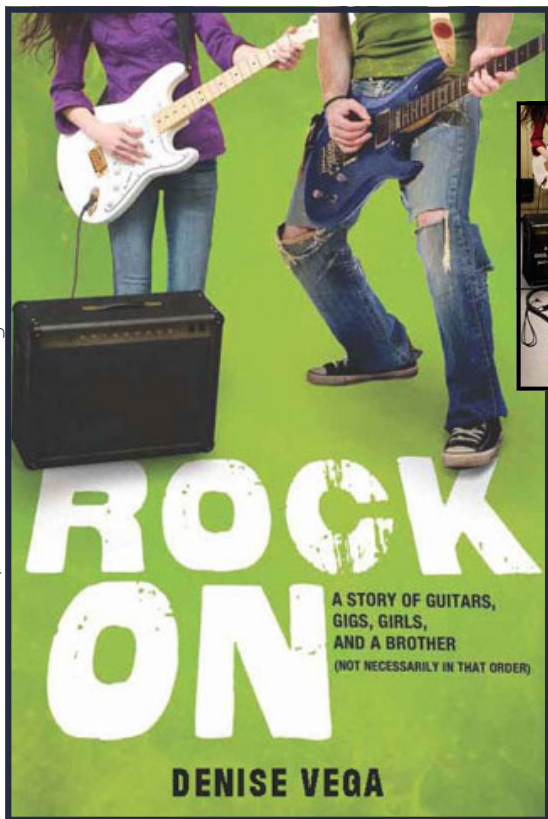


DISCUSSION GUIDE

Rock On

A story of guitars, gigs, girls, and a brother
(not necessarily in that order)

By Denise Vega



Also available in hardcover!

"Ori's honest voice will have readers caring about the outcome..." - PUBLISHER'S WEEKLY

"This book will be enjoyed by teens who like music, poetry, or a good family story." -VOYA
(VOICE OF YOUTH ADVOCATES)

"...a smart, absorbing read about music, relationship complexities, and reconciliation." - KIRKUS REVIEWS

"...a lively, accessible take on sibling rivalry and surviving high school..." -SHARYN VANE, STATESMAN.COM

978-0316133098 - Little, Brown Books for Young Readers

Ori Taylor is the lead singer, guitarist, and songwriter of the Band To Be Named Later, a garage band he started with his friends. Ori wants nothing more than to play his music, compete in the High School Battle of the Bands with his dream guitar (a Les Paul), and eventually record some of the band's music.

And things seem to be heading in that direction. The band starts to get a following on their website and in the clubs. Ori is learning to perform in public and deal with some of the fan attention, which includes meeting a girl—Taurus Girl aka Halyn aka Jane—who doesn't want to run in the opposite direction.

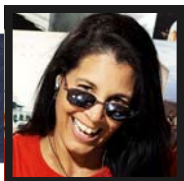
But his older brother, Del, is back after a bad semester at college and doesn't appreciate Ori's new-found success. He's used to being in the spotlight and finds a way to turn each of Ori's successes into a failure or a joke. Ori tries to ignore it and stayed focused but Del keeps showing up and amping up the negative vibes. Ori's best friend, Alli, tries to help him navigate these uncharted feelings but Ori doesn't want to listen. His anger and hurt build up until he lashes out at Jane. To make things worse, Del kisses Jane in front of him, magnifying Ori's anger and frustration until Ori finally confronts Del.

But when it looks like the TBTBNL isn't going to perform at the Battle of the Bands, it's Del who has Ori's back and pushes him to fight for his dream. Ori and Jane find their own rhythm and TBTBNL rocks it at the Battle. Ori discovers his voice both on stage and in life and finds himself with "a girl, a gig, a guitar and a brother, not necessarily in that order."

And the band finally gets a name too!

Note from Denise! This guide includes two sets of questions: Questions about the characters and story in *Rock On*, and general questions about your real experiences as they might relate to the book.

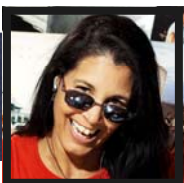
Pick and choose among these two sets of questions to get your discussion going. You'll probably have some of your own questions as well. Have fun!



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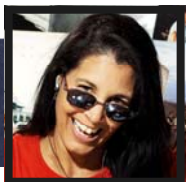
QUESTIONS ABOUT *ROCK ON*

- ★ Early in the book Ori struggles with his confidence in front of the mic and with girls, for example, referring to himself as an idiot whenever girls are around. He says he's even a failure at being a failure. What does Ori mean? How does his lack of confidence contribute to his feelings of failure?
- ★ Throughout the book Ori questions Del's behavior. "Why isn't he interested in my music anymore?" "Why does he seem to hate me when he used to have my back?"... What does this tell you about his relationship with Del before and now?
- ★ Throughout the book, Ori tries to reconnect to his brother. A lot of the times Del is responsive but then puts Ori down. What happens to make Del dis Ori? What does this tell you about Del?
- ★ Ori's job gives him access to the music world but also helps him get closer to his dream of owning a Les Paul guitar. How does his goal of saving for the guitar give him focus and confidence?
- ★ Ori doesn't quite know what to make of all the fanfare especially with the girls. How does he react when he meets and finds out Jane is Taurus Girl/Halyn from the website? Why do you think he has this reaction? Does it change how he views himself? If so, how?
- ★ Why do you think Del left? What was Ori's reaction to him leaving? Why do you think he felt that way?
- ★ Alli is a constant in Ori's life. She knows what he's thinking sometimes before he does. How does Ori's friendship with Alli contribute to his accomplishments and confidence?
- ★ Before Del left for college he gave Ori one of his lacrosse trophies for safe keeping. It was the only thing in his room that wasn't dusty. What does the trophy symbolize to Ori? After Del left, why do you think he hid it in the back of his closet?
- ★ Vela has a close bond and relationship with Del but she also has a connection with Ori. How is her relationship with Del different than her relationship with Ori? Why do you think that is?
- ★ How does Jane's relationship with Del affect Ori's feelings about Del? About himself? How does it impact his relationship with Jane?
- ★ After always holding back, why did Ori end up fighting with Del? How did it change things between them?



GENERAL QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- ★ Have you ever had a goal or dream that finally came true but terrified you so much you couldn't follow through? If so, what happened?
- ★ Have you ever choked in public like Orion did at his first gig? What caused you to freeze? How did you handle it?
- ★ The fans on The Band to be Named Later's site are very open and honest with their comments. Do you think they would be this honest face to face? Would you? Why do you think people are more honest (and sometimes cruel) when they are anonymous? How do you feel about anonymous posts and not being able to face the person who make the remarks?
- ★ The song Focus was originally written about Del. Ori has a very strong and emotional reaction when he sings it at rehearsal. Why do you think teens have such a hard time showing their deep emotions, even to their close friends? Have you ever felt this way? Do you think this gets easier as you get older?
- ★ Early in the book Jane corrected Del by saying, "I'm not his girlfriend." Even though it was true Ori took it to mean something else. Have you ever read into a comment like Ori? How did you react? Were your assumptions correct?
- ★ Ori has always looked up to Del and considered him to be better than he was. Have you ever looked up to someone so much you put them on a pedestal? How did that affect how you saw yourself? What happened when they didn't live up to your expectations?
- ★ If someone you liked and connected to started getting close to your sibling or good friend, what would you do? Would you be able to move past it like Ori and Jane did?
- ★ When Jane and Ori finally talked, Jane admitted she was intimidated and a little jealous of all the female attention Ori got. Have you ever been jealous of someone? Did you try to make them jealous like Ori and Jane did? How did it make you feel?
- ★ After literally "going to blows" Ori and Del are finally able to communicate how they've been feeling. Do you think that they had to get in a fist fight to do this? Why do you think people wait so long before talking about their thoughts and feelings?
- ★ Who was your favorite fan from the Band's blog site? Why?
- ★ If you've listened to "Waiting for You," a song from the book how do the words connect to Ori and Jane? How does it make you feel about their relationship going forward?



Denise's thoughts on ROCK ON

It might seem strange for someone who is (a) not a guy and (b) not musically inclined to write a book about a naturally gifted guitar-playing singer-songwriter dude, except... (a) I grew up listening to my dad and my brother play their guitars, (b) Dad would spin the Beatles, Jose Feliciano, the Kingston Trio, John Denver and Charlie Byrd, among others, on the record player and (c) I spent hours listening to albums and singles (yes that would be vinyl cuz I'm *old*) and going to concerts (yay, Red Rocks!), absorbing the music and lyrics until they were part of me and I was a part of them. I love music—how it makes me feel, what it promises, where it takes me.

Rock On was born out of my love for music and also my fascination with brothers. My husband grew up with two brothers and I've been watching brothers interact all around me through friends and family. Their relationships always fascinated me—so different from sisters (I have three), often with a fierce loyalty unmatched in other relationships.

I loved getting into Orion's music groove because I imagined it was a lot like my own groove when I write, where I can get completely lost in what I am creating and am transported to another place, where time seems to stand still as I create a world on paper that doesn't exist anywhere else.

I also had a blast writing the blogs and comments from the visitors. I worked hard to make each visitor a unique character. Weaving some of them into the main story was even more fun and I was surprised with a few things—like the role of DominantSpecies who I thought was just going to just be some obnoxious dude on the blog and ended up being a little different.

Enjoy the book and keep on rockin'!

Note from Denise: I'm happy to be a part of your discussion and am available for a 20-minute Q&A in-person (Denver area) or via Skype.

For answers to frequently-asked questions or to read more, visit my website, www.denisevega.com

