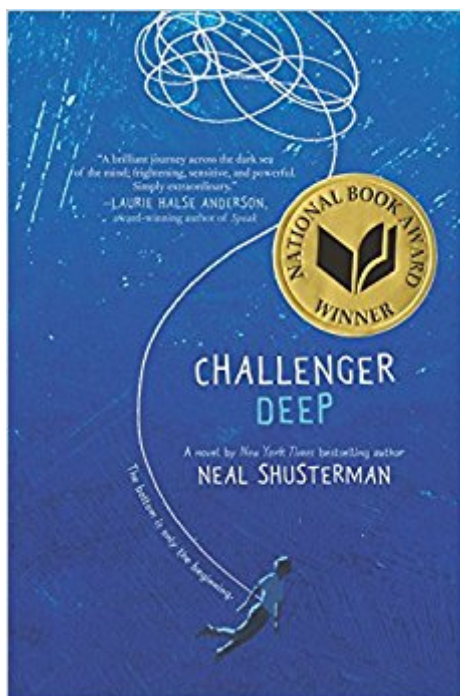


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# Challenger Deep (Golden Kite Awards)



## Synopsis

National Book Award and Golden Kite Award Winner 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. *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."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up **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. 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. (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))

This book was not at all what I expected. I knew that it would cover the topic of mental illness. That much I was aware of before I began reading it. I also knew it was a Neal Shusterman book, and I

pre-ordered simply because he wrote it. I think of him as a kindred spirit and find his writings to speak to me deeply. That said, this book didn't do that as much. I was at first bothered by that. It almost seemed like there wasn't as much of him (or me) written into the main character. I like finding myself relating so deeply to the main character that they feel like an extension of me. I like connecting with the author in that way. But I realized: He wasn't writing his own story. It's a story he identifies deeply with (as referenced by the author's note at the end); it is clearly a part of his narrative, but he was stepping into a place outside of himself to write it. As a result, I didn't connect as deeply personally, except for a few random paragraphs of Shusterman-POW that hit me in the gut with familiarity (which is much more common in his other writings). Once I realized that this story wasn't "for me" and building my ego and making me feel understood, but was for bringing a deeper understanding outside of myself, I fell into the story. I am so grateful that Shusterman was vulnerable enough to share this story. It's easier to write your own insecurities and fears into a book. Authors tend to be overshareers when it comes to "the depths of who they are". But to share a major part of his life and his son's life, to attempt to shed light on a touchy area and to try to fight the taboo of "talking about it"... He does a lot and does it well. Masterfully blended, with a sort of "Wayside School" feeling of other-reality-ness (for other 90s kids), this book was gripping. I highly recommend it. That said, if you don't like it, I would say this is also not "typical Shusterman", so don't let this close you off to his other writings. I hope most people can come to see this the way I did, if they don't deeply identify. Allow yourself to buy into the narrative and feel the cognitive dissonance within yourself. Feel the growing tension. If you let yourself "go there", it will be a very powerful read and experience for you. I also really appreciated Brandon's art and shared vulnerability. If either of the Shustermans read this: Thank you. Neal, I hope one day I have the honor of meeting you in person and just gleaning from your incredible Bradbury-like wisdom. Thank you both for sharing so much in this project.

The fact that I read this book start to finish in less than 24 hours speaks to how captivating it really was. It's sad, and funny, and heartbreaking, and uncomfortable, and engrossing, and I just couldn't put it down. The metaphor that weaves the story together is captivating, and much like mental illness itself, it gives moments where you can tell what's real, broken by snippets of memories, but overall still a feeling of being untethered to reality. This is not only an important story about a boy struggling with severe mental illness, but it's also a poignant journey about finding oneself, and how we get through our daily lives in the best way we know how. A very moving story, and one that will stick with you for a time.

This is a book for everyone . . . in some ways, a challenging read and yet a very important read. Follow this young man as he falls into the depths of serious mental illness; follow him as he imagines a life at sea; follow him as he finds himself in a mental hospital; follow him as he traverses the sea in his mind; follow him as his delusions and reality begin to 'mix'. This is not an easy read . . . the reader is thrust into the delusion world; into the real world; carried along with our teen character who suffers from a schizophrenic type of illness . . . stay with this book . . . stay with these characters . . . stay with this author whose own experience with his son is reflected in story and in description. Love this book . . . oh, yes indeed.

So interesting and thought provoking. I knew very little about the book before purchasing it (I knew it would be discussed on a podcast I listened to and wanted to be able to relate to the discussion), so I felt a little lost during the first part of the book, but it was completely worth pressing forward. It was a fascinating and moving portrayal of mental illness. It surprised me, engaged me, made me think, and made me feel. One of the best books I read this year. I'm not an avid reader of adolescent literature, although I read it occasionally, but I thought this was well worth reading for adults.

You never get over it. This is an important work and may become a classic read in English literature classes and psych 101 classes for decades. It's a map. If you have the dread disease of schizophrenia this can be intense--you can feel yourself slipping away. I started to put the book down so I wouldn't decompensate, but then Caden started to get better--so I read on . . . Author, On Gratitude, Jean Manthei, MA, LPC, CACIII

I'm a psych RN, I work on an in patient psych unit for adolescents. I loved this book so much I bought it for the social worker and psychiatrist I work with. I did NOT figure out who the parrot and captain were till the end. Then I couldn't believe I hadn't seen it before then. Thank you NAMI (national alliance for mental illness) for telling me about this book.

One of the best novels about mental illness I've ever read. Compassionate, moving, compelling, heartbreaking. My own son had a similar experience recently and Neal Shusterman captured the experience with great sensitivity and intelligence. I am grateful to him for writing this's beautiful novel. It was well deserving of the National Book Award.

Fantastic, fantastic, fantastic. I cannot rate this book highly enough. It was such a perfect description of psychosis in real time. Thank you, thank you, thank you Neal, for taking the time to write such a deeply personal and accurate story. I think every person working in mental health, and especially those working with teenagers or with people who endure psychosis, ought to read this book.

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