

BY BELINDA WU



# DRUMS, GIRLS, AND DANGEROUS PIE

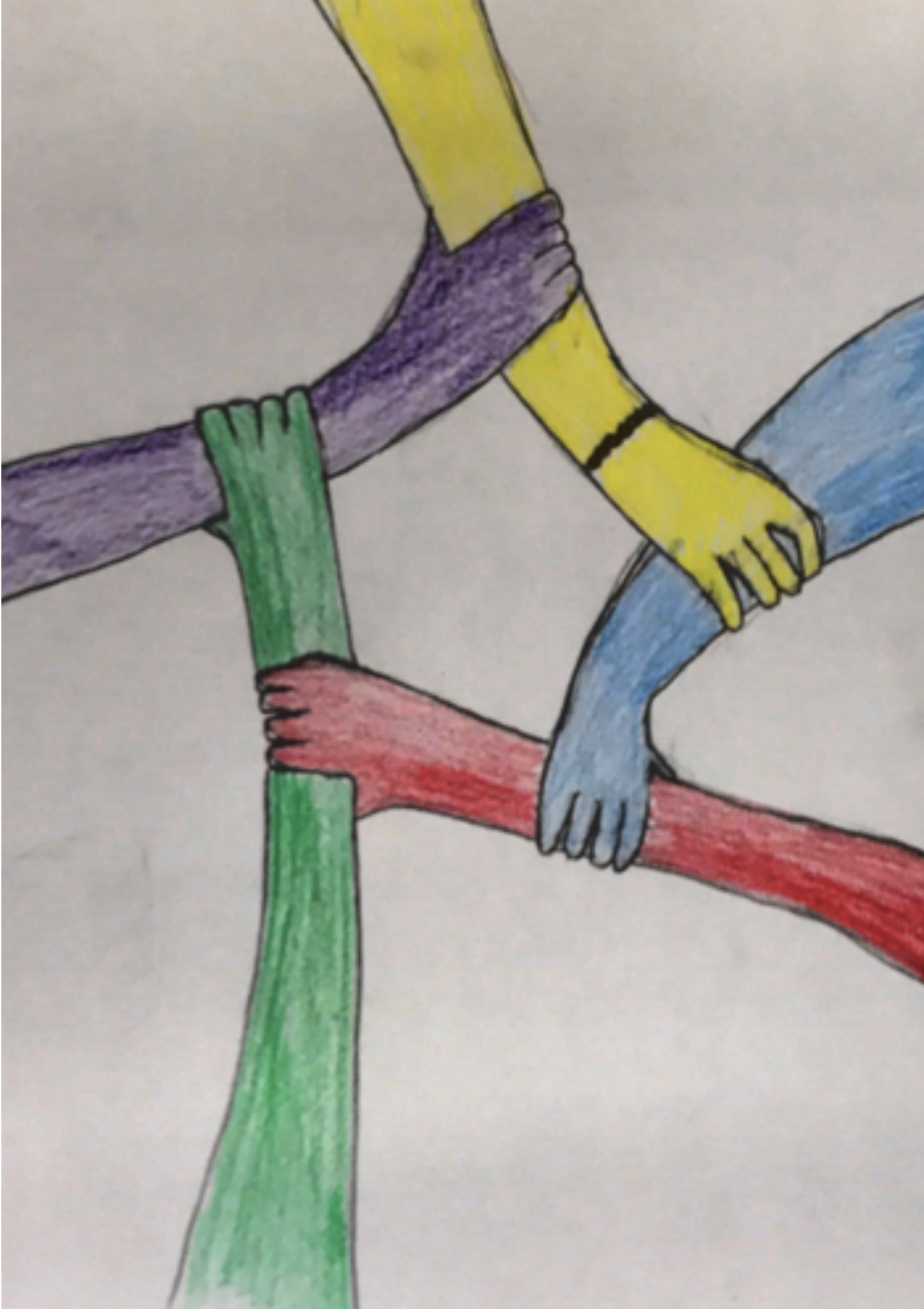
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Companion Guide- Analysis

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION



The sudden change in Steven's life brought to a point where his whole life became miserable. Steven, his family, and his friends worked harder and harder to accept the change and establish help for Steven's younger brother, Jeffrey. "What about... the fit ct st." (pg. 42), this shows that the Alper family really spent a lot of time and effort comforting each other and trying to figure out ways to accept the massive and sudden change in their lives.

Drums, Girls, and Dangerous Pie, written by Jordan Sonnenblick, is a brave and heartrending book. The author, Jordan Sonnenblick, shows that life still goes on even in the midst of tragedy. As Frank McCourt commented to the book, "A brave book. Sonnenblick carries it with such charm and elan, you forget for a moment your heart is breaking," this book really teaches the readers a lot of lessons about life and how we should always try to enjoy every single part of our lives.

In this companion book, you will be guided through the conflicts, events, and plot, as well as the analysis of the character motivations, developments, and relationships. Also, it will include the themes, plot structures, use of symbols, and finally literary techniques that were being used by Jordan Sonnenblick. And now, let's begin reading!

The background of the slide is a white surface covered with various colorful butterflies and leaves. The butterflies are in shades of blue, orange, pink, green, and yellow. Some are large and detailed, while others are small and faint. The leaves are also in various colors, including yellow, green, and blue, and are scattered throughout the scene.

CHAPTER  
TWO

STEVEN AND  
HIS LIFE

- Setting-
- Inner Thinkings-
- Character Motivation-
- Character Relationship-

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In the beginning of Chapter One, the author, Jordan Sonnenblick, introduces the main character, Steven Alper, and Steven's view toward his life using the journal in Miss Palma's (the eighth grade English teacher) class about truly annoying things. It started out showing how Steven view his younger brother as being the most horrible thing in the whole world, but even before establishing the character relationships, Jordan Sonnenblick starts with the setting.

This story takes place in New Jersey, whether in Steven's public school, or at home with his parents and his younger brother. "Baking in the June sun." (pg.1) This short line is a part of evidence that tells us it was June and that it was hot and sunny. Throughout the book, it will also take place in Philadelphia at the hospital when Jeffrey Alper, Steven's younger brother, needs to get treatments after the discovery of his sickness. Some other little settings that are also important throughout the story includes the All-City Jazz

Band practice rooms and concerts, Mrs. Galley's office, and the class that Mr. Stoll (Steven's drum teacher) teaches.

Steven Alper, the main character of the book, is an eighth grade drummer. In the beginning of the story, Steven was strongly annoyed by his younger brother, Jeffrey Alper. Steven plays drums, and he does a great job on it. He was the first seventh-grade drummer ever admitted into All-City High School Jazz Band.

"Unfortunately, all I could focus on was Renee Albert. Did I mention she's the hottest girl in the eighth grade?" In this section of text, Steven shows the readers that he has a crush on Renee when it proves that Renee obviously doesn't like him back, because he had known that Renee's gotten a boyfriend names Biff, while Annette Watson has a friendship with Steven and is

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Steven's best friend. Even though in the end, Annette ends up dating Steven.

"Having a brother is horrible. Having any brother would be horrible." This line proves that in the beginning, Steven feels constantly annoyed by his brother and feels like an unrelenting nightmare.

Steven was always a good student who was always well-prepared and never owed work to the teacher, but when his little brother, Jeffrey was discovered leukemia, everything started to change and he became so much different until he started to realize and began to overcome all the barriers that stopped him from being him and made him change so much.

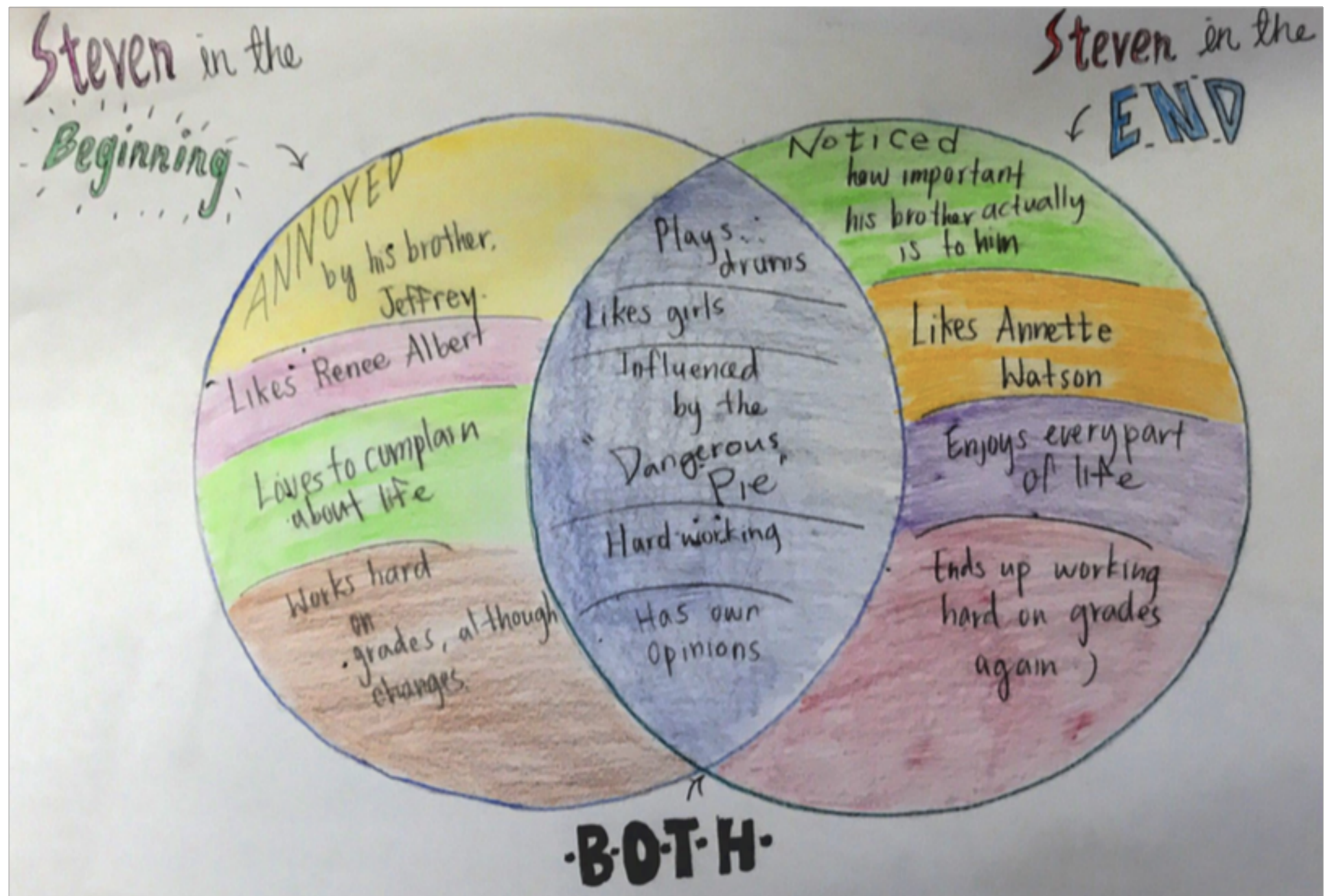
Jeffrey Alper, Steven's younger brother, constantly annoys Steven and makes him [Steven] feel frustrated during the beginning of

the story. Jeffrey had always been said saying he was cuter than Steven, most people took more care after Jeffrey, he was really popular. That was one reason Steven disliked his brother's existence. (but of course he didn't really mean he wanted his brother to not exist, he was just annoyed)

One day when Steven was making oatmeal as breakfast for Jeffrey, Jeffrey stood on the stool, when suddenly he fell and had a nosebleed, everything went wrong. Jeffrey's nosebleed lasted really long and couldn't stop itself and that caused Steven's mother having to run him to the E.R. (emergency room) When he was soon being discovered to be diagnosed with cancer, ALL, acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

After Jeffrey was discovered to the sickness, he and his mom started to need to go to Philadelphia for treatments to his ill. Steven needed to stay with his father at home when

Jeffrey and his mom went to Philadelphia. The main motivation of Steven's actions and large changes in his life is that he couldn't accept the fact that his brother actually had cancer, in which Jeffrey's health conditions weren't getting better overtime. He started to question his life and started to not put effort into his life. Many times he would imagine or dream that his brother was gone or that he passed away. It really made him worry and question about his life.



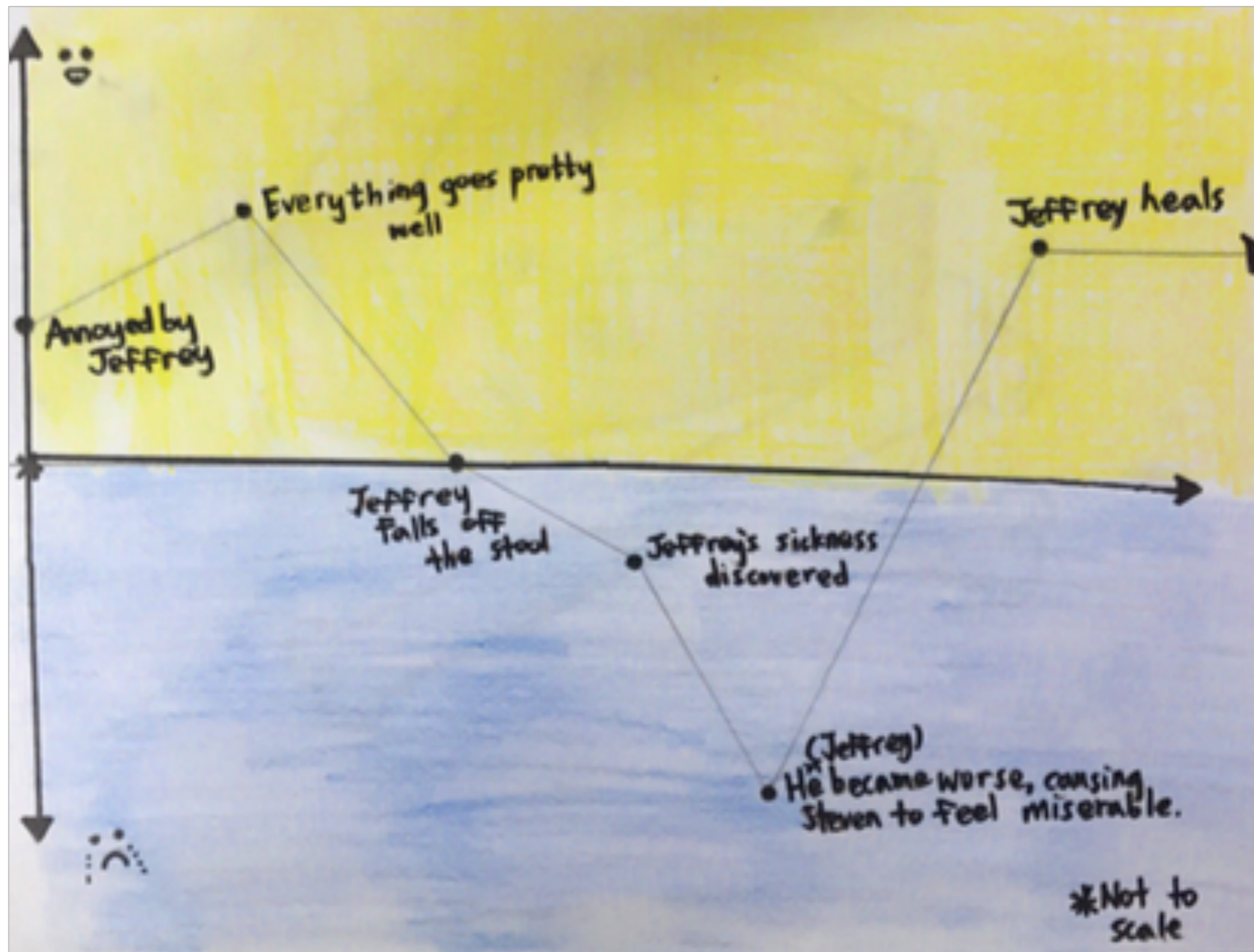


CHAPTER THREE

FALLING  
DOWN,  
COLLAPSE

- Plot Structure-
- Plot Developments-
- Story Structure-
- Character Developments-

Here's a diagram that shows the overall conflicts and plots of the book.



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The plot structure from Steven's view was having a huge confusion in his life. He couldn't imagine how it was like if Jeffrey disappeared. From Steven's perspective, it all happened so fast. It started out all normal and suddenly Jeffrey and his mother needed to go to Philadelphia often in order to receive treatments for Jeffrey's cancer.

Overtime, Steven and his family lost a lot of time together, eventually they didn't even spend time together for dinner. Jeffrey's ill became so much worse little by little, he even had high fevers (pg. 72) and even getting bald (pg. 200.)

Steven was always so worried about Jeffrey's conditions and if he's feeling well. Even in school, he didn't have the chance to focus even when assignments were being given. Slowly, Steven started to fail his grades, in most of the subjects, the grades dropped down all of a sudden. All his teachers were concern about his life and wanted

to know more about what had happened to him, and also about why he changed so much.

One day Mrs. Galley, the school's counselor, called Steven to her office (pg. 117.) In the beginning, she just tried to ask Steven about what happened, but Steven just wouldn't tell her. But in the end of this scene, when all his teachers met and encouraged him to explain, he did. "My brother.... has cancer." This section of dialogue expresses the feelings of Steven inside and tells that he is really nervous.

Steven usually kept all his thoughts and feelings inside him, and he just wouldn't share all his inner thinkings with other people. All his inner thinkings were kept inside him and when he felt really uncomfortable, he would just go to his set of drums and start playing them and hope he'd feel better. It changed throughout the book. He started to find people he trusts, and people he

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enjoys spending time with, as well as people he feels enjoying with.

As time passed, Steven slowly felt that Mrs. Galley is nice and trustworthy, and could help him when he needs. Steven also felt better and became brave about the unfortunate events that happened around him. By the time he felt like working harder, and trying his best, Renee Albert and Annette Watson was willing to help Steven catch-up in school. (pg. 130, 144, 164) Steven started to develop more feelings with Renee as well as Annette. (pg. 181)

During the climax of the story, Steven used symbols like the Dangerous Pie, to bond together he and Jeffrey's thoughts. It helped them think back about what used to happen before Jeffrey had cancer. Steven tried to help Jeffrey feel better and better, and it worked, time by time, Jeffrey felt way better when Steven was with him.

Because Mrs. Galley had told Steven a lesson. "Instead of agonizing about the things you can't change, why don't you try to work on the things you CAN change?" This section made a great impact against Steven's actions. This is the part where the motivation changed massively, the character, Steven, was developing a lot through this part of the story. It motivated Steven on working on his grades again so that their parents wouldn't need to worry about his grades AND about Jeffrey's health conditions at the same time.

One thing that also helped Steven realize he needed to support Jeffrey was because of meeting Samantha, Samantha was a character who also was diagnosed with cancer. She became friends with Steven and shared her feelings about her sister coming to see her and how she would feel if her sister would still come and support her,

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although at one point she passed away without her family beside her.

That strongly made Steven feel like he really should be with Jeffrey during Jeffrey's hard times. Steven even promised to teach Samantha drums, but he didn't have the chance. It became a sorrow for Steven for knowing Samantha didn't have her family with her during her hard times.

Steven, at one point, also shaved his whole head of hair so that Jeffrey wouldn't feel too bad about getting bald, because instead, his brother is also bald WITH him. (pg. 200) He gave up on a lot of things because of Jeffrey. For example, he didn't let Renee in the house when Renee was going to give Steven math tutoring class when he needed time to catch-up in school. The reason for that was because Renee caught a cold and Jeffrey couldn't get sick because his immune system was strong enough to support himself, Steven always

dreamed that Renee would go to his house, but when she really did, he didn't let her in.

Steven really helped cheer-up Jeffrey and he used his own way of letting Jeffrey know he's always with Jeffrey and will always be there for him. On the other hand, Steven also had an idea when he tried to focus on the things he can change. His idea was to lower down the amount of money their family had to afford, since his mother had to stop working and start looking after Jeffrey.

His own way of lowering down the expenses were by ending his drum lessons with Mr. Stoll, who had been teaching him for five years, and he'd always attend to Steven's concerts, it was bad news, but Mr. Stoll was really nice so he had decided to let Steven get drum classes for free. (pg. 186-188) And that resulted strongly for the Alper family.

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At one point, All-City Jazz Band helped the Alper family even more. Renee and Annette planned a benefit concert especially for Jeffrey and it was to save about \$20,750 for the Alper family to pay for Jeffrey's cancer. At first, Mr. Alper and Mrs. Alper did not think it was a good idea for them to accept this special favor, but in the end they were satisfied about it.

On page 216, Mrs. Alper was sick and couldn't go to Philadelphia with Jeffrey. As a result, Steven and Mr. Alper had to go instead. That was how Steven met Samantha and became friends as well as spending time with her to make her feeling better and more comfortable.

Soon after, the concert started but Jeffrey had to run to the E.R. because he was feeling really bad, and that happened before the concert started, Jeffrey hoped to see Steven with him, this decision was so hard for Steven, but Steven

thought he really needed to be with Jeffrey, so Steven went and left the concert. Jeffrey felt really happy about it, and that was the scene when Steven and Annette really knew about each others' feelings.

After a while, Jeffrey started to grow hair again which means he successfully fought over his sickness. While Steven and Annette developed a relationship.



CHAPTER FOUR

CHANGING ALL  
OF A SUDDEN

- Theme Analysis-
- Theme importance-
- Theme relation to others-

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Throughout the book, therefore lies a main lesson for the readers to learn, and also provides little lessons as well. It all relates to the characters' motivations of why they do certain things and why they actually think in the way they do. It makes the characters in the book learn as well as develop on the way they react. They all rely on the major and minor themes.

The major theme of *Drums, Girls, and Dangerous Pie*, according to my analysis is not knowing the importance of something until you're about to lose it. Steven didn't realize how things were going to be different without Jeffrey after he knew about his brother's illness. He never really "cared" about how Jeffrey felt, instead he always focus on the feelings of himself before everything. Jeffrey's illness became worse and worse everyday and that really made Steven worry. This theme is important to the story because a lot of characters in the story treated Steven very differently and doing so they tried to

help Steven accept the fact that Jeffrey was really sick.

One other theme that play a minor role in the story is that people are afraid of change, but things always change. Steven didn't want everything to change so much after Jeffrey was diagnosed with leukemia. Steven really missed his whole family eating together in the dinner table, although overtime, Steven eventually became strong and brave about it and accepted. This theme is important to the story because Jeffrey, Steven's brother, was a perfectly normal kid who was really positive and active. But one day his family suddenly discovered his illness, and it was just a very difficult thing for his family, especially Steven, to accept it. This theme makes the readers feel very negative and just basically feeling bad.

Next, another minor theme includes good communication leads to - satisfaction,

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understanding, better relationships, and cooperation. Whenever Steven yells and gets mad at Jeffrey, it becomes bad communication, which leads to problems and conflicts. When Steven finally recognized that he shouldn't of thought having a brother is horrible, he started to try to treat Jeffrey better and use good communication. (pg. 7, 174, 175, 183, 201) This theme is important to the story because if Steven didn't use good communication with Jeffrey or Mrs. Galley for example, then none of the problems would be resolves. For example, at first Steven never told Mrs. Galley what happened, but when Mrs. Galley used good communication, Steven finally explain to her about Jeffrey.

It takes a family to raise a child, this theme is being taught slowly throughout the book. It's not very easy to raise a child, Jeffrey's family needed to spend time to take care of Jeffrey, and even Steven needed to take care of Jeffrey as well. This theme is important to the story because if

only Jeffrey's mother cared about Jeffrey, and no one else did. Then Jeffrey would feel really lonely and scared.

Hard work can bring great reward, this theme is just a little minor theme that was being included in the story as when Seven shows how he really likes drums and plays really well on it, it lead to go results like going to the All-City Jazz Band as a seventh-grade drummer. This theme is important to the story because it shows that he really likes what he enjoys.

People should always think about what others think before being too self-centered. Steven's parents treat Steven very differently after Jeffrey got sick, that made Steven feel really confused. (pg. 177, 171) This theme is important to the story because the story explain, in detail, why and how Steven changes his view on Jeffrey as time passes.



CHAPTER FIVE

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TECHNIQUES

- Literary techniques-
- Symbolism-

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Throughout the book, many different techniques were being used by the author, Jordan Sonnenblick. Some included flashbacks and symbolism. The author used flashbacks to reveal to how Steven thought Jeffrey was annoying, but later on it changed his mind because of one major event that happened. He used symbolism to make inferences on how our real life connect to the book's life.

One of the ways the author bond together Steven with Jeffrey is that he started the story by using symbolism and flashback together. It was being used to explain the Dangerous Pie. It was started with Steven flashing back into the past when he was trying to explain how annoying Jeffrey is.

“Take this for example the “Dangerous Pie” incident. Jeffrey’s Dangerous Pie was a zesty blend of coffee grinds, raw eggs, and their

smashed shells, Coke, uncooked bacon, and three Matchbox racing cars. The Special Sticks STILL smell funny.” This was the way Steven brought in this symbol.

The Dangerous Pie is a combination of spices, sauces, and raw eggs, and most importantly, Steven’s special drum sticks that was being added in by Jeffrey.

Later in the book, the Dangerous Pie became a way the brothers bond together. Later it was being used for Steven and Jeffrey to think about what used to always happen before Jeffrey got cancer. That, for example, also became a flashback later in the book.

Dangerous Pie





CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

-Drawing an End-

Drums, Girls, and Dangerous Pie, this book written by Jordan Sonnenblick, is a book about an eighth grade boy, called Steven Alper, his life changed a lot in all of a sudden. After reading this book, it will leave the readers some ideas and it will also leave the readers lessons to learn about life, how people should understand how life works.

The author uses symbolism, flashbacks, plot developments, character relationships, developments, and motivations, setting developments, themes, inner thinkings, and literary techniques to create such an outstanding and brave book.

Jordan Sonnenblick explained how we should all be thankful for what we have instead of complaining about the things we have. There are both pros and cons about life. We should all be

thankful for the good things we have. We should all be complaining about the bad things.

I think the worthy lesson the author wants us to know is:

Sometimes viewing something using a different view is a good way of living too:)



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**-Author of Drums, Girls, and Dangerous Pie- Companion Book-**

Belinda Wu, the author and illustrator of this companion book, was born in Brisbane, Australia. She is currently 12 years old, she studies 7th grade in Kaohsiung American School (KAS) in Kaohsiung, Taiwan during the year of 2017-18. She really enjoys reading, writing, as well as creating



new ideas. She loves to share her thoughts and opinions and ideas with people. This companion book, *Drums, Girls, and Dangerous Pie - Companion Book*, is her first work written during the year of 2018, she hopes to write more books in the future and she would appreciate if you were to check them out and enjoy!