








Book Club Kit

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Warning: this book club kit contains explicit spoilers for *The Temperature of Me and You*.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Title: The Temperature of Me and You

Publisher: Disney-Hyperion

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ISBN-10: 136806471X

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Hardcover: 416 pages

Language: English

Age Range: Young Adult

Reading Range: 12 - 18 years

Grade Level: 7 - 12

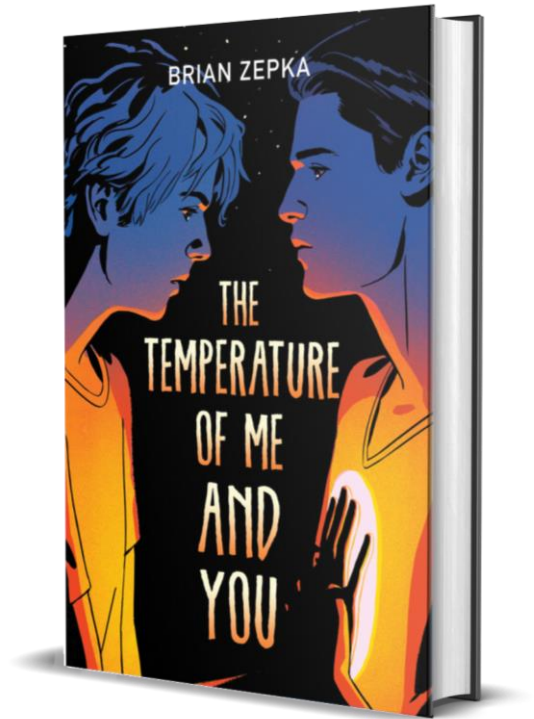
Sixteen-year-old Dylan Highmark thinks his winter is going to be full of boring shifts at the Dairy Queen, until he finds himself in love with a boy who's literally too hot to handle.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Dylan has always wanted a boyfriend, but the suburbs surrounding Philadelphia do not have a lot in the way of options. Then, in walks Jordan, a completely normal (and undeniably cute) boy who also happens to run at a cool 110 degrees Fahrenheit. When the boys start spending time together, Dylan begins feeling all kinds of ways, and when he spikes a fever for two weeks and is suddenly coughing flames, he thinks he might be suffering from something more than just a crush. Jordan forces Dylan to keep his symptoms a secret. But as the pressure mounts and Dylan becomes distant with his closest friends and family, he pushes Jordan for answers.

Jordan's revelations of why he's like this, where he came from, and who's after him leaves Dylan realizing how much first love is truly out of this world. But if the attraction between them defies the laws of physics, love may be the only thing that can keep Jordan and Dylan together.

The Temperature of Me and You is the story of first love, and the lengths we'll go to figure out our hearts. What starts as an electric, chance encounter at a Dairy Queen quickly evolves into a heated romance, a journey of trust and identity, and a ticking clock for survival.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brian Zepka is an author and public health scientist born and raised outside Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He works as a program evaluator for a nonprofit organization focused on chronic disease prevention, while also pursuing his doctorate in environmental health at Johns Hopkins University. In his free time, Brian competes for the attention of his nephews and wins more times than not. *The Temperature of Me and You* is his first novel.



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Discussion Guide



What was your first impression of Dylan? How did that impression change, or stay the same, by the end of the book?



Describe the first interaction between Dylan and Jordan. How would you have reacted to Jordan in that situation?



Why do you believe Jordan chose to open up to Dylan so quickly?



Dylan uses self-deprecation in response to many events throughout the story. How does his self-image align or differ with how his friends, family, and classmates see him?



Dylan relies on his two best friends, Kirsten and Perry, for support. How does their support change the story?



One of Dylan's main goals in the story is to attain romantic love, but he struggles to understand what it means. Describe what love means to you in your own words.



Reflecting on the book, when, if at all, did you begin to suspect that Dr. Ivan was not truthful in her efforts to protect Jordan and Dylan? Were there any early clues to show she was still working with HydroPro?



What decisions could Dylan have made to help him cope with his new powers and HydroPro's continued threat? Why didn't he make those decisions?

Discussion Guide



How does the presence of HydroPro in Falcon Crest define Dylan and Jordan's relationship?



Dylan is openly gay at the start of the book, but the author explores coming out as a process rather than a singular event. What are some scenes in the book where Dylan still feels insecure or ashamed of being gay?



How do you think Dylan's family dynamic influenced his feelings about his sexual orientation? What about how Savanna's family dynamic influenced her feelings?



Dylan and Savanna react to their sexual orientations in different ways. Describe these differences.



Discuss how Dylan responded to Savanna coming out to him. How would you have responded to her story?



If you could read one point-of-view chapter from Jordan or Savanna, which would you choose and why? What would you like to learn from them?



How do you think the events in this book will shape Dylan and Jordan's future as a couple?



In what ways is Dylan's life better or worse since Jordan moved to Falcon Crest?

AUTHOR INTERVIEW

- **How did you start writing?**

I started writing in college as a creative outlet. I majored in biology, and it didn't really fulfill the creative side of my brain. Growing up, I was always drawing, painting, and just being creative in general. I was obsessed with the tycoon computer games like Rollercoaster Tycoon, Zoo Tycoon, and Sim City. I played the trumpet, practiced wood burning, and took studio art classes. But when I got to college that all grinded to a halt and my life became multiple choice tests and rigid lab work. Don't get me wrong, I loved science and was happy with my major, but I needed more of a balance. I found writing to be something creative that I could easily switch back and forth to from my coursework.

- **Where did you get the idea for *The Temperature of Me and You*?**

Before I even started the book, I knew I wanted to write a fun, adventurous story centering two gay boys who were falling in love and open with their sexuality. I thought a lot about what comes after the classic queer teen coming out story. What happens when the characters can date? How do they behave when they can be open with their friends and family? How are they shaped by the pivotal teen experiences we've seen in other young adult books? There's so much to explore in literature regarding queer teens at that point in their lives. This thought was a big inspiration for where the characters were at in chapter one.

The sci-fi elements of the story were inspired by a random collision of thoughts on my drive to work one day. Jordan, the love interest in the story, has a body composition of part hydrogen that gives him flame wielding abilities and an increased body temperature of 110 degrees Fahrenheit. He acquires these powers when his family crashes a hydrogen-powered prototype vehicle. I witnessed a car accident on my commute after reading about the Hindenburg disaster. The Hindenburg was a German passenger blimp fueled by hydrogen that crashed and burned in 1937. The idea developed from there!

AUTHOR INTERVIEW

- **What was your process for developing real, well-rounded characters?**

I focused on the plot and getting words on the page for the first draft. I kind of let the characters write themselves early in the story's development. Then when I went back and read the draft, I noted pieces of each character's personality, dialogue, or mannerisms that stuck out to me. I used those pieces to create and refine character profiles which then acted as reference guides for editing beyond the first draft. For example, Dylan is closed off, anxious, and self-deprecating. Jordan is quiet, reserved, and tepid. Kirsten is responsible, studious, and ambitious. I wrote out their passions, goals, shortcomings, and important interpersonal relationships. If I read something in the draft that didn't match their profile, I'd change it so it was more in line with how I envisioned them. And I repeated this process.

Also for the side characters, I thought about how each of their lives intersected with Dylan's at this specific moment in time rather than how they revolved around his life. I wanted them to seem like real people and not just fillers to keep Dylan's plot moving forward. I took them out of the story and thought about what they were going through in their own world . . . almost treating them like they were the protagonist.

- **What scene or moment in the book are you most proud of?**

If I had to pick one, it would be the pond scene in Chapter 12 with Dylan, Jordan, Perry, and Kirsten. That scene has always stuck with me. It's been in the story since the very first draft. It's cinematic and encompasses so many of the story's themes. There's romance, action, suspense, humor, friendship, sci-fi, and adventure across those few pages. Readers have told me that after they finished that chapter they were like, "okay, now I have to finish this book" or "let me buckle up"—which I love. It's Dylan's *big* moment too. He realizes the extent of what he's dealing with and decides to continue pursuing Jordan anyway.

AUTHOR INTERVIEW

- **What advice would you give to young writers and aspiring authors?**

1. Be patient. Your hard work will pay off and everything will fall into place when it's supposed to. I wrote two books before *The Temperature of Me and You* that never sold to a publisher. I was devastated and frustrated. I really thought about giving up because writing is such a big time commitment. But I started writing again at step one and could not be happier that *The Temperature of Me and You* is my first book for the world.
2. Your first draft is not your final draft. Don't waste time obsessing over the sentences in your first draft or going back and editing what you wrote yesterday when you could be finishing the rest of the story today. I stalled my journey several times along the way worrying about my first draft. For me, editing and refining the story is easier when the whole thing is written out. You will have plenty of time for revisions. Again, patience!
3. Focus on writing chapters or scenes, not a book. Writing a book can feel overwhelming. When I write, it helps to work with a goal of finishing a single chapter or scene. It's manageable and I feel so much more accomplished and productive thinking about it that way, rather than about how much of the story is left unfinished. Then before you know it, you can connect all the scenes and you have a book!
4. Find your writing sweet spot. Everyone is different. I've found that I am not productive writing in random, short bursts or late at night. I work best during long stretches of time when I can really get my head into the story. I like to block off mornings or weekends for extended writing binges.
5. Try and keep external influences, like current book trends or social media dialogue, from changing your writing. Don't forgo a story because you think there's too much of it already or people say no one wants to read that type of stuff. I sometimes find myself deleting scenes or dialogue because of something I saw on social media or reactions to a show or movie. And I hate that! I'm constantly trying to self-correct and write what comes from my heart. I've realized that the more I try and cater my writing to outside voices the more my story becomes bland and boring.

RESOURCES

Some of the themes in this book around coming out, bullying, or suicidal ideation might affect readers in different ways. Below are resources for those who want to seek support or learn more.

Stop Bullying

Provides resources for dealing with, addressing, and getting help if you are a victim of bullying or cyberbullying.
stopbullying.org

The Trevor Project

Provides information and support to LGBTQ young people 24/7.
thetrevorproject.org
Call: 1-866-488-7386
Text: text 'START' to 678-678

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Provides free 24/7 service to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress.
suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Call: 1-800-273-8255

GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network)

Provides advocacy, GSA, and anti-bullying resources to create affirming learning environments for LGBTQ youth.
glsen.org

NOW WHAT?

Thanks for reading and discussing *The Temperature of Me and You*! If you have more questions, you can get in touch with Brian using the contact form on his website: brianzepka.com/contact. Below are more young adult titles from Disney-Hyperion you can read next!

