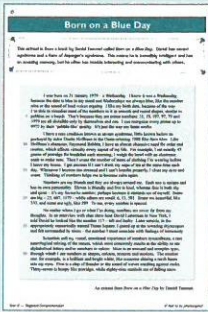


Born on a Blue Day



Question Book:

Year 6, pages 6-7

Author / Source:

Daniel Tammet

Genre:

Non-fiction — memoir

Cross-curricular links:

- PSHE (autism spectrum)
- Art (numerical representation)
- Maths (prime numbers)

Introduction

As well as suffering from Asperger’s syndrome, Daniel Tammet has savant syndrome, a rare condition in which individuals with serious mental disorders show remarkable abilities in a specific field, often either art, music, calendar calculation, mathematics or spatial skills. Like Daniel, around fifty per cent of people with savant syndrome suffer from an autism spectrum disorder, although savant syndrome also occurs in individuals with other developmental or neurological disorders. Before you start reading the extract with the class, use the introduction in the Question Book to ensure that pupils have a basic understanding of the nature of Daniel’s condition.

Answers

1. E.g. A number that’s only divisible by itself and one. Daniel recognises them by their “pebble-like” quality.
2. E.g. He eats exactly 45 grams of porridge for breakfast each morning, weighing the bowl with an electronic scale. Then he counts the number of items of clothing he’s wearing before leaving the house. He gets anxious if he can’t follow his normal routine.
3. E.g. “Eleven is friendly” and “five is loud”.
4. E.g. Because “Times” and “Square” are both words that you might use in maths.
5. E.g. He means that he felt surrounded by enormous things. He links the number nine to “feelings of immensity”, so the huge buildings in Times Square made him feel like there were nines all around him.
6. Any appropriate answer. E.g. I think that it would be difficult if you needed to follow the same routine every day, because sometimes things might get in the way of your routine, and that would be very stressful.

Extra Activities

- *Born on a Blue Day* is a memoir. Memoirs follow similar conventions to autobiographies. With the whole class, discuss the conventions of autobiographical writing. Ask pupils to write a short autobiographical passage, or a memoir, describing how they celebrated their most recent birthday.
- With the whole class, look at the way Daniel describes the different numbers mentioned in the extract. Ask pupils to suggest how Daniel might see other numbers, and to explain their answers. You could then ask pupils to draw or paint a picture showing the way that Daniel sees some of the numbers he describes in the extract.
- Ask pupils to write a poem describing how Daniel views his world.
- With the whole class, discuss the challenges that people living with savant syndrome and other autism spectrum disorders face on a daily basis.
- Challenge pupils to find all the prime numbers under 100.

