




NEAL SHUSTERMAN  
**Antsy Does Time**

Extension Activity  
Suggestions

- Antsy and Gunnar's ill-fated dust bowl project is based on the book *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck. Read this American classic and decide if any of its themes are echoed in *Antsy Does Time*.
- Mr. Crawley manages to turn Antsy's water pitcher fiasco into a great marketing tool for the restaurant. Try your own hand at marketing and spin control. Choose an event from your own life, or perhaps something from current events, and create a plan to turn the negative aspects into positives.
- The entire time campaign begins because Antsy wants to do something to help Gunnar. Pick a cause that means something to you and find some way to help out. Raise money for disease research, lend a hand at a soup kitchen, or volunteer at a political campaign.
- Make up your own fake quotes, just like Gunnar. Choose a famous person and put words into their mouth. Be creative and have fun!

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**The Schwa Was Here**

Discussion Questions

- Antsy understands how the Schwa can feel invisible because he often feels that way himself. What makes them feel this way? Do the people around them realize how they contribute to the invisibility?
- Why is Lexie's friendship so important to the Schwa? In what ways is she blind to the Schwa? How does her blindness affect the way she interacts with him?
- Does Crawley live up to his reputation as a mean man? How does Antsy feel about him? How does Crawley feel about Antsy? Does this change over the course of the book?
- Why is his mother's story so important to the Schwa? Is Antsy right to make him hear the truth? Does this information help or hurt the Schwa?
- Is Antsy a good friend to the Schwa? Does he help him or exploit him? Are there times when Antsy could have done more to help the Schwa?
- In what ways is Manny Bullpucky different than the Schwa, and in what ways are they similar? How does the trip to the elevated subway affect each of them?

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## HOW TO START YOUR OWN BOOK CLUB

Think it would be hard to start your own book club? Think again!  
All you need are some friends who are as excited about the books they read as you are and a little bit of organization.

### HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED:

**The best way to find people to be in your book club is to ask your friends.**  
Think of all the people you know who like to read, and ask them to join. If you still don't feel like you have enough people, ask each of your friends to bring someone else. You can usually get a good discussion going with 6–8 people, but any number that is comfortable for you will work. If you're having trouble finding enough cool people to form your book club, check with your school, local library, or bookstore to see if there's a group that you can join.

### Figure out when and where you want to meet.

Some groups meet once a month, some meet every other month. You could get together at someone's house, in a park, on the beach, or in your school's library. If it sounds too official and overwhelming to decide all the "where"s and "when"s right now, don't worry! It's YOUR group and so YOU get to make all the decisions. All you have to do is get together once, and you can work out the rest of the details later.

### Decide how you will choose books, and how the discussions will be run.

This is another one that sounds a little scary but totally isn't. Maybe you have a favorite author that you and your friends would like to focus on. Or maybe you want to take turns picking your favorite book. Maybe one person likes to talk and would like to lead the discussion, or maybe you would rather just get together and talk about the books you are reading. If you get stuck, you can often find discussion questions online (try the publisher's web site) or at your local library or bookstore.

**The most important thing to remember is that there's no right or wrong way to have a book club. Do what you're comfortable with and always have fun, and your group will be a success!**

For more discussion guides to get your group going, visit  
[www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians](http://www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians)

## THE ADVENTURES OF ANTSY BONANO



### The Schwa Was Here

by Neal Shusterman

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## DISCUSSION GUIDE



## ABOUT THE SCHWA WAS HERE



"They say his clothes blend into the background, no matter where he stands. They say a lot of things about the Schwa, but one thing's for sure: no one ever noticed him. Except me. My name is Antsy Bonano—and I was the one who realized the Schwa was 'functionally invisible' and used him to make some big bucks. But I was also the one who caused him more grief than a friend should. So if you all just shut up and listen, I'll tell you everything there is to know about the Schwa, from how he got his name, to what really happened with his mom. I'll spill everything. Unless, of course, 'the Schwa Effect' wipes him out of my brain before I'm done . . ."

Anthony, also known as "Antsy," is fascinated by "The Schwa Effect"—the fact that no one ever sees Calvin Schwa. Even when acting weird and dressed ridiculously, the Schwa is only barely noticed. The two boys form a partnership and get away with all kinds of mischief, from conducting experiments at school to confounding opponents on the basketball court. When the Schwa senses that even Antsy is beginning to lose sight of him, he vows to do something that will make him so visible, no one will ever forget him. Antsy and the Schwa's quest for notoriety is not to be missed.

## ABOUT ANTSY DOES TIME



"It was a dumb idea, but one of those dumb ideas that accidentally turns out to be brilliant—which, I've come to realize, is much worse than being dumb. My name's Antsy Bonano—but you probably already know that—and unless you got, like, memory issues, you'll remember the kid named the Schwa, who I told you about last time. Well, now there's this other kid, and his story is a whole lot stranger, if such a thing is possible."

Fueled by friendship and sympathy, Antsy Bonano signs a month of his life over to his "dying" classmate Gunnar Ümlaut. Soon everyone at school follows suit, giving new meaning to the idea of "living on borrowed time." But does Gunnar really have six months to live, or is news of his imminent death greatly exaggerated? When a family member suffers a heart attack after donating two years to Gunnar, Antsy wonders if he has tempted fate by playing God. Fans of "the Schwa" will welcome favorite and new characters in this wholly fresh tale, which is as touchingly poignant as it is darkly comical.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Award-winning author Neal Shusterman was born and raised in the heart of Brooklyn, New York, where he began writing at an early age. He began his professional writing career shortly after graduation from college, when his humor column was picked up by Syndicated Writer's Group; a national feature syndicate, making Neal, at 22, the youngest syndicated columnist in the nation. Neal has made his mark as a successful novelist, screenwriter, and television writer. As a full-time writer, he claims to be his own hardest task-master, always at work creating new stories to tell. His books have received many awards, winning accolades from the International Reading Association and the American Library Association, as well as garnering a myriad of state and local awards across the country. Another Antsy Bonano book is in the works. Neal lives in southern California with his four children. To learn more about Neal and his books, visit him at [www.storyman.com](http://www.storyman.com).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ANTSY DOES TIME

- Why do Antsy and his friends go into the city to see the runaway Roadkyl Raccoon balloon? How does Antsy feel once he is actually there? Does everyone else in the crowd share his emotions? The author moves back and forth between humorous moments, and serious moments. Why do you think he does this? What does it achieve?
- What originally inspired Antsy to give a month of his own life to Gunnar? What does this arrangement mean to each of the boys? Does Antsy's motivation change as more people get involved? What do the other characters think about what he is doing? Why do you think the entire school is so enthusiastic about the time-raising campaign? Do they really pitch in just to help Gunnar? How does Antsy feel about the involvement of various others?
- What secret is Gunnar keeping about his condition, and why? How does it make Antsy feel?
- During the course of the story, both Antsy and Gunnar feel distanced from their respective fathers. How does each boy deal with this feeling of estrangement? How is the problem resolved in Antsy's case? In Gunnar's? Are the boys satisfied with these solutions?

- What does Kjersten hope to gain from her relationship with Antsy? How does he feel about these expectations? How does their relationship change over time?
- Discuss Antsy's relationship with Lexie. Is it a good idea for each of them to date other people? Are they good friends to each other?
- How does Gunnar's family deal with his illness, and his obsession with dying? Is this healthy for Gunnar? Do you feel that Gunnar and Kjersten are bad people for letting the school campaign get so big?
- At one point, Antsy says that there are three types of people in this world—those who ignore trouble, those who repel trouble, and those who try to fix trouble. Which type of person is he? Is he successful at solving problems? Which kind of person are you?
- How does Antsy react to what happens to his father on the night of the rally? How is it different from the way he feels when Gunnar first tells him he's dying? Does he feel responsible for his father's illness? Why does Mrs. Ümlaut's statement, "Either he will live, or he will die," make Antsy feel better?
- Why is Antsy's family so intimidated by Aunt Mona? Why do you think she acts this way? Is she similar to any of the other characters in the book? Do you have an "Aunt Mona" in your family?
- Why does Gunnar make up fake quotations? Does this habit relate to other things he does in the story? Why is his parting quotation so memorable for Antsy?
- What role does Skater Dude play in the story? Why does Antsy listen to him? What makes him able to see the other characters so clearly?
- Antsy, his mother, his father, Mr. Ümlaut, Kjersten, and Gunnar all have their own ways of dealing with stress. Describe each of their methods. Are any of them healthy? What can we learn from each of them?
- Discuss the ending of the book, and what happens to the Ümlauts. Why do you think the author chose to end the story this way? Why do you think Antsy was willing to give away 123 years of his life? What does that decision say about him?

★ "Antsy tells his story in a bubbly Beastie Boys-meet-Bugs Bunny Brooklynese that keeps the pages flipping"

—School Library Journal, starred review



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The comic sequel to the award-winning novel *The Schwa Was Here*



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★ Booklist Starred Review

★ Kirkus Reviews Starred Review

★ School Library Journal Starred Review

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