



# The Reason I Jump: The Inner Voice of a Thirteen-Year-Old Boy with Autism

By Naoki Higashida

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**“One of the most remarkable books I’ve ever read. It’s truly moving, eye-opening, incredibly vivid.”—Jon Stewart, *The Daily Show***

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You’ve never read a book like *The Reason I Jump*. Written by Naoki Higashida, a very smart, very self-aware, and very charming thirteen-year-old boy with autism, it is a one-of-a-kind memoir that demonstrates how an autistic mind thinks, feels, perceives, and responds in ways few of us can imagine. Parents and family members who never thought they could get inside the head of their autistic loved one at last have a way to break through to the curious, subtle, and complex life within.

Using an alphabet grid to painstakingly construct words, sentences, and thoughts that he is unable to speak out loud, Naoki answers even the most delicate questions that people want to know. Questions such as: “Why do people with autism talk so loudly and weirdly?” “Why do you line up your toy cars and blocks?” “Why don’t you make eye contact when you’re talking?” and “What’s the reason you jump?” (Naoki’s answer: “When I’m jumping, it’s as if my feelings are going upward to the sky.”) With disarming honesty and a generous heart, Naoki shares his unique point of view on not only autism but life itself. His insights—into the mystery of words, the wonders of laughter, and the elusiveness of memory—are so startling, so strange, and so powerful that you will never look at the world the same way again.

In his introduction, bestselling novelist David Mitchell writes that Naoki’s words allowed him to feel, for the first time, as if his own autistic child was explaining what was happening in his mind. “It is no exaggeration to say that *The Reason I Jump* allowed me to round a corner in our relationship.” This translation was a

labor of love by David and his wife, KA Yoshida, so they'd be able to share that feeling with friends, the wider autism community, and beyond. Naoki's book, in its beauty, truthfulness, and simplicity, is a gift to be shared.

**Praise for *The Reason I Jump***

"This is an intimate book, one that brings readers right into an autistic mind."—*Chicago Tribune* (Editor's Choice)

"Amazing times a million."—Whoopi Goldberg, *People*

"*The Reason I Jump* is a Rosetta stone. . . . This book takes about ninety minutes to read, and it will stretch your vision of what it is to be human."—Andrew Solomon, *The Times* (U.K.)

"Extraordinary, moving, and jeweled with epiphanies."—*The Boston Globe*

"Small but profound . . . [Higashida's] startling, moving insights offer a rare look inside the autistic mind."—*Parade*

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### **The Reason I Jump: The Inner Voice of a Thirteen-Year-Old Boy with Autism By Naoki Higashida Bibliography**

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**Editorial Review**

Amazon.com Review

**Author One-on-One: David Mitchell and Andrew Solomon**



**David Mitchell** is the international bestselling author of *Cloud Atlas* and four other novels. **Andrew Solomon** is the author of several books including *Far From the Tree* and *The Noonday Demon*.

**Andrew Solomon:** Why do you think that such narratives from inside autism are so rare--and what do you think allowed Naoki Higashida to find a voice?

**David Mitchell:** Autism comes in a bewildering and shifting array of shapes, severities, colors and sizes, as you of all writers know, Dr. Solomon, but the common denominator is a difficulty in communication. Naturally, this will impair the ability of a person with autism to compose narratives, for the same reason that deaf composers are thin on the ground, or blind portraitists. While not belittling the Herculean work Naoki and his tutors and parents did when he was learning to type, I also think he got a lucky genetic/neural break: the manifestation of Naoki's autism just happens to be of a type that (a) permitted a cogent communicator to develop behind his initial speechlessness, and (b) then did not entomb this communicator by preventing him from writing. This combination appears to be rare.

**AS:** What, in your view, is the relationship between language and intelligence? How do autistic people who have no expressive language best manifest their intelligence?

**DM:** It would be unwise to describe a relationship between two abstract nouns without having a decent intellectual grip on what those nouns are. Language, sure, the means by which we communicate: but intelligence is to definition what Teflon is to warm cooking oil. I feel most at home in the school that talks about 'intelligences' rather than intelligence in the singular, whereby intelligence is a fuzzy cluster of aptitudes: numerical, emotional, logical, abstract, artistic, 'common sense' – and linguistic. In this model, language is one subset of intelligence – and, Homo sapiens being the communicative, cooperative bunch that we are, rather a crucial one, for without linguistic intelligence it's hard to express (or even verify the existence of) the other types. I guess that people with autism who have no expressive language manifest their

intelligence the same way you would if duct tape were put over your mouth and a 'Men in Black'-style memory zapper removed your ability to write: by identifying problems and solving them. I want a chocky bicky, but the cookie jar's too high: I'll get the stool and stand on it. Or, Dad's telling me I have to have my socks on before I can play on his iPhone, but I'd rather be barefoot: I'll pull the tops of my socks over my toes, so he can't say they aren't on, then I'll get the iPhone. Or, This game needs me to add 7+4: I'll input 12, no, that's no good, try 11, yep...

**AS:** Naoki Higashida comes off as very charming, but describes being very difficult for his parents. Do you think that the slightly self-mocking humor he shows will give him an easier life than he'd have had without the charm?

**DM:** Definitely. Humor is a delightful sensation, and an antidote to many ills. I feel that it is linked to wisdom, but I'm neither wise nor funny enough to have ever worked out quite how they intertwine.

**AS:** As you translated this book from the Japanese, did you feel you could represent his voice much as it was in his native language? Did you find that there are Japanese ways of thinking that required as much translation from you and your wife as autistic ways required of the author?

**DM:** Our goal was to write the book as Naoki would have done if he was a 13 year-old British kid with autism, rather than a 13 year-old Japanese kid with autism. Once we had identified that goal, many of the 1001 choices you make while translating became clear. Phrasal and lexical repetition is less of a vice in Japanese — it's almost a virtue — so varying Naoki's phrasing, while keeping the meaning, was a ball we had to keep our eyes on. Linguistic directness can come over as vulgar in Japanese, but this is more of a problem when Japanese is the Into language than when it is the Out Of language. The only other regular head-bender is the rendering of onomatopoeia, for which Japanese has a synaesthetic genius — not just animal sounds, but qualities of light, or texture, or motion. Those puzzles were fun, though

**AS:** Higashida has written dream-like stories that punctuate the narrative. Can you say what functional or narrative purpose they serve in the book?

**DM:** Their inclusion was, I guess, an idea of the book's original Japanese editor, for whom I can't speak. But for me they provide little coffee breaks from the Q&A, as well as showing that Naoki can write creatively and in slightly different styles. The story at the end is an attempt to show us neurotypicals what it would feel like if we couldn't communicate. The story is, in a way, *The Reason I Jump* but re-framed and re-hung in fictional form. They also prove that Naoki is capable of metaphor and analogy.

**AS:** The book came out in its original form in Japan some years ago. Do you know what has happened to the author since the book was published?

**DM:** Naoki has had a number of other books about autism published in Japan, both prior to and after *Jump*. He's now about 20, and he's doing okay. He receives invitations to talk about autism at various universities and institutions throughout Japan. This involves him reading 2a presentation aloud, and taking questions from the audience, which he answers by typing. This isn't easy for him, but he usually manages okay. In terms of public knowledge about autism, Europe is a decade behind the States, and Japan's about a decade behind us, and Naoki would view his role as that of an autism advocate, to close that gap. (I happen to know that in a city the size of Hiroshima, of well over a million people, there isn't a single doctor qualified to give a diagnosis of autism.)

## Review

“One of the most remarkable books I’ve ever read. It’s truly moving, eye-opening, incredibly vivid.”—**Jon**

**Stewart, *The Daily Show***

“Please don’t assume that *The Reason I Jump* is just another book for the crowded autism shelf. . . . This is an intimate book, one that brings readers right into an autistic mind—what it’s like without boundaries of time, why cues and prompts are necessary, and why it’s so impossible to hold someone else’s hand. Of course, there’s a wide range of behavior here; that’s why ‘on the spectrum’ has become such a popular phrase. But by listening to this voice, we can understand its echoes.”—***Chicago Tribune* (Editor’s Choice)**

“Amazing times a million.”—**Whoopi Goldberg, *People***

“*The Reason I Jump* is a Rosetta stone. . . . I had to keep reminding myself that the author was a thirteen-year-old boy when he wrote this . . . because the freshness of voice coexists with so much wisdom. This book takes about ninety minutes to read, and it will stretch your vision of what it is to be human.”—**Andrew Solomon, *The Times* (U.K.)**

“Extraordinary, moving, and jeweled with epiphanies.”—***The Boston Globe***

“Small but profound . . . [Naoki Higashida’s] startling, moving insights offer a rare look inside the autistic mind.”—***Parade***

“Surely one of the most remarkable books yet to be featured in these pages . . . With about one in 88 children identified with an autism spectrum disorder, and family, friends, and educators hungry for information, this inspiring book’s continued success seems inevitable.”—***Publishers Weekly***

“We have our received ideas, we believe they correspond roughly to the way things are, then a book comes along that simply blows all this so-called knowledge out of the water. This is one of them. . . . An entry into another world.”—***Daily Mail* (U.K.)**

“Every page dismantles another preconception about autism. . . . Once you understand how Higashida managed to write this book, you lose your heart to him.”—***New Statesman* (U.K.)**

“Astonishing. *The Reason I Jump* builds one of the strongest bridges yet constructed between the world of autism and the neurotypical world. . . . There are many more questions I’d like to ask Naoki, but the first words I’d say to him are ‘thank you.’”—***The Sunday Times* (U.K.)**

“This is a guide to what it feels like to be autistic. . . . In Mitchell and Yoshida’s translation, [Higashida] comes across as a thoughtful writer with a lucid simplicity that is both childlike and lyrical. . . . Higashida is living proof of something we should all remember: in every autistic child, however cut off and distant they may outwardly seem, there resides a warm, beating heart.”—***Financial Times* (U.K.)**

“Higashida’s child’s-eye view of autism is as much a winsome work of the imagination as it is a user’s manual for parents, carers and teachers. . . . This book gives us autism from the inside, as we have never seen it. . . . [Higashida] offers readers eloquent access into an almost entirely unknown world.”—***The Independent* (U.K.)**

“*The Reason I Jump* is a wise, beautiful, intimate and courageous explanation of autism as it is lived every day by one remarkable boy. Naoki Higashida takes us ‘behind the mirror’—his testimony should be read by parents, teachers, siblings, friends, and anybody who knows and loves an autistic person. I only wish I’d had this book to defend myself when I was Naoki’s age.”—**Tim Page, author of *Parallel Play* and professor of**

## **journalism and music at the University of Southern California**

“[Higashida] illuminates his autism from within. . . . Anyone struggling to understand autism will be grateful for the book and translation.”—*Kirkus Reviews*

### **About the Author**

**Naoki Higashida** was born in Kimitsu, Japan in 1992. Diagnosed with severe autism when he was five, he subsequently learned to communicate using a handmade alphabet grid and began to write poems and short stories. At the age of thirteen he wrote *The Reason I Jump*, which was published in Japan in 2007. Its English translation came out in 2013, and it has now been published in more than thirty languages. Higashida has since published several books in Japan, including children's and picture books, poems, and essays. The subject of an award-winning Japanese television documentary in 2014, he continues to give presentations throughout the country about his experience of autism.

**David Mitchell** is the author of seven novels, including *Cloud Atlas*, *The Bone Clocks*, and, most recently, *Slade House*. **KA Yoshida** was born in Yamaguchi, Japan, and specialized in English poetry at Notre Dame Seishin University. KA Yoshida and David Mitchell live in Ireland with their two children.

### **Users Review**

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##### **Guadalupe Baxter:**

Reading a book being new life style in this 12 months; every people loves to study a book. When you read a book you can get a great deal of benefit. When you read publications, you can improve your knowledge, because book has a lot of information on it. The information that you will get depend on what types of book that you have read. In order to get information about your analysis, you can read education books, but if you want to entertain yourself you can read a fiction books, these kinds of us novel, comics, along with soon. The *The Reason I Jump: The Inner Voice of a Thirteen-Year-Old Boy with Autism* will give you new experience in studying a book.

##### **Shannon Lynch:**

Is it you who having spare time in that case spend it whole day by simply watching television programs or just lying on the bed? Do you need something totally new? This *The Reason I Jump: The Inner Voice of a*



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