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# Mindblind



## Synopsis

Fourteen-year-old Nathaniel Clark lives in two worlds—the outside world of his family and friends and his own, special, inside Aspie world, where he's not forced to interact with people or worry about wearing his clothes right-side out. The world where he can solve mathematical problems that elude even the brightest graduate students. The world where he feels he can find his own inner truth. People say he's a genius, but Nathaniel thinks differently. According to a book he once read, a true genius uses his talent to make a contribution to the world. Nathaniel takes the definition literally, and begins his quest for genius status. "I will start, right after I wash the chocolate off my face. If I want to be seen as a genius, I should not look like an idiot." Nathaniel has a sky-high IQ and perfect SAT scores, but Jennifer Roy and her husband, Greg, have a remarkable 8-year-old son, Adam, who not only inspired the character of Nathaniel Clark, but also created the "Amazing Race" charts and the narrative at the back of *MindBlind*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

**\*Starred Review\*** Formulas are 14-year-old Nathaniel's friends because they relax him, an important consideration for someone given to panic attacks when he has to interact with people. Nathaniel is a high-functioning "Aspie," a term that those like him with Asperger's syndrome employ to describe themselves. Fortunately, formulas aren't Nathaniel's only friends. His neighbor Cooper is one; pretty, vivacious Jessa, upon whom Nathaniel has a serious but unarticulated crush, is another; and Molly—an Aspie like him—is a third. The multitalented Nathaniel plays keyboards in a

band, teaches himself Mandarin Chinese, and is an absolute whiz at mathematics. And why not? He has an IQ of 182. A genius, you say? Well, yes, but don't tell Nathaniel that, for he has read that to be a bona fide genius, you have to make a contribution to the world, something he is determined to do (just as he is determined to kiss Jessa). Roy (Yellow Star, 2006) has written an extraordinary novel with highly developed, good-hearted, and appealing characters (except for Nathaniel's father, who is a real stinker); a beautifully realized first-person voice that offers us an often humorous and intimate look into the mind and daily life of an Aspie; and a compelling story filled with surprises and drama. To read it is to want to read it again and again. Grades 6-9.

--Michael Cart --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Lovable 14-year-old "Aspie" Nathaniel Clark stores his memories in computer-like files in his brain, loves formulas, plays keyboard in a rock band, has some trouble in social situations, likes to spend time in his own mental world and really, really wants to be a genius. Nathaniel's father, now divorced from his mother, does not believe in Asperger's syndrome; he insists that Nathaniel can simply be "normal" if he chooses to. To prove this, he forces Nathaniel to go to a party, where Nathaniel unknowingly ingests quite a bit of alcohol along with his fruit punch. The sickness that ensues, coupled with the fact that Nathaniel thinks he sees the girl he loves with another boy, nearly results in institutionalization. Luckily, he has a great therapist, a loving mother and some incredibly supportive friends/bandmates who get him through the rough patch. The band decides to video-record themselves singing Nathaniel's rocking math songs, and they quickly become famous. There is romance, grad school and a job at the grocery store just on the horizon. Overly optimistic? Maybe--but who cares? Readers will be happy to see Nathaniel succeed. --Kirkus Reviews, October 2010

Fourteen-year-old Nathaniel is taking a gap year between college and graduate school, leaving him free to work on his goal of becoming an official "genius" by accomplishing something significant with his profound gifts. His devoted, firm mother keeps him connecting to the outside world rather than staying in the comfort zone of his Asperger's life, where he is normal. He understands that he is "mindblind" (it's hard for him to guess what others are thinking), but he has friends, including longtime crush Jessa, and he plays keyboard in a rock band. He also has his weekly stressful visit with his egomaniacal father and his new family, which includes his young half-brother, who Nathaniel perceptively sees is the gregarious, sports-loving son his father always wanted. Nathaniel's life mostly works well for him, until his father insists on his going to a teen party where alcohol is in the punch. Already on overload from loud noises, confusing conversations, and a disappointing revelation about Jessa, Nathaniel has a serious breakdown that marks the turning

point of the novel. The specificity of the references may date the book quickly, but they seem essential to Nathaniel's concrete point of view. The outcomes feel a little optimistic, but like Beverly Cleary, Roy succeeds in presenting a unique and human perspective that allows the reader to laugh at her character's quirks while engaging with him wholeheartedly. --The Horn Book, October 2010  
--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I loved the narration choice of the book. Kids with autism tend to have a rigid grasp on reality so it only makes sense for Nathaniel to file his memories like files on a computer. Every time there's a flashback it's prefaced with something like "Open file: C:/My Files/BradenParty\_Jessa.avi (Date: 10/12/10)" It helps the reader know it's a flashback but it also provides a glimpse in to Nathaniel's mind. The relationships in this book really make the book for me. Thankfully we live in a world where more and more people know about autism. People might not be sure exactly how to behave with autistic people but they at least understand a bit about it. The book highlights the typical reactions people have to autism. You've got the people who think the disease is a bunch of BS & think the kid should toughen up (Nathaniel's dad), the people who know about all the ups and downs & love the person just the same (Nathaniel's mom), the people who are oblivious to the differences (Nathaniel's little step-brother), and the people who treat the person as normally as possible (Nathaniel's friends). All of the relationships seem so normal and natural. I really appreciated that the author made Nathaniel as "normal" as possible. He's a kid, not a spectacle. The path of the story is very natural. It's very much a coming-of-age story that shows only a snippet of Nathaniel's life (not including tiny flashbacks). There's not a radical change of character. It would be silly to expect that. Instead you see small little changes in Nathaniel which for him is fantastic progress. The bottom line? I enjoyed it!

This is a lovely book which I understand was written by the mother of a child with Asperger's Syndrome. Nathan, our narrator, describes his experience of the many manifestations of Asperger's, or Aspy affectionately. He knows that he is remediated by his tireless mother and the therapists and teachers in his world. He has a psychiatrist, Dr. Ali, who helps him to understand his perception of the world. Nathan is a genius, although he believes this title will only be earned when he has made a major contribution to the world. Some of Nathan's thoughts are related in mathematical terms. He also thinks in computer files. This can be a bit confusing, but I think that is the point. Nathan is far from perfect, but he is endearing. His portrayal is finely drawn and at times amusing. In fact some of the best parts of the book are his learning to come to terms with humor.

The plot is character driven. I found the sequence of events believable. This is a book replete with empathy and a warm view of humans, neurotypical or autistic. I urge you to experience it.

3.5 STARS Nathaniel is an incredible mathematician and a 14 year old boy with Aspergers. From his perspective, the reader experiences his struggles and successes. I have never read a book quite like this, it is very unique. The contrast between his parents was well executed. The author seemed more realistic about portraying a person with Aspergers. The multitude of math formulas made it quite confusing for me at times. Some things were also disconnected, for instance he is in a band but is very noise sensitive. BOTTOM LINE: I love the unique perspective. I found some parts confusing but this might have been done on purpose to add to the experience. I would recommend this novel.

This book was a good insight into the life of a person with aspergers. Roy does a great job of describing Nathaniel's mind processes and interactions with others. While Nathaniel does struggle socially, he does have friends and plays in a band. He even has a crush on long time friend Jessica. His parents are divorced and he lives with his mom, who shows deep love for him. His father on the other hand has remarried, and while he sees Nathaniel on the weekends, hates the fact that Nathaniel is classified as having aspergers. He seems to think that Nathaniel is just weird or acting out. He tries to make Nathaniel act like a "normal kid", thinking if he does he will suddenly become "normal". Nathaniel's half brother is a refreshing character even though he's only seen in the book a little bit, he has accepted Nathaniel for who he is unlike Nathaniel's dad. Overall this book was great and I would definitely recommend it!

This story of the inner experiences of a youngster experiencing autism is realistic and well written. The reader comes to understand the rigidity of thinking involved with this disorder. As you read the book you come to empathize with the protagonist. You recognize that all people have strengths and weaknesses. When we focus on strengths we form bonds whereas when we focus on weaknesses relationships are disrupted. I highly recommend this insightful novel.

I was drawn to the cover of this book because my grandson is on autism spectrum, has perfect pitch, and plays piano. Even though the character in this book is an autistic teenager with musical abilities, the narrative is really about how he navigates among family and friends, attempting to understand their actions and words. I think this was cleverly written, and a good, quick read. We

certainly need more fiction for this particular population and those wanting to communicate with them.

I'm going to recommend this book to a lot of people! I felt like I was reliving so many scenes from my son's childhood that it was eerie. This book brings some wonderful insight into both the young man and his parents, and their sometimes difficult relationships. There's a saying "If you've met one person with autism.... you've met one person with autism" because each one is so unique, but if you are struggling to understand and relate to a high functioning "aspie" or if you know someone who is, this is one of the books to suggest.

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