

2008

Sonnenblick, Jordan. *Drums, Girls & Dangerous Pie*. Scholastic, 2004.

SUMMARY:

Steven Alper leads a hectic eighth grader's life, trying to keep up with school work, playing the drums in the school band, and obsessing about the hottest girl in school. To top it off, he has a kindergarten brother, Jeffrey, who asks too many questions and gets on his nerves. When Jeffrey is diagnosed with leukemia, Steven's life becomes a roller coaster ride that is almost all down hill. Family and friends, though, show what they're made of as they struggle and support one another.

QUESTIONS:

How did this story originate?

How does Steven's role within the family change after his brother is diagnosed with leukemia?

In what ways do Steven's parents react differently to Jeffrey's sickness?

How does Steven support Jeffrey during his sickness?

Why do you think Steven's father does not go to the hospital with Jeffrey and their mother?

Why does Steven not want to tell kids at school about Jeffrey's illness?

Why is Steven so angry?

Describe one time when Steven "changes the things he can."

Is Steven right to tell his parents that they don't have to pay for drum lessons anymore?

Why does Samantha tell Steven to always be there for his brother?

How does the band show support?

How is each character's life been changed by Jeffrey's illness?

JOURNAL STARTER:

The perfect way for me to escape from all my problems is ...

ACTIVITIES:

Research the current statistics and progress being made on curing children with leukemia.

Find out what agencies exist in your neighborhood that could support a family who is having a difficult time dealing with disease.

Design a poster for the All-City Band Benefit Concert.

Draw a picture of Matt Medic.

Ask a drummer to perform for your group.

Write a recipe for your own version of "Dangerous Pie."

Listen to Dave Matthews.

Contact one of the following agencies, or a similar one, to see if there are opportunities for students to host fundraisers or to volunteer to help others in need:

American Cancer Society

Public Action to Deliver Shelter (P.A.D.S.)

Make-A-Wish Foundations

Locks of Love

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades: 5-8

BOOK TALK:

Steven Alper is an eighth grader who goes through life with one significant challenge:

Read page 4---from “Having a brother is horrible” through “...he also destroys all of my stuff, including my self-esteem and sanity.”

When 5 year old Jeffrey is diagnosed with leukemia, though, it all turns around. His mother can only concentrate on Jeffrey, his father becomes distant, yet Steven still has to focus on normal, eighth grade stuff---like girls and drums and (you’ll have to figure out the dangerous pie part!)

READ-ALIKES:

Sonnenblick, Jordan. *Notes from the Midnight Driver*. Scholastic, 2006.

Bloor, Edward. *Tangerine*. Harcourt, Brace, 1997.

Hobbs, Valerie. *Defiance*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.

Kadohata, Cynthia. *Kira-Kira*. Atheneum Books for young Readers, 2004

LaFaye, A. *Worth*. Simon and Schuster, Books for Your Readers, 2004.

Park, Barbara. *Mick Harte Was Here*. Apple Soup Books, 1995.

Paterson, Katherine. *Bridge to Terabithia*. Crowell, 1977.

Peck, Richard E. *Something for Joey*. Bantam, 1978.

Stepanek, Mattie J.T. *Just Peace: A Message of Hope*. Andrews McMeel, 2006.

Stepanek, Mattie J.T. *Heartsongs Treasury*. Hyperion, 2002.

RELATED WEB SITES:

Jordan Sonnenblick: www.jordansonnenblick.com

Cynsations: <http://tinyurl.com/2upazy>

Book Page: http://www.bookpage.com/0610bp/jordan_sonnenblick.html

Super Sibs: <http://www.supersibs.org>

OTHER RECOGNITION:

Winner of a Children’s Choice Award in Maryland, 2008; Minnesota, 2008.