

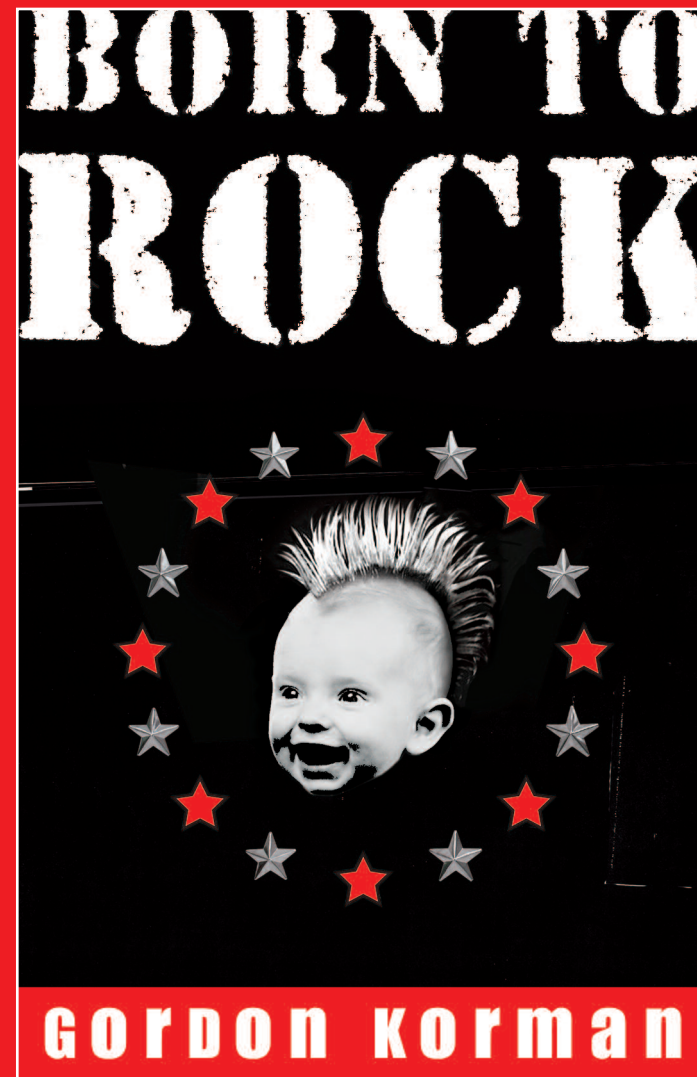
This guide was created by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, a reading specialist and author of the poetry collection *Sketches from a Spy Tree*, Clarion Books, 2005.

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

HYPERION BOOKS

ABOUT THE BOOK

Leo Caraway is on the fast track to six figures: president of the Young Republicans, 4.0 GPA, and early acceptance to Harvard. Then he learns that his biological father might be none other than Marion X. McMurphy, aka King Maggot, the lead singer of Purge, the most popular, destructive punk-rock band ever. When an unfair cheating accusation gets his scholarship pulled, Leo ends up as a roadie for the band trying to get tuition money for Harvard. Can he get King Maggot to pony up the money he needs? Life on tour is wilder than imagined and before the summer ends he will discover the truth about his best friend, his real father, and even himself.

ABOUT THE GUIDE

This guide includes discussion questions and projects intended to extend the use of the novel into classrooms, book clubs, and literature circles. It should promote discussion on the themes of the novel, including friendship, music, parenthood, and identity.

BORN TO ROCK



AUTHOR INTERVIEW

[1] What was the best part of writing this novel?

GK: Some kids dream of being sports heroes or actors, but when I was growing up, my number-one fantasy was always to be a rock star. I was constantly posing in mirrors behind imaginary microphones and wind-milling air guitar. So, in a way, writing *Born to Rock* was a real-world way to live out my old, impossible dreams.

[2] How did you make the concert and roadie scenes seem so vivid? Have you ever been backstage?

GK: Believe it or not, I've never been backstage at a rock show. In the past few years, I've been doing a lot of adventure writing, and I've had to get good at research. So for *Born to Rock*, I researched the rock-and-roll lifestyle the same way I might have researched scuba diving or Mount Everest.

[3] Was King's character inspired by anyone?

GK: King Maggot was sort of a composite of many colorful rock-and-roll icons, with a little of the Hollywood lovable scoundrel mixed in. For *Purge*, my intention was to create a band that had the kind of impact on 1980s North America that the Sex Pistols had on Britain in the 1970s.

[4] What groups would you suggest for a punk-rock conversion?

GK: I like to start with the Ramones, because it's so easy to trace their music back to the simple three-chord rock and roll of the 1950s. For the attitude, I don't think anyone ever beat the Sex Pistols. From *Purge*'s decade, the 1980s, X was my favorite. These days I'd have to go with Green Day, but you can find the influence of punk in everything from TV cartoons to punk-inspired clothing for dolls.

[5] What can your fans look forward to next?

GK: My next novel will be *Schooled*, about a homeschooled kid who was raised in total isolation by his former-hippie grandmother on what's left of her 1960s commune. It's the story of how he has to sink or swim when he's suddenly thrown into a large suburban middle school.



DISCUSSION GUIDE

- [1]** Describe Melinda. Why does she have so much influence on Leo? What does she ask him to do that leads to trouble? Do you know anyone who can get you to do things you don't want to do?
- [2]** Explain what happened during the infamous cheating incident. What does Leo suspect is behind the accusation? What would you have done? How prevalent is cheating in your school?
- [3]** How does Leo first learn of his paternity? Why does this offend him? How does his mom react to his questions? Why? Would you look for your biological parent if in the same situation?
- [4]** How does Leo end up on tour with *Purge*? In his situation, would you want to go? Why or why not? What are his motivations? Is it fair to expect King Maggot to pay for his college costs? Why or why not?
- [5]** Describe the concert atmosphere. Leo says, "The life of a rock band on tour was like boot camp." (pg. 130) Why?
- [6]** Why is King arrested in Phoenix? What does Melinda do? Do members of *Purge* really care about each other or not? Support your answer.
- [7]** What is KafkaDreams? Why doesn't Leo admit he knows about it? Do you read any blogs? Whose? Why? How do you think blogs will change over time? Do you think Leo will ever admit to Melinda he knows?
- [8]** What event triggers the cavity search? Whose fault is it? How does it change the summer tour? Do you think Leo will tell his parents?

[9] How do things change between Leo and Melinda through the course of the novel? Do you think their long-distance relationship will work? Can a Punk-Goth and a Republican make it long term? Why or why not?

[10] Why does Leo not ask King for the money for Harvard? Would you have asked? What does King do to Mr. Borman? Does King know the truth? What does he offer to do? What does it mean to be a parent?

PROJECTS

LANGUAGE ARTS

Create a blog that Leo posts about his travels with Purge. Add at least five entries about his experiences.

MATH

Research the big business of the music industry. What does the average rocker earn? What is a royalty? How much do agents, managers, and roadies make? How much does it cost to create an album and get it to market? What is the profit margin on concert tours?

MUSIC

Listen to vintage punk-rock bands and write a brief journal about your response. How would you compare it to other types of music?



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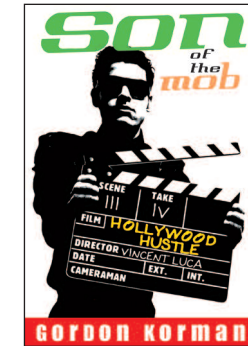


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