

MASCOT

by Antony John

EDUCATORS' GUIDE

About This Book

Noah Savino has been stuck in a wheelchair for months. He hates the way people treat him like he's helpless now. He's sick of going to physical therapy, where he isn't making any progress. He's tired of not having control over his own body. And he misses playing baseball—but not as much as he misses his dad, who died in the car accident that paralyzed Noah. Noah is scared he'll never feel like his old self again. He doesn't want people to think of him as different for the rest of his life. With the help of family and friends, he'll have to throw off the mask he's been hiding behind and face the fears that have kept him on the sidelines if he ever wants to move forward.

Discussion Questions

1. What details does Noah remember about attending Cardinals games with his father? Why are they important to him?
2. Why do you think that Noah chooses to keep his thoughts and feelings hidden from his mom?
3. Noah has two "coaches": his Physical Therapist, Angelica, and his PE teacher, Mrs. Friendly. List similarities and differences in how they approach working with him. Is one more successful than the other? Who would be more successful coaching you? What does Noah learn about himself through PT and PE?
4. Noah's father used to say that making it in the big leagues is "all just time and effort" (p. 194). Dynamo says, "we're all running our own races" (p. 250). Angelica says, "PT is a marathon, not a sprint" (p. 24). How do Noah's feelings about these statements change throughout the book? How does Noah making an effort at physical therapy affect his recovery?
5. When Noah first sees Dee-Dub he believes that the new kid is prime bullying material. Then Dee-Dub introduces himself to the class and Noah changes his mind. What does Noah see in Dee-Dub that tells him the new arrival is not a bully? Why does Noah reach out to Dee-Dub?
6. What do Noah and Dee-Dub have in common? How have their experiences differed? What do they learn from each other? Would they have become friends if Noah hadn't been injured?
7. Noah and Dee-Dub bond over playing Minecraft. What do they get out of playing the game, both individually and together? What is a game that you and your friends like to play together? Why is it important to you?
8. As Logan teased and made fun of Noah and others, his friends stood by and watched but seemed uncomfortable. What are some things that Logan's friends could have said to be upstanders rather than bystanders?
9. Logan intimidates many of the characters in the story but not Alyssa. Why do you think Alyssa is not afraid to stand up to him? How does her reaction to his behavior affect how he interacts with her?
10. Why have Noah and his Little League teammates grown apart? How do Noah's feelings about Logan change over the course of the novel? Give examples. Do you think they can ever be friends again?
11. Why does Alyssa accept Logan's challenge of a rematch? Does she expect to win? What else does she hope to achieve by playing him?
12. Apart from wanting to unmask Fredbird, what is Noah's motivation to go along with Operation Face-off / GMU? Why do you think he starts to change his mind when they get to the stadium? Give evidence from the text.



GRADES 3-7

Creative Writing Activities

Overcoming adversity.

Noah faces many challenges in Mascot. Have students write about a challenge they have faced, how they overcame it, and what they learned from it.

A day in the life.

Have students consider how their daily routine would change if they required a wheelchair. Then ask them to design or make a machine or device that would help someone in a wheelchair in a daily activity.

A sense of place.

Berra Park is a hub in the Hill neighborhood of St. Louis. Brainstorm a list of places that best represent the students' home town. What makes these places special or unique?

A league of her own?

Both Noah and Logan are surprised by Alyssa's ability to pitch. Have there been any female players in Major League Baseball? Research the history of women in America's favorite pastime.

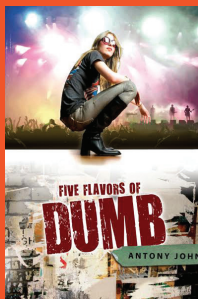
Safety first.

Create a poster to deter drivers from using their cell phones while operating a vehicle.

Mascot 2: The Sequel!

Working in groups, have students list the challenges still facing Noah, Dee-Dub, Alyssa, Makayla, and Logan. What happens next for each of these characters? Who would be the main character in the sequel, and why?

ALSO BY ANTONY JOHN

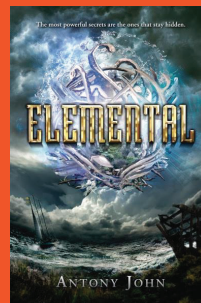


Five Flavors of Dumb

★ “Complex characterizations,
authentic dialogue”

–*Kirkus* (starred review)

- ALA Schneider Family Book Award
- IRA Notable Books for a Global Society
- Grades 7+



Elemental

“Gripping science fiction”

–*BCCB*

- Truman Award nominee
- Grades 7+



About the Author

Antony John is the award-winning author of several books for young adults and middle grade readers. A native of England, he graduated from Oxford University and received a Ph.D. in composition from Duke University. He lives in St. Louis with his family. Visit him online at www.antonyjohn.net.