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## **Review: Drums, Girls & Dangerous Pie**

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## *Drums, Girls & Dangerous Pie*

By Jordan Sonnenblick

Scholastic, 2004

### DESCRIPTION:

Middle school can be an agonizing experience for anyone but add into the mix an annoying little brother who is diagnosed with leukemia. At thirteen, Stephen is consumed with getting the girl he likes to notice him and to refine his drumming skills until his brother's illness turns their family upside down. His mother has to quit her job to care for five-year-old Jeffrey and his father disappears into his work to raise money to pay the huge medical expenses. Stephen tries to handle everything himself without letting his friends or anyone at school know what is happening. Frightened and angry, he spends more and more time on his drumming all but ignoring his school work. When he is in danger of failing altogether, the school psychologist intervenes convincing him to stop obsessing over what he cannot change and to concentrate on the things that he can change. As the word gets out about his brother, Jeffrey and his family are surprised by the influx of support given by teachers, friends and neighbors.

### CRITIQUE:

With such a somber topic it seems logical that this would be a depressing book, but it is not. Instead it is touching and funny at the same time. Stephen's reactions to Jeffrey's illness and the painful treatments his brother must undergo are at the heart of the book. As their relationship transitions, Stephen's begins to realize what is really important. He also learns to look at his friends in a different light, realizing that he does not have to handle difficult situations alone. His parents also grow in the way they handle this crisis and their connections as a family grow stronger. Highly recommended.

### RELATED SUBJECTS:

Brothers, Cancer, Coping, Dreams, Drumming, Family relationships, Friendship, Humor, Leukemia, Middle School, School, Self-respect, Sickness

### CHARACTER THEMES:

Acceptance, Caring, Community, Coping, Fairness, Family love, Fear, Humor, Pride, Selflessness, Sharing, Survival

### AWARDS:

Best Children's Book of the Year (Bank Street), Black-eyed Susan Book Award (MD), *Booklist* 50 Best Middle-Grade Novels of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, *Booklist* Editors' Choice Books for Youth, *Booklist* Top 10 Arts Books for Youth, Garden State Teen Book Award (NJ), Grand Canyon Reader Award (AZ), Isinglass Teen Read Award (NH), Maud Hart Lovelace Book Award, Nutmeg Book Award(CT), Pennsylvania Young Readers' Choice Award, Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award, YALSA Popular Paperbacks for Young Adults, YALSA Teens' Top Ten