

A Newsround Special – My Autism and Me

A Newsround Special – My Autism and Me (CBBC, United Kingdom) is the first time an autistic child has presented a film for the BBC (cf. screenshot 1). Autism is a condition which affects thousands of children in the UK. It affects how children see life, and the way they relate to others around them. A lack of understanding of autism means that many autistic children are bullied at school and feel anxious and unhappy. 13-year-old Rosie, who has Asperger’s Syndrome, a condition on the autistic spectrum, takes us into her world to show other children what it’s like to grow up with autism (cf. screenshot 2, 3). With the help of beautifully crafted animation Rosie introduces us to other children who have the condition: Tony, who gets totally obsessed with things and struggles to make friends (cf. screenshot 4); Rosie’s own little brother Lenny, who turns the house upside down daily to try and make sense of things (cf. screenshot 5, 6) and Ben, who has suffered from terrible bullying at school (cf. screenshot 7). These children tell their own stories in their own words to give us a vivid and moving insight into what it’s like to be autistic, while Rosie presents some facts on the dire consequences people with autism face in our society (cf. screenshot 8).

A Newsround Special – My Autism and Me was one of the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2012 finalists in the 7-11 Non-Fiction category.

International experts’ opinions

International experts shared their opinions about *A Newsround Special – My Autism and Me* during the discussion sessions at the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2012. Many international experts liked this program especially because of its aim to educate children about autism. The experts appreciated the fact that the presenter herself is an autistic person and is able to express the troubles and difficulties an autistic person faces.

“I liked it a lot and I liked her as a presenter. For me, this works pretty well. Like, having one child who’s affected by this kind of illness and talking about it, but then at the same time bringing in other kids so it was not just focusing on her. Usually something like this could also be different. They have the different paces all related because they have the same kind of condition. But I think in this program it worked pretty well. And it was really because autism is a kind of condition of the mind and you really have to try to understand how the brain of autistic children works and how they feel. So I really loved that she was talking about it without having any adult who’s just asking questions. She was taking your hand and leading you into her world and really giving you an insight about this condition – because you can’t visualize it in pictures. She was really like talking about how it feels and what’s happening in her mind. I really loved it.” (female expert, Germany)

Experts appreciated the use of graphics and different catchy images in the program.



Ill. 1: Rosie introduces herself as a person with autism



Ill. 2: Rosie shows graphics on how the mind functions



Ill. 3: An autistic person explains the difficulties in his daily life



Ill. 4: Tony struggles to make friends



Ill. 5: Rosie's brother Lenny in the bathroom



Ill. 6: Lenny nests on the TV and tries to make sense of things in his way



Ill. 7: Ben explains how he suffers from terrible bullying



Ill. 8: Rosie presents the fact that only one in every six autistic persons in the UK gets a full-time job

“I think it was a very catchy program. It is a heavy story but, yes, having the child explaining at that level made it very easy for children to understand and that girl carried me through the story and, I liked it also because the language was easy.” (female expert, Kenya)

One expert thought graphics added beauty to the program and made it more enjoyable, “apart from the message that was, I think, very important and touching, I also liked the way they packaged the whole program in terms of mixing the graphics which was moving from one segment to the other pushing up and down. The additional characters made it more enjoyable to watch and engrossed me in the message as well.” (male expert, Zambia)

A female expert from Japan emphasized the importance of the knowledge this program imparts. She thought that this program explains clearly about the condition and its various forms:

“I felt that because autism is a disability that you can't see from the outside makes it, as she said, that much harder for the patients themselves to be understood. As the presenter said, showing so many types of children lets us understand that there is a disease called autism and furthermore, it is completely different from child to child. It was very easy for me to understand that and appreciate that's what they have to go through.” (female expert, Japan)

Khem Guragain (Centennial College, Toronto, Canada)

Screenshots from *A Newsround Special - My Autism and Me* © CBBC, UK

Target Audience 7.86	Idea 8.18	Script 7.82	Realization 8.23
Average Score per Category by experts' voters at PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2012			