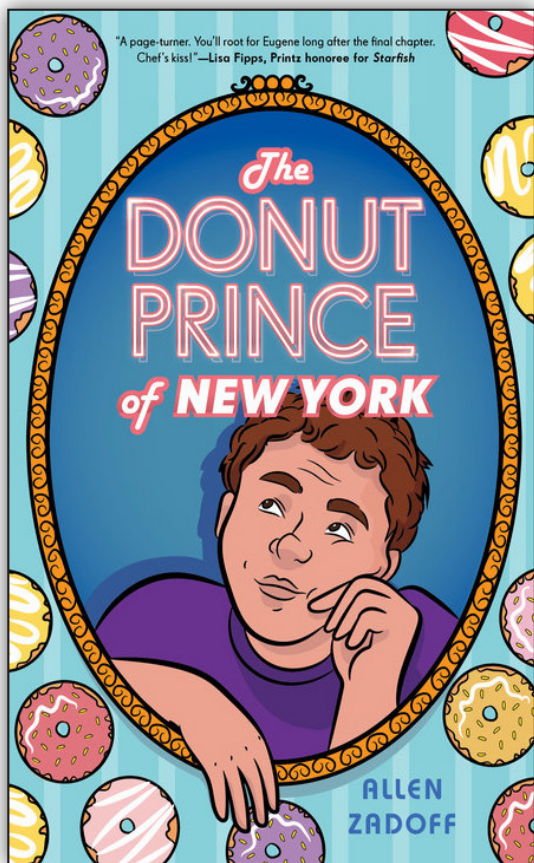


HOLIDAY HOUSE

READING GROUP

GUIDE



HC: 9780823456635 · e-book: 9780823461356

The Donut Prince of New York

by **Allen Zadoff**

★“A pitch-perfect journey of self-discovery.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

ABOUT THE BOOK

“A masterful page-turner. You’ll root for Eugene long after the final chapter. Chef’s kiss!”—Lisa Fipps, author of *Starfish*

Eugene Guterman’s junior year in high school is off to a rocky start. No love life, no new theater production, and if his mother has her way, no more of his favorite comfort food—donuts. Eugene would just as soon spend the year playing small, but that’s hard to do when you’re the biggest kid in your class.

Things change when he accidentally tackles the school’s star quarterback and Coach sees the possibilities and recruits the plus-size playwright onto the varsity football team. Eugene is suddenly catapulted into the world of “The Pops,” the exclusive clique of popular athletes known for their parties and dating scene. Best of all is the new and mysterious girl Daisy who seems to be noticing him.

Then Eugene discovers that he misses his former life and his old friends. Can he find the courage to give it all up, write something real, and maybe, just maybe, be the big guy who actually gets the girl?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Describe Upper West High where Eugene Guterman is a junior. What is the social hierarchy of the school? How is this similar to most high schools? In what way does Eugene Guterman become the victim of this hierarchy? Eugene is a playwright and is in the drama club. Contrast the thespians with the jocks.
- What is the first clue that Eugene has a body image problem? Why is he called the “Donut Prince”? What other labels contribute to his body image issues? Explain what Eugene means when he describes his home as “Weight Watchers prison, and my mom is the warden” (p. 37). Debate whether his mom contributes to his body image problems by badgering him about his weight.

- Who is Daisy Luna? How does Eugene fall for her? Why does Daisy say she doesn't feel that she fits in? Daisy takes Eugene on a shopping spree at H&M for his birthday. What items do they purchase? How does this reveal that Daisy isn't turned off to Eugene's "fat guy" image? Discuss why Mia doesn't trust Daisy. How is she right? In what way does Daisy eventually betray Eugene?
- Eugene accidentally breaks Harry Habib's arm. Describe the rumors that travel through the school about the incident. Why does Mia think that Eugene should apologize to Harry? Explain what Eugene means when he tells Harry, "It looks like I turned your arm into a dating app" (p. 63). Debate whether it's completely true that Harry was Eugene's "unintended victim." What was Eugene trying to prove to himself?
- What is gym class like for Eugene? Why is he being assigned to "adaptive gym"? Debate whether this is a way of getting rid of kids like him. Why does Eugene say that the jocks hate him? How does he wind up on the football team? Explain why he is dismissed from the team later in the book. How did Coach Kyle and Harry use Eugene?
- Describe the friendship between Eugene, Mia, and Ishaan. What threatens their friendship? Why does Eugene insist that they attend Harry's party with him? What goes wrong at the party? Explain why Mia is surprised that Eugene attended Demo Day. At what point does Eugene admit that he has special feelings for Mia? Discuss why Eugene asks Mia, "What do you see when you look at me?" What is the significance of her response?
- Manny Cruz is one of the greatest playwrights of his generation. Describe the park bench meetings that Eugene has with Manny. Discuss what Manny means by "It sounds like you need an anchor in the storm, my friend" (p. 227). What is the anchor? What is the storm? Discuss the advice Manny gives Eugene about writing. At what point does Eugene apply Manny's advice? Explain how Eugene's play changes his mother's view of him.
- What does Eugene mean when he says that Harry has a dark side? Explain Harry's dark side. Discuss the other characters that have a dark side. Which characters overcome their dark side? Debate whether characters like Harry ever change.
- Use one word that best describes Eugene at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the book. At the beginning of the novel, Mia tells Eugene that they should focus on peaking their junior year. Explain how Eugene peaks.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Allen Zadoff is the author of nine novels and a memoir, including the thriller series *The Unknown Assassin*, which debuted to starred reviews and was a YALSA Top Ten Pick for Reluctant Readers. The series has been translated into over a dozen languages and is in active development at Sony Pictures. Allen's middle-grade sci-fi action series *Wild & Chance* is available now, as is his new YA with Holiday House, *The Donut Prince of New York*. A former stage director, Zadoff is a graduate of Cornell University, the Harvard University Institute for Advanced Theater Training, and the Warner Bros. Writers' Workshop. Learn more at AllenZadoff.com.