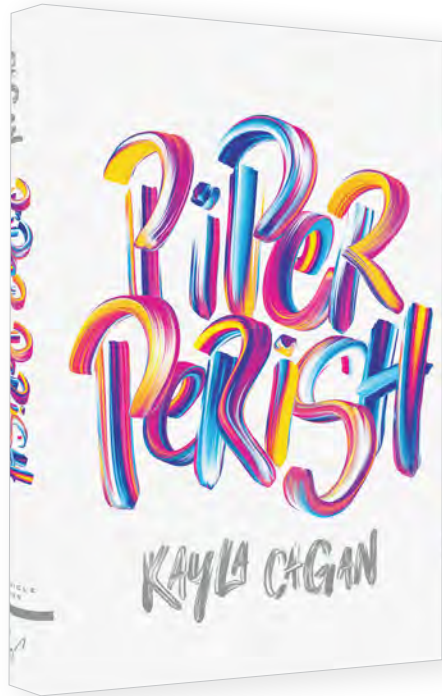


DISCUSSION GUIDE

“With Andy Warhol as her muse and art school as her dream, Piper Perish is a character readers will root for. Style and wit, intelligence and heart, genuineness and longing: this girl is a gem. If you’ve ever yearned to be part of a bigger world than the one you were born in, you’ll find a home in this book.”

—Jennifer Buehler, Ph.D., 2015-2016 President of the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the NCTE



Piper Perish **By Kayla Cagan**

978-1-4521-5583-8* \$17.99 HC

978-1-4521-6201-0 * \$10.99 E-book

Ages 14 and up

Piper Perish inhales air and exhales art. The sooner she and her best friends Enzo and Kit can get out of Houston and get into art school in New York City, the better. It’s been Piper’s dream her whole life, and now that senior year is halfway over, she’s never felt more ready.

But in the final months before graduation, life’s got Piper a little more breathless. Things are weird with Kit and awful with Enzo; art school is looking increasingly impossible; three different guys have each claimed a different piece of Piper’s heart; and Piper’s sister’s tyrannical mental state seems to thwart every attempt at happiness for the Perish family. Piper’s art just might be enough to get her out. But is she strong enough—and brave enough—to seize that power, even if it means giving up what she’s always known?

In this ridiculously propulsive, utterly authentic work from debut author Kayla Cagan, the unprecedented Piper Perish is realer than real. Breathing new life into fiction, Piper will have readers asking big questions along with her. What is love? What is friendship? What is family? What is home? And who is a person when she’s missing any one of these things?

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide contains discussion questions designed to spark conversation about themes and ideas raised by this novel.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. How does Piper's art help her to navigate her world? Do you think she could survive without it? During the Senior Showcase Marli tells Ronnie, "Arts and crafts don't mean a thing in real life" (232). Do you agree?
2. Describe the relationship dynamic between Piper and Marli. Is it just normal sibling rivalry, or is something more going on? How would you counsel Piper to deal with Marli, and vice versa? How do you see their relationship developing in the future?
3. Do you believe everything Piper says about Marli? How do other characters in the story respond to Marli? What do their responses tell you about her personality? Do the actions of other characters support what Piper says about her sister?
4. Marli is not a very sympathetic character. Did you have any empathy for her? What about for Ronnie? What do you think their future holds? Explain.
5. What is your opinion of Piper's mom and dad? Describe their relationship with each of their daughters. How well do you think they handle Marli's pregnancy and their financial situation?
6. How do the Perishes differ from other families in the book? Which of these families feels most like—or most different from—your own?
7. What purpose do the morning runs serve for Piper's dad? What purpose do they serve for Piper?
8. Piper's dad tells her that she can't run away from her problems. In the course of the novel, do he and Piper's mom model this kind of behavior for their daughters? Do you think Piper's dream of going to New York City is an attempt to run away from her problems? Or is she running to something? Can it be both? Explain.
9. Were you surprised when both Kit's and Enzo's plans to go to New York City fell through? How would the story be different if all three of them had headed to New York at the end of the book? Did you hope they would end up there together? Do you think the NYC Three would have benefited or hurt Piper? Why?
10. What is Piper hoping to find in New York? What do you think she will gain from leaving Houston? Explain.
11. Friendships are often built upon on a relationship of give and take. What does Kit provide for Piper? What does Piper provide for Kit?
12. Kit's parents only appear a couple of times during the story, but their absence is frequently observed and mentioned by other characters. How does their absence impact Kit? Do you think their absence influences Kit's relationships? Why or why not?
13. What role does Ms. Adams play in Piper's life? Without her support, do you think Piper would be headed to New York City? Why or why not?
14. How do the quotes Ms. Adams posts in her classroom affect Piper? How do the quotes relate to the plot of the book? Do you have a favorite? (A compilation of the quotes can be found at the back of the book.)

15. Had you heard of Andy Warhol before reading this book? Does his inclusion in the story make you want to know more about him? Do you want to learn more about any of the other artists mentioned in this book? Why or why not?

16. The Senior Showcase marks a turning point for Piper. How does it change the way others see her? How does it change the way she sees herself? How do the events from that night change the trajectory of her life?

17. Silas is a character the reader never meets “in person,” and in fact, the only glimpse Piper gets of him before the final scene of the book is in a collage of photographs. What do you think Silas might represent for Piper?

18. “I thought I had built a country for my personal geography project, but it was something else. I had created an oversized heart. The borders were veins. The rivers were arteries. The states as faces. They were chambers. Somehow my brain had mixed up biology and geography and art” (230). Piper makes this key discovery on the night the Senior Showcase opens. What is significant about the final shape and execution of Piper’s personal geography? Consider the author’s descriptions of how each student creates his or her own personal geography. What do you think the seniors might have gained from this project as a final course assignment? If you were assigned this project, what events and images might you include in a map of your life up to this point, and what shape do you think your project might take?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kayla Cagan is a novelist and playwright. She received her BFA in Theater from Stephen F. Austin State University. She lives with her husband and dog in Los Angeles. *Piper Perish* is her debut novel.

This guide was written by Daria Plumb, educator and 2015 President of the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the NCTE.