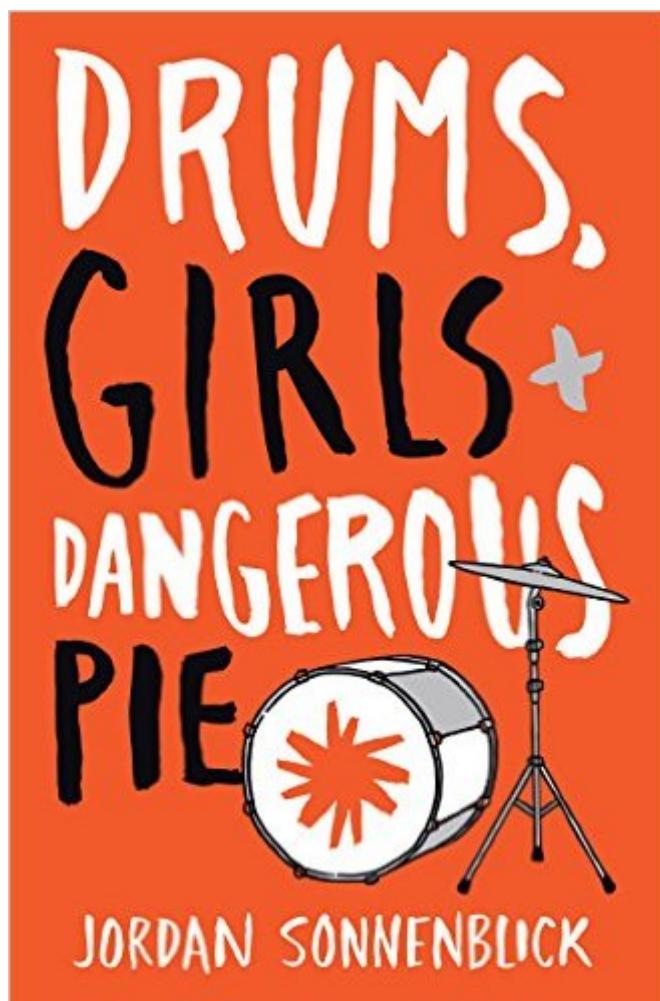


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# Drums, Girls, And Dangerous Pie



## **Synopsis**

A brave and beautiful story that will make readers laugh, and break their hearts at the same time. Now with a special note from the author! Steven has a totally normal life (well, almost). He plays drums in the All-City Jazz Band (whose members call him the Peasant), has a crush on the hottest girl in school (who doesn't even know he's alive), and is constantly annoyed by his younger brother, Jeffrey (who is cuter than cute - which is also pretty annoying). But when Jeffrey gets sick, Steven's world is turned upside down, and he is forced to deal with his brother's illness, his parents' attempts to keep the family in one piece, his homework, the band, girls, and Dangerous Pie (yes, you'll have to read the book to find out what that is!).

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

DRUMS, GIRLS & DANGEROUS PIE starts out breezily enough. Told in the sarcasm-laced voice of 13-year-old Steven, the novel describes his various adolescent trials and tribulations, all of which are familiar yet still cringe-worthy --- he has a crush on the hottest girl in school, has an angelic-looking yet demonic little brother named Jeffrey, and his parents irk and annoy him constantly. With a droll and ironic tone, teacher and first-time novelist Jordan Sonnenblick paints Steven both convincingly and with enough color to make him an amusing and compelling narrator. Readers will be ready and willing to let Steven narrate the woes of adolescence for 273 pages, without expecting anything more or less from the novel. Steven's story takes a sharp turn, however, into potentially over-dramatic emotional ground when Jeffrey's nosebleeds turn out to be an

indicator of something serious. Yet Sonnenblick handles Steven and his family's reactions to Jeffrey's diagnosis and the onslaught of his illness with an admirable balance of humor and compassion. Jeffrey's initial question to his mother after they return from the hospital in Philadelphia is, "So Mom, everything's OK right? This whole cancer mistake is sorted out?" And Sonnenblick's treatment of the different reactions of Jeffrey's parents --- Steven describes his mother as "weepy" and his father as "a zombie" --- is both nuanced and realistic. Steven has to break his parents' emotional states into simple, one-word summations, because he fears grappling with the extent of what they're going through and why; by acknowledging the complexity of their anguish, he must acknowledge the fact that his brother might die.

I picked this book up yesterday, read the inside flap about the author being a middle school English teacher and was sold. I hadn't read the other flap, the one at the front that gives a summary of the book, so I was truly surprised while reading. I started reading after I put the kids down and couldn't stop-read it in one sitting it was THAT compelling. Sonnenblick manages to create Steven Alper, an eighth grade boy who is thrown into the utter despair of dealing with his brother's Leukemia. But what's so fresh about it is that Steven is still forced to face the trials and turbulence of teen-hood despite the fact that his family life as he knows it has taken a turn for the worst. Steven's dimensional thoughts run the true gamut, from grief to illusions of grandeur. I think what's so important about this book (speaking as a former eighth grade English teacher) is that although it appeals to teens and adults alike, it is a perfect read for a middle schooler. Sonnenblick obviously listens to his students, is keyed in to what makes a middle schooler different from a high schooler. He knows the voice and in Steven has created a character that embodies the thoughts and mixed emotions of a boy who is teetering between boyhood and young adulthood-in Steven you see the true metamorphosis. I would be remiss not to mention the music in this book. Steven's life-line and main coping mechanism is his involvement with his drums. Sonnenblick provides the reader with a virtual soundtrack. One can hear Steven at his drum pad and drum set and catch the beat of the bass drum and the ding of the cymbals. I couldn't help but think it nothing shy of brilliant for Sonnenblick to plant mentors like Dizzi Gillespie and Dave Brubeck in his book as parallels to Steven himself.

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