


## Five Flavors of Dumb

*Antony John*

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The Challenge: Piper has one month to get the rock band Dumb a paying gig.

The Deal: If she does it, Piper will become the band's manager and get her share of the profits.

The Catch: How can Piper possibly manage one egomaniacal pretty boy, one talentless piece of eye candy, one crush, one silent rocker, and one angry girl? And how can she do it when she's deaf?

Piper can't hear Dumb's music, but with growing self-confidence, a budding romance, and a new understanding of the decision her family made to buy a cochlear implant for her deaf baby sister, she discovers her own inner rock star and what it truly means to be a flavor of Dumb.

## Five Flavors of Dumb Details

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Author : Antony John

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## From Reader Review Five Flavors of Dumb for online ebook

### Cara says

You know how people say that something is made of awesome? Well this book is *really* made of **awesome**. The concept is golden. A girl who is deaf managing a band? Does that even work? Oh yes it can.

Piper Vaughan is eighteen, a good student that gets stellar grades, president of the chess club, and deaf. Oddly enough she gets recruited to be the manager of the local high school band Dumb. She has her reservations at first of course, but the recent emptying of her college fund drives her to try this and get some cash. As it turns out the band needs a lot more help than she knew. How was she suppose to know they were so bent out of shape? The band goes through ups and downs, and Piper feels everyone of them. Dumb (the band) becomes her life but things start to get really ugly. Can Piper keep it together so the band has a chance to survive?

The book deals with a lot of things: Piper being deaf and how that affects her interaction with people, connecting with people through music, and coming to terms with who you are. One of the things that stood out the most to me was how Piper had a family (they aren't MIA like in many young adult books) but who have problems of course. I think the family dynamic is spot on. The people in the family are *real* people who have flaws, make mistakes, but at the end of the day they do love each other. Piper comes to realize that she wasn't alone as she thought. Then there is the musical aspect of the book. Since the book is set in Seattle we hear about Kurt Cobain and Jimi Hendrix. I can honestly say I'm not into this type of music but now I get the appeal. It's interesting to see music through a deaf person. Piper can tell how music is so enigmatic, moving, and tells the story of people. It can capture a moment and through this experience she learns that and so much more.

There are so many enticing characters. I mean I don't think I can even write about them without coming up short. My personal favorites were (not including Piper) Finn (Piper's brother), Kallie, and Ed. All of them are exceptional in their own way, for good and bad reasons. I so wish I could give you guys a rundown of each character but read the book. You'll get what I mean, and it would be so much better than what I could come up with.

I'm not giving the book enough credit with my review. Just go and fall in love with music again with Piper. The girl who can do anything, even *hear* music.

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### C.G. Drews says

**Okay, I TOTALLY enjoyed that.** I didn't have particularly high expectations, but gawsh, I just *enjoyed* it -- meaning my mega-analysing brain just chilled for a moment. OKAY but there was some stuff I didn't like. There were a few sexist comments (mostly coming from the girls! not okay) and I didn't actually understand some of the characters' crankiness. BUT WHATEVER. I had fun.

**A big reason I wanted to read this is because it's narrated by a deaf protagonist.** Piper (ironic name) wasn't born deaf, but it's hereditary. Her dad is really crappy about it...he wants to "fix" deafness. I really appreciated that the book took on passive-aggressive discrimination AS WELL as just outright discrimination. And it was also a totally interesting peek into deafness, hearing aids, and signing.

**SO. The book has a big focus on music.** Irony, right?! SO MUCH IRONY IN THIS BOOK. It was interesting, but I have to admit I'm not into rock. And I *don't care* about bands. #awkward So even though premise wise it was kind of meh-bleh for me **it had such good characters they made up for it.** I LOVE GOOD CHARACTERS. There's a big cast, and *everyone's* really fleshed out and dynamic and interesting. Plus Piper's family is a HUGE part of the book (yay for books featuring families!!) and I loved the character development and how Piper changed and grew and how her relationship with her parents strengthen AND fell apart. And friendship? So much friendship awesomeness. **Also it had a super diverse cast!** There were all sorts of ethnicities in their and minorities. YAY YAY YAY.

#### **A quick list of what I wasn't fussed on:**

- + There were a few moments when Piper was "hearing" things I didn't think were realistic for her to hear.
- + The band, Dumb, got through a LOT for not knowing how to play. Like, realistically? No. But for an interesting story: yes.
- + I totally don't understand why everyone hated on Kallie?! LIKE WHAT. It felt so shallow and random...and I also do *not* understand why Piper was so quick to let her in the band without a) knowing what instrument she played, or b) thinking it through.
- + It had one of those "deluded romances". You know...where the girl totally doesn't notice the dude's liked her for 87 million years. ARGHHH THEY DRIVE ME NUTS. (But ultimately they were cute and I ship it.)

**It was totally well written and spunky and I literally couldn't put it down.** I ATE IT IN LIKE TWO SITTINGS. I loved the view into Deaf culture and the characters were ultimately the best part. Maybe belief needs to be suspended a little? BUT C'MON. IT WAS FUN.

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#### **Flannery says**

I've started a list of books set in Seattle and Western Washington. For obvious reasons, I like reading about people I could hypothetically pass on the street. (if they somehow managed to jump out of books...hey, I've read *The Eyre Affair* and *Inkheart* so I'm not ruling it out) I think about Sam and his friends playing potato hockey every time I go over to University Village. I think about Georgina Kincaid prowling the streets when it is eerily quiet outside at night, I think of Jade and Sebastian and Ruby Lockhart when I pass the houseboats on Lake Union. Shall I continue? I think of Bella et al. when I am on the Olympic peninsula, of Nora Roberts' dog-training Fiona Bristow when I see dogs on the ferries, and when I went over the Cascades a few weekends ago, the cast of *North of Beautiful* was in my thoughts. I love the experience of reading a book and recognizing a lot of the landmarks, street names, and even just localisms that are peppered in the writing. So I was excited to see that this book is set in Seattle even though it was surprisingly penned by a Brit. It definitely added a few more literary memory places to my purely-hypothetical- in-reality-though-catalogued-in-my-brain map. (please post in the comments any Seattle/WA books you can think of!)

*Five Flavors of Dumb* intrigued me when I first read about it because it features a deaf protagonist and a musical plot-- I was curious to see what the storyline would include. I'm trying to gather my thoughts so I don't sound like a complete idiot here. I think what was missing for me was the actual feeling of deafness. I know, I can't actually experience deafness (at this moment) as a hearing person but I wanted to connect with Piper on her level as much as I could and I felt like I was receiving mixed messages. I could, however, feel Piper's frustration and I loved that aspect of John's writing. Her anger with her parents over their decision to give her sister a cochlear implant was palpable. That entire subplot was/is fascinating to me since I watched a documentary (*Sound and Fury*) about how the deaf community varies in its opinions on cochlear implants and the importance of deaf culture. The family dynamics were just so interesting in this book because each

family member had a different relationship with Piper—I mean, that is always the case but John definitely put thought into the different reactions people could and do have to any particular situation. The perfect example presents itself in the relationship between Piper and her father, who never learned any ASL and basically communicates on a far lesser level with Piper because of it.

The supporting cast was just not as three-dimensional as I would've liked. They were almost caricatures of themselves. After reading works where the side characters each have a distinctive personality and voice, (Recent reads *Raw Blue* and *Finnikin of the Rock* are two that spring to mind) It disappoints me to say that about this book because I wanted to love it. There was one character other than Piper that truly came to life for me and that was Ed, the nerdy drummer in Dumb. (their band) As a former chess geek, I found Piper and Ed's chess battles really adorable.

I absolutely recommend this book to most YA fans. Piper's voice is unique in the genre and I appreciated what she had to say.

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### **Rose says**

It's hard for me to put into words how much I enjoyed reading "Five Flavors of Dumb." Antony John presents a brilliantly savvy, realistic voice through Piper, a deaf teen who ends up - inadvertently - becoming a manager for a rising teen rock band called "Dumb". It became clear to me from the opening paragraph of the novel that I would be in for a ride with a protagonist that would actively question the decision of the band naming themselves Dumb. At first, I kept thinking this might be a lighthearted foray in the vein of a book like *Lemonade Mouth*, but as I read forward through the story, it became so much more.

To say that it's the story of a teen who struggles with managing the band, however, is not the only thread that manages to engage within the heart of this story. The story presents a realistic look at Piper's world - struggling with family issues, dealing with facets of her identity, and even finding the value in her relationships all while navigating historical threads of music and uncovering the passion and zeal that comes with the craft. Piper stands above many teen protagonists in that the issues she struggles with have weight. There isn't any conflicts that are introduced here for the sake of drama or exaggerated - the investment in not only Piper as a central character, but also the band members, Piper's family and surrounding characters creates an environment where one can feel for the events that transpire. I didn't cry reading this novel, but there were sentimental moments that got to me (including one conversation that Piper has with her father and the way he reaches out to her).

I thoroughly enjoyed this novel and would recommend it to those who love coming of age stories, realistic teen fiction, and music. One of my favorite reads in 2011.

Overall score: 4.5/5

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### **Keertana says**

*Five Flavors of Dumb* is a novel I've had on my radar for awhile, but one I simply brushed off a countless number of times. It was never a priority on my list, but when I found myself stranded waiting for a long time

with nothing to read but this novel on my Kindle, I decided to give it a shot. Well, it would be an understatement to say I was pleasantly surprised because more than anything, I was simply astounded by the depth of this tale. *Five Flavors of Dumb* is more than “just another music novel.” It’s a story about family, friendships, discovering yourself, and ultimately, *belonging*.

One of the main reasons *Five Flavors of Dumb* and I hit off so well was because it was a primarily character-driven novel. Piper is the type of protagonist I *love*. While she knows she’s intelligent, she fails to see the other remarkable traits she possesses in a very realistic manner that never makes her come across as vain. Furthermore, as a deaf heroine, her perspective of life is different, all while seeming to be achingly familiar too. Seeing Piper grow, adjust, learn, and make long-lasting bonds of friendship was simply beautiful. John makes your heart beat in sync with that of his characters, so you as the reader are completely invested in their tale, even if you didn’t think you would be.

In addition, *Five Flavors of Dumb* sheds a notable amount of light on band dynamics. As a lover of music, I adored seeing the dysfunctional members of this band, Kallie, Tash, Josh, and Ed, finally come together to create something *more* than just music. In fact, I’d go so far as to say that the friendships Piper forms with these band members was reminiscent of the friendships formed in Melina Marchetta’s *Saving Francesca*. They were just as heart-warming and touching to read and I found myself cheering for this group the whole way. Lastly though, I have to mention Piper’s relationship with her family. Not only was it achingly realistic, but it is also so rare to see such an honest portrayal of family life in contemporary literature. I can’t do any justice to it through descriptions, but just know that it made tears come to my eyes on more than one bittersweet occasion.

I can’t recommend *Five Flavors of Dumb* enough. If you’re a lover of music, slow-burning romance, well-rounded characters, and unfailing character friendships, then you simply *must* pick this book up. *Five Flavors of Dumb* may have been my first Antony John novel, but it will, by no means, be my last.

You can read this review and more on my blog, [Ivy Book Bindings](#).

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## Catie says

3 1/2 stars

I don’t often read or enjoy “feel-good” books and that’s most certainly what this is, although; I will grant that it does take a while to find its way into corn-country. However, sometimes I do get bogged down by all the darkness and depression. Sometimes I just need a little refresher. Luckily for me, there are a few things that can help circumvent my “corn-free” policy. A few of these things are:

- Nerdery/Geekery in all its forms
- Off-beat humor
- A unique voice
- Soft rock anthems
- Shenanigans
- 90’s Grunge
- Awkwardly hot Asian love interests

And guess what? This book has all of those things. This book was exactly what I needed, and I’m really glad

that Flannery challenged me to read it. I think I inhaled it in less than a day, and in my world of chauffeuring, cooking, cleaning, and crisis-mediation that's quite extraordinary! I really couldn't put this book down.

This is a very sweet story with more depth than your average sweet story. Piper feels completely alone in her school, ever since the only other deaf person (and her best friend) moved to a new state. At home, things aren't much better. Her baby sister, who was born severely deaf, has recently been fitted with a cochlear implant and is starting to hear – meaning that Piper is now the only person in her family who can't. To make matters worse, Piper realizes that her parents have raided her college fund – the one she was going to use to pay for tuition at a prestigious university for the deaf – to pay for the implant.

Desperate for money, Piper sees opportunity in the somewhat lame but nonetheless enthusiastic high school band quite appropriately named “Dumb.” After witnessing a performance in front of the school, Piper ends up giving the band a not so small piece of her mind and their arrogant (but hot, natch) leader challenges her to become their manager. If she can get them a paying gig in one month, she will not only get a share of the money; she will get to keep the job. So Piper accepts. Even though she has little to no interest in music.

The first three quarters of this book had me grinning and laughing and swooning. I loved almost every minute – from Piper's realization that her dorky Chess club partner is secretly a master percussionist with the soul of a rock star, to the band's various (and mostly failing) attempts to succeed and get paid, to the very sweet dynamic between Piper and her younger brother Finn. I loved that Piper is a no-nonsense shark of a manager, perfectly willing to lie to get her foot in the door. And I really loved that each and every member of Piper's family is both present and feels like a real, three-dimensional character. No absentee parents here!

Where this story lost me was, of course, in the ending. Oh, how I wish that I could just beam myself in to these quirky, fun reads and tell everyone to step away from the corn-ledge! *Just don't do it, fictional people! Don't reach for the corn!!* Alas, I have no such powers. Because I have to admit that I really loved that Dumb was such a big hot mess of a band. And this story, for me, was about Piper reconnecting with the world – both at home and with her peers – and finding her own identity. I just don't think it was necessary or realistic for the band to fall into such perfect alignment and become a success. Also, the way that they eventually came together was very predictable, in my opinion. Her family's progress also verged into unrealistic territory. Some of her parent's decisions and actions later in the book felt out of character and yes, corny.

However, I did have a lot of fun reading this. Will I remember this book in a year or two? I'm not sure. I am writing this review only a week after reading it and already had to look up the main character's name.

### Perfect Musical Pairing

Evelyn Glennie – How To Listen To Music With Your Whole Body

Okay, so this is actually mostly a lecture, but I wanted to include it here because I was kind of bummed that this book never addressed the myth that deaf people do not enjoy music. Even though I thought it was hilarious that Piper was very much not a music lover, I think it would have been awesome if the author had found a way to dispel this myth. However, I completely respect his decision and I would much rather it not be present than for him to have artificially shoe-horned it in. That doesn't stop me from including it in my review though! This video is really amazing – a fascinating demonstration from deaf percussionist (she probably plays the marimba!) Evelyn Glennie.

Also seen on The Readventurer.

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## Tina says

### Original post at One More Page

In 2007, I wrote a NaNoWriMo novel with my main character as the manager and the guitarist of a Christian band. I had a pretty good idea for a story, really, with the band looking for a female vocalist and I figured the hardest part was writing about their chemistry. It turned out it wasn't. The hardest part was writing about *music* because even if I've helped produced some concerts before, I still didn't know how it feels like to be in an actual band, or even to just manage one. Suffice to say, that was one of the hardest novels I've tried to write.

But that doesn't stop me from putting singing characters or bands in my stories. I don't know why -- maybe it's a frustration because I know I am hardly musical? Oh I listen to a lot of songs, but I usually pay attention to the lyrics and not the music. Maybe it's because I have a secret dream of being a rock star or a manager of a band?

Antony John's latest novel, *Five Flavors of Dumb* spoke to my inner rock star *and* band manager. I've been eyeing this book for the longest time (even made a Want Books post about it) ever since I saw it from That Cover Girl. I was planning on waiting for the actual book to arrive but I had an ebook itch I needed to scratch and I was very easily swayed when she convinced me to. And this is one splurge I am very glad I did. :)

*Five Flavors of Dumb* tells the story of Piper Vaughan, deaf girl, who gets recruited to be the manager of Dumb, the new rock band in school. What would a deaf girl know about music, right? But Piper says yes to it after she finds out that her parents used her college money to buy a cochlear implant for her baby sister, Grace, who was born deaf. She has one month to bring in the cash, and it would have been easier for her if Dumb actually worked together...but as luck would have it, it wasn't. And craziness ensues.

*Five Flavors of Dumb* is such a fun read from the start all the way to the end. I loved Piper's voice. If you didn't read the blurb, you'd honestly be surprised to find out she was deaf as she revealed it. I loved how smart and snarky Piper was despite her circumstances, and the fact that she was hearing impaired made her rock some more. I love how the other characters were more than what they were at first, particularly the other girls, Tash and Kallie. The characters were a diverse group, and it really brought out the "flavors" in the novel.

There's also a lot more going in this novel other than Piper's deafness or managing the band. This book also tackled some music history (Kurt Cobain and Jimi Hendrix, for those who are curious), passion, a bit of self-image and a lot of family. I was torn between Piper and her family when tensions rose about her deafness and her sister's cochlear implants, and normally I would think it was unfair for Piper. I hated Piper's father at first for being so prejudiced against his daughter, but he had a good redemption in the end. It really is a difficult situation for a family to be in, anyway. The choices that Piper's parents made are choices that they shouldn't have to make, but they have to and just find ways to deal with what happens after. I loved how that issue was resolved and how everything was tied up at the end. To put it simply: **it rocked.**

I was kind of expecting it to be like *Audrey, Wait!* by Robin Benway (which I also liked a lot), but *Five Flavors of Dumb* had all the things I liked about that novel, *and* more. This is one of the books that I think I will also get in print version when I see it in the stores here so I can lend it to other people and they can read



for themselves how much this book rocks (and the cover is just really pretty). Don't miss out on this one rocking your world. :)

And you know what? This book just gave me a problem. I'd need to fix my Top 10 reads of 2010 again to make room for this one.

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## **Mandy says**

One word: Emotional.

Which is crazy because that was NOT the way I'd expected to react to this novel. It's about a rock band! It's called FIVE FLAVORS OF DUMB!

And yet this novel has so many layers and story arcs and relationships that I found myself getting totally, completely invested in it. The main character, Piper (yeah, she doesn't love the irony of it) is deaf, and yet finds herself manager of a mess of a rock band, with thirty days to get these guys a paying gig-- or lose her job.

It's an uphill battle, because even her parents can't resist the urge to snicker at the idea of a deaf girl managing a rockband. When she finds out they raided her college fund to pay for cochlear implants for her baby sister, she's filled with conflicting emotions, anger the least of them. The connection they shared because of the shared disability is gone, and Piper is all alone again.

The setting in this one-- Seattle-- also plays an impact on the story, as the rag-tag group of teens find themselves visiting Kurt Cobain's mansion and Jimi Hendrix's shack.

I loved every chapter, every page, every sentence. It was beautifully told. I hope you all check it out!

Mandy

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## **Reynje says**

I sort of rode into my teenage musical awakening on my older siblings' grunge/post-grunge coat tails. Well, since coats aren't very grunge, maybe the tails of their oversized flannel shirts. Which means that as my social circle nudged the periphery of theirs, it was Nirvana and Pearl Jam playing in darkened living rooms, The Stone Temple Pilots and Silverchair's "Frogstomp" in the car CD player etc etc

Now that I'm older, and I find myself getting a bit crotchety when I see a kid in those of those mass-produced Ramones t-shirts and wanting to shriek "*do you even know who they are?*", I have to wonder if the generation preceding mine felt a similar protectiveness over "their" music. If they eyed my fourteen-year-old self askance when I "borrowed" my sister's cherry red Doc Martens and tried to emulate what I perceived as her particularly cool brand of apathy. (It never worked, I have always been far too dorkily earnest to pull it off).

But I guess part of the beauty of music is that for each person the discoveries feel like they're being made for

the very first time, profound and deeply personal, no matter how handed-down it really is.

This journey of musical and personal epiphany forms part of Piper's story in *The Five Flavours of Dumb*, and I have to say that this reading experience had more than a touch of nostalgia about it. Piper undergoes her own musical awakening of sorts when she takes on the role of managing high school band Dumb, with the goal of securing them a paying gig within a month. It's a means to an end: replenishing her recently raided college fund. And Piper also happens to be deaf.

The cover quote describes *The Five Flavours of Dumb* as "a love letter to rock music", and that's partially true. Set in Seattle the story traces a path through the musical history of area, most notably touching on Nirvana and Jimi Hendrix, and their respective musical legacies. But more than that it charts Piper's growth from a manager out of necessity to a girl with a genuine passion for what she has become embroiled in, and a greater understanding of the power of music.

Piper is one my favourite protagonists of late - she's intelligent, resourceful and driven, yet not without insecurities and a streak of naivety. (view spoiler) John has also created an cast of relatable supporting characters, a varied group of "flavours", though some are more nuanced than others. And while I found Piper and her story both hilarious and witty, John doesn't shy away from the tougher aspects of the plot, in particular the strained family relationships and perceptions of Piper's deafness.

While ASL and Auslan are different, I think that Chrissie Keighery's *Whisper* handled the explanation and incorporation of sign language into the plot better. I'm not sure that it comes across as clearly here that sign is it's own language, with unique grammar and syntax, and there are not always equivalent translations into English. That said, I liked how it was used to explore Piper's different dynamics with the characters, particularly her father and brother.

Another minor complaint is that some aspects of the climax beggar a little belief, especially in terms of how the Josh / Kallie situation was resolved, but honestly I found it all too entertaining to be bothered that much.

I had a feeling that I was going to like this book from the synopsis and a few reviews I'd read, but I really wasn't expecting to enjoy it as much as I did. The humour and seriousness are well-balanced, and it never feels like an "issues book", nor does it read like it's being glib with the subject matter. It's an endearing story, but it isn't twee.

It's a fun book, but it has heart. Recommended for anyone who's ever wanted to embrace their inner rockstar, but didn't think they could.

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**Nic says**

**Rating: 4.5 stars**

**Favourite Quote:** *"Music. It's not about those things. It's about a feeling. It's about expressing yourself. It's about letting go."*

I have been trying to write this review for days and I am having a hard time trying to sum up what makes *Five Flavours of Dumb* so special from most other coming of age stories. It could be Piper's believable and

heart felt voice or the loveable bunch of supporting characters or the constantly entertaining plot or the wonderful writing. But whatever the reason is I loved it!

John's writing makes you feel like you are there with the characters. And what an awesome bunch of characters to be hanging out with. They would have to be some of my absolute favourites. Piper is just awesome. Strong, witty and inspiring. She isn't perfect, she makes mistakes but she learns from them pretty quick. Then there is Piper's brother Finn. I loved the interactions between him and Piper. It was absolutely hilarious at times and then they would share a really touching moment. I kind of wish I had a younger brother like him.

There is also a little bit of romance in the story that will make you wish your were Piper (and of course swoon all over the place). And awww the first kiss, so perfect and completely goofy grin worthy. So I suggest not reading that part in a public place like I did!

Music is another important element in the story. It takes you behind the scenes of the music business. I for one am a big fan of stories regarding music and I loved Piper's journey into the music world.

Overall, Five Flavors of Dumb is funny, smart and completely heartwarming. A must read!

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### **Vanessa says**

This was such a refreshing YA read. I loved this book, it was so different from others in that it wasn't a coming of age focused on a romance, but on the main character's own personal development.

Piper is deaf. She makes a deal with the members of the band Dumb to be their manager and get them a paying gig by the end of the month. She can't hear the music but to her its all about the feeling you get watching the band perform. As the book goes on she becomes really invested in shaping the band to be the best it can be. Meanwhile she struggles with self-confidence and feels alone even in her family. What I loved to see throughout the book was watching Piper become her own person. The more she began to take control of her position in the band the more that translated to her personal life. It helped her open her eyes to things she hadn't noticed before and learned from it.

This book had some other great characters that I fell in love with: Ed, Kallie, and Fin. In their own ways they helped Piper be who she wanted be.

This was a very touching book and I loved that music was a big part of it.

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### **~Tina~ says**

Piper has one month to get her high school band, Dumb, a paying gig and if she succeeds she gets to become the band's much needed manger. The only problem is, how do you manage a crumbling band into rising stardom when you don't even know if they're any good?  
See...Piper's deaf.

Going into this book, I had zero expectations and pretty much thought it was just another fluffy piece about

high school, music and teenage angsts.  
Yeah..how wrong was I?

**Five Flavors of Dumb** is an inspiring and humorous story that features a tough fiery protag, Piper and her five flavors; Ed, Will, Tash, Josh and Kallie. It's a story about a girl finally finding out who she truly is and what she's really made of. Despite the fact that Piper's deaf, sit back and let her show you just what she can accomplish when she wants to be heard.

I loved this book. It's clever and uplifting and funny and I had a lot of fun reading it. Antony John did an amazing job with Piper's voice and the very detailed storyline that he crafted. I'm not one for reading music-type-books, and have a few that I actually loved, but this book felt very different from the rest. It meshes the inner workings of the music industry from contracts to negotiations to recording to interviews to finding your next gig, combining it with the true meaning and passion of music while set to a journey of self-discovery. That's a very hard task to create in ya-contemporary, and yet, John makes it look effortless and impressive, not to mention a whole lotta fun.

I really just loved every single one of these characters (minus Josh). They each have their own unique rhythm that bounces off each other. Piper is a conflicting character. She's strong, dependable and resilient but she's also very blind to her life and the people in it. She also has one of the most realistic voices with very understandable issues. She's always felt ignored, alone, disabled...but with the right opportunity truly begins to come out of her shell and be the person she was born to be. The rest of the flavors were also really great, but Ed and Finn were my favorites. Ed's *that* guy, the one who believes and likes you for you and only you. Everyone needs an Ed in their life. As for Finn, I've always had a thing for strong brother/sister bonds in books and these two are a great example of that.

Bottom line, I loved this book. It surprised me in the best way possible. The writing is brilliant, the characters are likable and the plot is warm and wonderful. If you're a fan of music or a fan of ya-contemporary or just a fan of feel good reads, this one goes out to you.

Well done!

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## Janina says

I had very high expectations for **Five Flavors of Dumb** and therefore am a little disappointed although I can say that overall; I had a good time reading the book. It was a quick read, but on a whole, more on the forgettable side than something that made a lasting impression.

Piper is the new manager of Dumb, a high school band riding on a wave of quickly fading popularity after winning a local contest. Nothing special you say? Well, Piper is deaf. Will she be able to contradict her classmates' prejudices and help Dumb to lasting success? Piper wants to make a change, wants to show everyone that being deaf does in fact not mean being invisible. She wants to break out of her shell and stop being the girl in the front row only the teachers like.

What I really loved about this book were the family dynamics, especially Piper's relationship to her brother Finn and her baby sister Grace. Also, I often felt furious on Piper's behalf when her parents were concerned, and I totally got how hard it was for her to swallow down her anger towards them sometimes. I found what

they did inexcusable, putting her sister before her and (view spoiler). All in all, I thought the issue of Piper's deafness and how her family perceived this "disability" (how her father often called it) that never felt like one for Piper herself was portrayed extremely well.

Piper's friendship with Ed was lovely as well, their chess games, how they slowly opened up to each other. I'd say the outcome of their relationship was probably a surprise only to Piper, but I thought it was very cute.

On the other side, the music business part felt kind of forced and often unrealistic. Can a former garage band consisting of only partly talented high school students really rise to fame that fast and even receive recognition from fellow musicians for their skills? I somehow doubt it. Dumb came across as a big work in progress in one chapter (its members only being able to play three different chords on their guitars, never playing in time), but they only needed a little motivational talk and a talented drummer to fix those problems. The scavenger hunt through Seattle, visiting Kurt Cobain's and Jimi Hendrix's homes, had much unused potential as well. Those episodes could have really added something to the story, but I just found them incredibly boring.

All in all, I think I just wished to really be able to understand how it felt for Piper to not be able to hear. Obviously never having experienced deafness, I wanted to be able to do it through her. I'm not sure if this sounds weird, but the author did not succeed in giving me this experience.

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### **Mike Mullin says**

I wish I hadn't read this book. Well, not really, but there's a chance I might meet the author in November, and now I'm going to have to put on a wig and pretend like I'm not really Mike Mullin because I'll be too nervous to meet him.

Anyway, the book: insane humor and gentle humanity wrapped in a cloak of grunge rock attitude. Five Flavors of Dumb is six flavors of brilliant!

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### **Steph Su says**

Antony John's novel would more appropriately be called Five Flavors of AWESOME. This rocking good book will make you want to jump up and cheer, for wonderful characters, great narration, and an absorbing and uplifting tale.

I'm really quite bowled over at how well John captures the voice of a teenage girl. Piper may be deaf, but she struggles with many of the same issues as other teenagers: her dreams of independence and acceptance battle her sense of familial obligation, she wishes she could blend into the crowd yet simultaneously wants to be respected. Incredibly, Piper never falls into the YA cliché of the smart and quiet good girl who breaks out of her shell. She is down-to-earth and resilient despite years of having to struggle against the current, particularly her family's subpar ways of dealing with her deafness. She is truly a character that I would be proud to call a friend, and gives contemporary YA female protagonists everywhere a good name.

A story cannot propel itself on the strength of a well-written protagonist alone, and happily supporting characters in *FIVE FLAVORS OF DUMB* are just as fascinating, just as complex. The band members different personalities and problems with one another are believable and add a good amount of conflict to the story without being too messy or overwhelming. The changes that Piper and her family undergo in their relationships with one another truly take the cake, however. It is subtle yet prominent, optimistic without wandering into unrealistic happily-ever-afters.

*FIVE FLAVORS OF DUMB* is not simply a book about the music business, or being deaf. It is, rather, the story of an incredible girl who learns how to be proud of who she is, and beautiful in her confidence. Highly recommended for those who enjoy a strong read that reminds us about why we love contemporary YA: for that gem of a character into whose journey we get irrevocably swept.

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