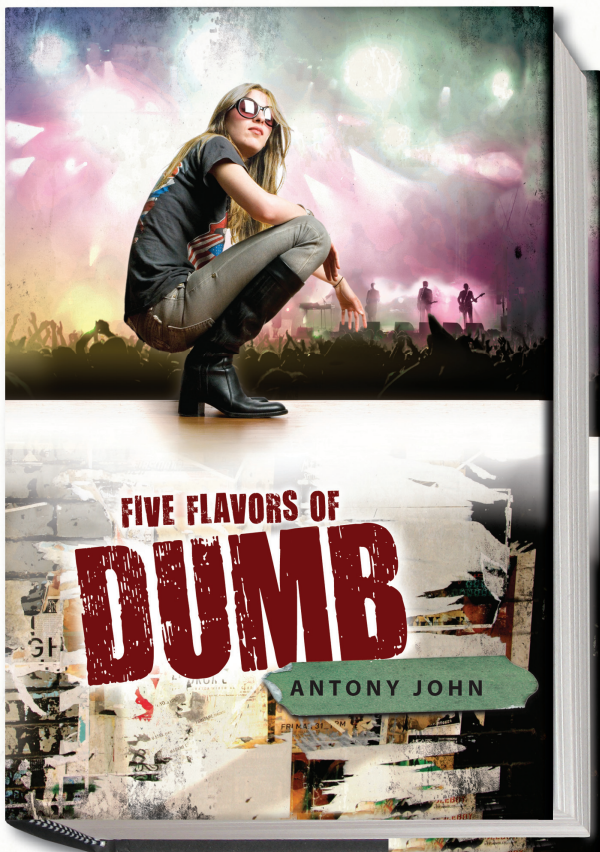


A Discussion Guide for

FIVE FLAVORS OF DUMB

by **ANTONY JOHN**



978-0-8037-3433-3 (HC) • \$16.99 • Ages 12 up • Grades 7 up
978-0-14-241943-3 (PB) • \$8.99 • Available September 2011

Can a deaf girl manage her high school's hottest rock band?

ABOUT THE BOOK

PIPER is a seventeen-year-old high school senior, and she's just been challenged to get her school's super-popular rock band, Dumb, a paying gig. The catch? Piper is deaf. Can she manage a band with five wildly different musicians, nurture a budding romance, and discover her own inner rock star, even though she can't hear Dumb's music?

Winner of the Schneider
Family Book Award

★ "Complex characterizations, authentic dialogue and realistic ups-and-downs give this title chart-topping potential."

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

"I loved it and laughed out loud. Hilarious and so smart. *Dumb* proves that everyone, no matter what, deserves to be heard."

—Catherine Gilbert Murdock,
author of *Dairy Queen*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



ANTONY JOHN was born in England and grew up in the seaside town of Bournemouth. Having grown up with an interest in music and composing, Antony attended Oxford University, where he studied classical music and earned a BA degree. He continued his education at Washington and Lee University as an exchange student for one year. After taking a one-year break from college to work in a Swiss ski resort, Antony returned to the United States and earned a PhD from Duke University. He taught briefly at Duke University and the University of South Carolina before moving to Seattle with his wife, where their first child was born. He published his first novel, *Busted*, in 2008. *Five Flavors of Dumb*, his second novel, grew out of John's fascination with rock music and rock personalities and a challenge by his wife to write a rock story from the point of view of a deaf character. John currently lives in St. Louis with his wife and two sons and is a stay-at-home dad.

Visit Antony online at www.antonyjohn.net.



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- Why does Josh Cooke offer Piper the job of managing Dumb? Why does Piper accept?
- Characterize Piper. Describe ways in which she is strong and confident. In what way does she lack confidence?
- Why is Piper angry with her parents? Describe her relationship with her parents and outline how that relationship changes throughout the story.
- Piper seems jealous of Grace and, yet, she is tender and loving toward her. How do Piper's behaviors toward Grace speak to her internal conflict about Grace's ability to hear?
- Describe the relationship between Piper and her young brother, Finn. What does she learn about him in the end?
- Piper receives email messages that encourage her to visit Kurt Cobain's home and Jimi Hendrix's home. Who sends these messages and why? Piper visits the homes. What effect do these visits have on her?
- In what way is Piper "blinded" by her drive to make money?
- Piper learns that Kallie feels the raw emotion of music better than any of them. What does she mean and why does she believe this?
- After Dumb implodes on the TV show, *Seattle Today*, the three girls begin bonding. What contributes to this change in their relationship? How do they become better friends as a result of the blow up on the show?
- Mr. Belson tells Piper she has changed. How does Piper change from the beginning of the story to the end?
- Piper is secretly jealous of Kallie and doesn't see past Kallie's physical appearance. How does Piper's perception of Kallie change? What does the realization that Kallie is the most "broken" of all the Dumb members teach Piper?
- Explain the significance of the title.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Can good come from conflict? Explain.
- What role does image play in this story? What messages might the book convey about physical appearance and beauty?
- Piper comes to believe that it is important to live in the present. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- What might readers learn from this story about the connection between music (or other art forms) and the human spirit?
- Based on the information given in the story about the characters of Josh Cooke and Jimi Hendrix, how might their lenses for viewing humanity and growing up be different? How might they be the same?
- Piper's parents choose to use Piper's college fund to pay for a surgery that gives baby Grace the ability to hear. How difficult would it be to make this kind of a choice? Can you think of a comparable dilemma a family might face?

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