



Total Constant Order

Crissa-Jean Chappell

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Fin can't stop counting. She's always heard a voice inside her head, ordering her to listen, but ever since she's moved to the Sunshine State and her parents split up, numbers thump like a metronome, rhythmically keeping things in control. When a new doctor introduces terms such as "clinical depression" and "OCD" and offers a prescription for medication, the chemical effects make Fin feel even more messed up. Until she meets Thayer, a doodling, rule-bending skater who buzzes to his own beat—and who might just understand Fin's hunger to belong, and her struggle for total constant order.

Crissa-Jean Chappell's candid and vividly told debut novel shares the story of a young teen's experience with obsessive compulsive disorder and her remarkable resolve to find her own inner strength.

Total Constant Order Details

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From Reader Review Total Constant Order for online ebook

Vikatolia Puni says

I learned that I have my own version of OCD. This book pretty cool. Thayer brings out the best of Fin. the only thing i was disappointed in was how it ends. Otherwise it was cool

michelle says

The protagonist is nicely-drawn and she tells an engrossing story as the reader follows her struggles and successes as she figures out how to be more comfortable in her mind, in her life, with her friends and family.

Bethany says

this was a great book! i loved that it did have information on her disease but it was in perspective on the info and how she took it she meets a good friend and lover and he understands her more than herself this was an amazing book it really showed character

Nancy says

Fin, a girl who has Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Thayer, a boy who has Attention Deficit Disorder. Fin can't stop counting and trying to keep things in order, in her control. Thayer can't stop paying attention to one thing. Shunned by normal society, Fin finds solace in Thayer, who finds nothing wrong with her.

The writing is bearable, but mostly terrible. Just take a look at the sentence structures. The male protagonist gets on my nerves just because he's not the kind of guy who does things that I'll agree with, ADD or not. (I.E. smoking, ditching school, and getting hooked on Ritalin. Not exactly a role model, is he?) The only things worth semi-praising over are the topics and the itsy-bitsy depth. I'm glad authors are really choosing to put themselves out there by writing about above-the-norm subjects. It's really showing that they would rather educate others than get famous overnight. Now, depth. Here's a girl who's actually looking at the world like the other half of teenagers, the ones who couldn't care less about popularity. Who thinks that what adults tell you about high school is complete bull. Take this passage, for instance:

“Of course not,” I said. “It’s like people at school. Everybody’s so fake.”

‘How so?’ She asked.

‘From the minute you start school, you’re fed a bunch of lies: Be yourself. Don’t follow the crowd, blah blah. What they really mean is: Follow the crowd. Just make sure that it’s the right one.’

‘And if you don’t?’ Dr. Calaban raised her eyebrows at me.

‘Suffer the consequences,’ I said” (Chappell 208).

Sure, you could get this kind of internal thinking in just about any other book (like Alyson Noel, who’s a pro at catching teen angst and trying to fit in) so that’s why I labeled it as “itsy-bitsy depth”.

So, in general, not a brilliant book, but it’s kind of serious. This certainly doesn’t fit my to re-read criteria, but it’ll at least teach you about OCD and its struggles.

Jessica says

The narrator, Finn, struggles with OCD after her family moves from Vermont to Florida and her parents divorce.

Ronni says

I could question the accuracy of the depiction of emerging OCD, but that would distract from my actual opinion of the book. Which is that it's a good one.

Ronda says

Fin knows that something is wrong, she just doesn’t know what. She can’t stop counting. Some of the teachers at her new school think she just isn’t paying attention, but Fin knows that maybe she’s paying too much attention--to everything. Her dad wants to be buddies with his new girlfriend. Her mother wants her to go to counseling. Her counselor wants her to take Paxil, but her mother doesn’t want her to take meds at all. Fin feels like she’s all alone--until she begins a “conversation” with a tagger on the stall wall of one of the girls’ bathrooms. Maybe she’s not so alone after all, but will she ever be able to stop counting everything? Will she take the meds? Will she meet this tagger? Read *Total Constant Order* by Crissa-Jean Chappell and see.

Chappell does for obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) what Jack Gantos and his character, Joey Pigza, do for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Neither Gantos nor Chappell presume to solve their characters’ problems, nor do they preach or sugar-coat. They do not push any particular treatments. What they do is to skillfully offer the reader a glimpse into the minds of young people as they learn that, maybe, they’re not crazy--and that they aren’t alone. *Total Constant Order* is a worthy addition to any young adult collection.

Susan says

Refreshing to see this kind of poetic prose in YA literature. It's something that's sorely lacking, especially these days.

However, the book tries too hard to be "cool" and to hit an emotional chord with the reader.

From the review I wrote of the ARC in 2007:

With her first novel, Crissa-Jean Chappell joins a long tradition of young adult novelists writing about the experience of growing up with OCD. In my opinion, she handles it well. The language is wonderfully poetic and a delight to see in any YA novel, the narrative structured in chapters that often seem as if they could stand on their own. I especially liked this free flow of ideas as they counterbalanced the rigidity that is often associated with OCD.

Fin (I love the significance of her name throughout the novel) is a fully realized character who I felt I could connect to on a number of levels. However, at times, I felt Chappell was trying too hard to reach the teen audience. I found Thayer, Fin's new friend, to be somewhat two-dimensional. His character was inconsistent at times, not in an unpredictable way that I would expect of ADDers, but in an unbelievable way. Fin's mother presented a different problem. I often felt that Fin's scenes with her mother were overreaching for an emotional impact that was already there in Fin's narration, in the metaphors that were created. No more was needed.

Ultimately, the novel is less about a young girl growing up with OCD than about a young girl growing up, period. For me, that is the most successful part. It is true that Chappell doesn't really experiment enough to set herself apart from previous clusters of OCD novels, but that doesn't matter here. Despite some problems with the execution, there is truth to Fin's story, truth that I think many people could recognize and relate to. At the end of the novel, Fin realizes that "counting stars was like wishing on nothing [...] I could never count them all." I could never count all the lines in this novel that resonated with me. They are the beauty of this book.

bjneary says

Fin is the teen who is struggling with her need to constantly count and/or wash her hands. When she asks her parents about it, they don't get it. Fin is an outcast at her school with a group of girls tormenting her and a guy, Thayer, who acts out in school all the time with rants and shouts. When Fin sees a psychiatrist she finds out a lot more about herself, her counting, her hand washing, and why she can now understand and cope with this behavior. Thayer also goes to the same doctor and they begin to hang out. Fin realizes she doesn't need to count with Thayer, but she is getting more and more angry with her mother. It is only through her anger and confronting her mother that Fin can help herself and Thayer. I loved the way the author really nailed Fin's agony, resentment and defiance in the face of her mother's controlling behavior. I also liked the way Fin gets Thayer and his differences. A must read for "different" teens, they have a voice and place in school and everyone should accept them for who they are.

KayLee says

I liked this more than I expected to :D

edh says

Fin is a high schooler with problems - beyond the fact that school is a drag and her parents' divorce means an estrangement with her father, Fin has come to recognize that her rituals and requirements for daily life are actually signs of OCD. It doesn't help that her mother (and grandmother, as we discover) also display symptoms of this condition. While at school Fin meets a guy named Thayer, a skater into tagging and pot (not necessarily in that order). But is he someone she can really trust? This is a great story about teens who are marginalized in multiple ways by society, family, and illness. It's a good read for teens that contrasts with Harrar's *Not As Crazy as I Seem* (which I think of as more of a middle school pick) in its treatment of teen OCD.

Cana Rensberger says

Rhythm is the pulse of life. Everything has rhythm. The waves in the ocean, cars buzzing down the highway, the drip of the rain after a spring shower, the pencil scraping across our paper, even our own pulse in our ears, late at night when all should be quiet.

Fin doesn't know quiet. For her, the rhythm has become more than a beat, it's an obsession. It's good luck to turn a light on three times, the wrong number could be deadly. The roar of numbers in her head blocks the outside chaos. They offer comfort. Stability. She taps her seat three times. Someone touches her shoulder. She touches the opposite one. It's about keeping life in balance. Control.

Control is something Fin lost when her parents uttered those devastating words, "...this doesn't mean we're abandoning you or that we don't love you anymore." The D-word. Moving from a place she loves, to a place she doesn't. Her mother copes by excessive cleaning. Fin copes by counting.

Soon, Fin's mother has her visiting Dr. Calaban. Fin meets Thayer who is also being treated by Dr. Calaban, but for ADD. Fin discovers there's a name for what she's feeling, OCD, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. She wonders if it's hereditary as her mother rewashes the jeep Fin's just finished washing. With the help of Thayer and Dr. Calaban, Fin rediscovers her love of something she'd lost along the way, something that will help calm the need for total constant order.

TOTAL CONSTANT ORDER is a riveting first novel by debut author Crissa-Jean Chappell. I was sad to end the book because I wanted to spend more time with the characters. I kept trying to slow down as I read, to linger and enjoy, but it was impossible. Each chapter drove me forward to the next and the next until the final page. The characters were fresh and real. I know you'll enjoy them as much as I did!

WCPL Teens says

Fin can't stop counting. Voices in her head tell her if she doesn't, something terrible will happen. Although counting didn't stop her parents from getting a divorce. Now her dad has a new girlfriend and Fin is stuck with her mom, who seems to have some OCD tendencies as well. To top it all off, Fin is forced to go to therapy. But her life starts to change when she befriends Thayer, a boy in her class who sees the same therapist. Soon she is able to calm the voices and ignore the need to count.

Jennifer Wardrip says

Reviewed by Cana Rensberger for TeensReadToo.com

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Emily David says

Total Constant Order allows the reader inside the life of Fin, an outcast teen whose head is not working quite right. Fin ends up seeing a psychiatrist is diagnosed with OCD and put on Paxil. Ironically it's another 'crazy' who helps her find her way. I found the authors descriptions of Fin's compulsions, mental musings and struggles very real. I feel like I have better understanding of what a person suffering from ODC might feel like, what an uncontrollable life might feel like after reading this beautifully written novel. I will highly recommend!
