Do you think having an insight into a new life every day would make it easier to develop your own sense of self in the world, or more difficult?

'After a while, you have to be at peace with the fact that you simply are...You can have theories, but there will never be proof.' (pg 2)

- How do you interpret this sentence, once you have finished reading the book? Do you think the author is hinting that there is no answer to who A is, or do you think there will be a sequel that explains it?

Search for Happiness

'If there's one thing I've learned, it's this: We all want everything to be okay. We don't even wish so much for fantastic or marvellous or outstanding. We will happily settle for okay, because most of the time, okay is enough.' (pg 6)

- This statement is made at the very beginning of the novel. Do you think A changes his/her mind about what he/she wants throughout the novel? In what ways is A's journey simply a quest for a life that is 'okay'?
- Do you agree with this sentiment? Is 'okay' enough, or do you want something more than that from life?

'Happiness is so rarely a part of my vocabulary, because for me it's so ephemeral.' (pg 15)

- Look up the definition of 'ephemeral' and explain the double meaning in this sentence. How does this sentence directly relate to A's experience of life?
- Do you think this view of happiness is something unique to A and his/her situation? Can happiness ever be more than something temporary?

While at the beach on their first day together, Rhiannon tells A about her best day ever, dressing up at a mother-daughter fashion show.

- How does this example both mirror and contrast with A's experience of being someone else every day?
- Think about a perfect day you have had in your life. What made it so memorable? Write a story about what happened and how you felt.

LITERARY DEVICES

Structure:

- Why do you think David Levithan chose to keep A in other people's bodies for just one day? Is it purely to create a plot and narrative structure, or do you think there were other reasons? Discuss how structuring the novel in this way affects how you relate to A, and how you read the book.
- *Every Day* is written in the first person. Discuss how this narrative style works with this particular plot. How would the book have been different if it had been written in the third person? Would it have been as successful? Why or why not?

Setting:

- Pinpoint on a map the area in which *Every Day* is set. Why do you think the author has chosen to set it there?
- How might this story have been different had it been set in a different country or location? Do you think the issues that the teenagers in *Every Day* face are the same worldwide? Brainstorm some other types of characters that A could have inhabited, had the story been set in your town. Write the first few paragraphs about the time A wakes up in the body of one of them.

Language:

Read the opening few paragraphs that begin: 'I wake up' and end: 'It has always been like this' (pg 1).

- Discuss how the author has created an opening that immediately makes you want to keep reading. Consider the sentence structure, the information that is revealed, and how you feel when reading it.
- Extension work: Look at the opening paragraphs of other books you have read or are reading. How do they begin? What do you think makes a good opening?
- Try to write an opening paragraph for a story that has the same power to draw readers in.

Personification:

Personification is a literary device in which inanimate objects are given human qualities or characteristics. An example of this technique in *Every Day* is:

'The books sit crooked on shelves, like rows of neglected teeth.' (pg 120)

- Read the rest of the description of Kelsey's room on page 120 and write down other examples of personification that the author uses.
- Discuss how the technique adds meaning to the sentences and to your understanding and feelings about Kelsey, her room, and her depression.
- Using personification, write a few sentences to describe your room that also show how you feel about it.

Repetition:

In many instances, the author uses repetition when structuring his sentences:

'We do nothing more than kiss. We do nothing less than kiss.' (pg 16)

'I am not thinking about the past. I am not thinking about the future.' (pg 16)

- Find and record other examples of this style of writing in your journal. How does this literary technique add meaning to what are, in essence, very simple sentences?

Symbolism:

Symbols are designed to represent complex ideas in a simple way. In *Every Day*, the author references particular songs and artworks to symbolise emotions and thoughts.

- The same song comes on when A is driving Justin's car to the beach, and the day A returns to Rhiannon the first time. 'And if I only could, I'd make a deal with God...' (pg 52) Research the song to find the rest of the lyrics and who sung them. Comment on the significance and symbolism of the lyrics.
- Music and songs can often trigger emotions and memories. What are some songs that have particular meaning to you? Play the song for the class and explain the memory it brings back for you.
- On Day 6013, A goes to see a Winslow Homer exhibition at Baltimore art museum. Look up images of Winslow Homer's work and comment on the symbolism of these particular paintings to A's life. Research and find another artist whose work you think expresses particular themes or emotions found in the book. Print out one image and explain the significance of the image to the class.
- Look for other examples of symbolism in the book and record them in your journal with an explanation about the significance of each symbol.

Characterisation:

Throughout *Every Day*, we meet numerous teenage characters. That the author is able to make each of these characters memorable and distinct is a testament to his skill at characterisation.

- Record each of the characters that A wakes up as each day. In your reading journal, keep a list of their names and write a short description about them.
- What are the main issues in the lives of each of the characters on your list? Write down the significant challenges that each of these characters face. Are there any overarching themes developing?
- Do you relate to any one character that A inhabits more than the rest? Explain your answer.

CHARACTERS

A

'I am a drifter, and as lonely as that can be, it is also remarkably freeing. I will never define myself in terms of anyone else... I am not blinded by the past or motivated by the future. I focus on the present, because that is where I am destined to live.' (pg 7)

- Read the rest of the description of Kelsey's room on page 120 and write down other examples of personification that the author uses.
- Referencing the quote above, discuss whether you think A's view of himself/herself changes throughout the course of the book.
- How would you describe A? Can you 'classify' him/her?

'By seeing the world from so many angles, I get more of a sense of its dimensionality.' (pg 107)

- In what ways has living the life A has lived given him/her a unique perspective? Make a list of some of the issues that A faces, and how the experience of changing bodies has influenced A's response to them.
- Do you think this experience has made A more knowledgeable about human behaviour, or less? Discuss this in class, using examples from the text to back your view.

Rhiannon

Rhiannon is the first person A meets who he/she is compelled to reconnect with the following day. They share a perfect day together at the beach and A says: 'As we drift into sleep, I feel something I've never felt before. A closeness that isn't merely physical... A sensation that can only come from the most euphoric of feelings: belonging.' (pg 22)

- Reread the passage where A and Rhiannon are at the beach. What is it about Rhiannon that draws A to her?
- When Rhiannon meets Amy Tran (pg 54), what does her reaction say about her character?
- Track the developments in Rhiannon's character from when she is first introduced on Day 5994 to the end. How does she change? Give examples from the text.
- Could you be as accepting of A's situation as Rhiannon?
- Is Rhiannon a remarkable person or is she just a normal girl? Is it love that makes A see her differently? Discuss your thoughts with the class.

Justin

Justin is Rhiannon's boyfriend and the first body A inhabits in the book.

- Find the various descriptions the author gives of Justin and explain how the author casts him as an unlikeable character.
- Why do you think Rhiannon is attracted to Justin?

- Are there any moments in the book when Justin's behaviour surprises you? Comment on them, and on what they reveal about him.

Nathan

Nathan Daldry is a studious and unremarkable teenager until the day A takes over his body. Afterwards, Nathan struggles to come to terms with the 'possession' he underwent.

- How do you feel about Nathan and the way he goes about finding answers?
- Why do you think Nathan gets caught up with Reverend Poole?

DISCUSSION / DEBATE QUESTIONS

- Do you think there are others like A? Provide examples from the book.
- Rhiannon accuses A of derailing Vic's life for a day and asks: 'Shouldn't her life come above yours?' (pg 259). Do you think A, as 'a guest', has an obligation to carry out the day that the host body would have wanted? Debate this idea as a class, citing examples from the book about the probable repercussions of A's interventions.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

- 'Love is blind.' Discuss this saying in reference to the story of *Every Day* and the relationships and characters within it.
- Write an essay on the idea that A represents anyone and everyone.
- Consider the famous quote from *To Kill A Mockingbird*: 'You never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them.' What does A learn about humanity and tolerance from his/her experience of the world?

WRITING ACTIVITIES

- Every day, A wakes up in the body of a different teenager. Write an 800-word story about the day A wakes up in your body. Share your story with the class, or create a book of your own by combining everyone's story.
- Imagine you could be someone else for a day. It could be someone famous, someone you know, or a historical figure. Write a short story about what you decide to do that day.
- The ending of *Every Day* is very open ended. Write an epilogue, set five years in the future.

ART ACTIVITIES

- Draw a sketch of how you imagine each of the characters A inhabits looks. Or, if you prefer, find images online or in magazines. Create a flipbook or montage of them.
- What do you think of the cover artwork of *Every Day*? Research other covers of books in the young adult field, and design a new book jacket based on this knowledge, and the themes in the text.