



Every

A Love Story,

Good

in Music Lessons

Boy

Does

Fine

Jeremy

Denk

Discussion Guide

Discussion Questions

1. What's the significance of the title *Every Good Boy Does Fine*?
2. Denk writes, "I dreaded my lessons, but I never wanted them to stop." Were you surprised by the intensity of Denk's piano practice, even at a young age? What motivates him to stick with the instrument? How do you find the balance between tedium and joy when learning a new skill?
3. How does Denk write about the emotional connections music can form within us? Are there certain pieces of music that evoke a strong emotional response for you? If so, what are they, and how would you describe those emotions?
4. What do you think of the author's relationship with his parents? How does it change throughout the book, and how is it intertwined with his piano-playing?
5. Denk enters high school and college at a much younger age than his peers. What challenges does he face because of this? How does he mature? How is his talent occasionally at odds with his maturity?
6. What did you think of Denk's relationship with Polly? How do his relationships with his classmates at Oberlin change him?
7. Much of the book is devoted to the author's relationships with his teachers. Was there a teacher in the book who stood out to you most? Have you ever had a teacher who made a big impact on your life? Share those memories.
8. Denk writes, "The performer has two tasks: one is to do what's written in the score . . . and the other, even more important, is to find everything that's not." What do you think of this? How does Denk learn when to do what's written in the score, and when to find what isn't? How is this idea reflected by his teachers?
9. Why do you think the author chose the titles he did for each section? What did you learn about harmony, melody, and rhythm, and how did each connect thematically to the stories in the book?
10. Did this book alter your perception of professional musicians at all? Why or why not?
11. What scene from *Every Good Boy Does Fine* stayed with you most? Why?

Playlist

*Immerse yourself in the music Denk recommends, below.
For the full annotated playlist, see the book's appendix.*

1. Saint-Saëns: Symphony no. 3 in C Minor (Organ), second movement
2. Mahler: Symphony no. 1 in D Major (Titan), first and fourth movements
3. Clementi: Sonatina in F Major, op. 36, no. 4
4. Ravel: Piano Concerto for the Left Hand
5. Mozart: Concerto in F Major, K. 459
6. Mozart: Sonata in C Major, K. 545, second movement
7. Schubert: Impromptu in F Minor, D. 935, no. 1
8. Schubert: Sonata in B-flat Major, D. 960, second movement
9. Beethoven, Sonata in C major, op. 53 ("Waldstein"), third movement
10. Mozart: Viennese Sonatina no. 1 in C Major, K. 439B, first movement
11. Chopin: Waltz in A Minor, B. 150, op. posth.
12. Chopin: Prelude in D-flat Major ("Raindrop")
13. Debussy: Arabesque no. 1
14. Mozart: Concerto in A Major, K. 488, first movement
15. Gounod: "Ave Maria" (sung by Barbra Streisand)
16. Bach: Prelude in C Major from The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I
17. Nina Simone: "Just in Time," from *The Tomato Collection*
18. Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring, introduction
19. Mozart: Concerto in A Major, K. 488, third movement
20. Beethoven: Sonata in C Minor, op. 13 ("Pathétique"), first movement