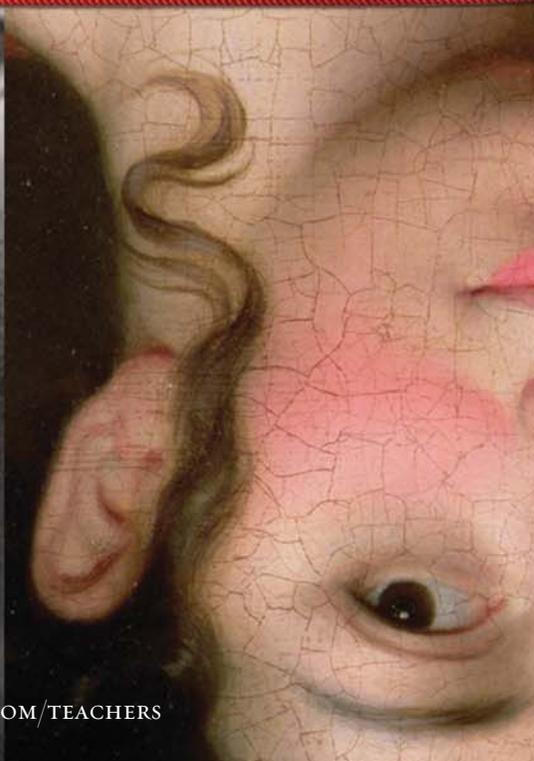




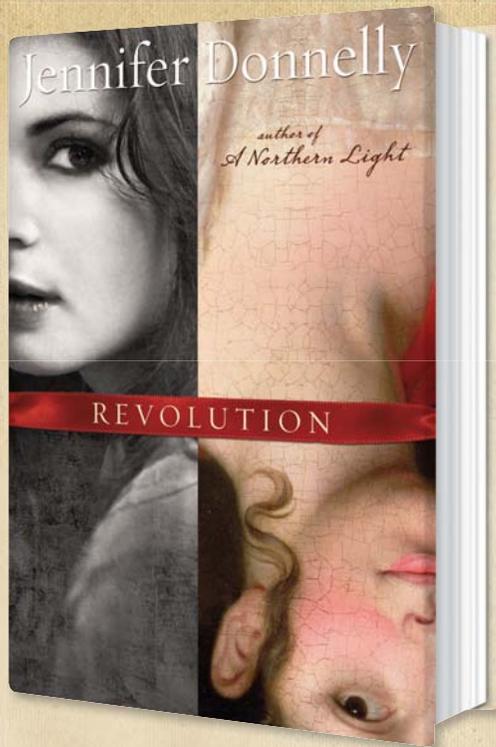
Jennifer Donnelly

*Author of
A Northern Light*

REVOLUTION READERS GUIDE



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ABOUT THE BOOK

Andi Alpers, a gifted musician and student, is a senior at a prestigious private school in Brooklyn when rage and grief threatens to destroy her life. She is angry with her father for leaving

the family, and she blames herself for the death of her younger brother, Truman. Things seem to be spinning completely out of control when her father forces her to accompany him to Paris for winter break. She discovers a diary in an old guitar case and becomes intimately acquainted with Alexandrine Paradis, an actress living in Paris during the French Revolution. Andi seems to find solace and distraction in the diary as she peels away the layers in what appears to be Alex's "personal revolution." But the story abruptly stops. There is unfinished business—answers left for Andi to discover deep in the catacombs of Paris.

Grades 9 Up
Delacorte Press HC:
978-0-385-73763-0
GLB: 978-0-385-90678-4
Listening Library CD:
978-0-307-74621-4

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- Read the short passage from Dante's *The Divine Comedy* that Donnelly uses at the beginning of the novel. Interpret the passage as it applies to Andi Alpers' life. What other characters in the novel are in a "dark forest"? Discuss why the pathway out of a dark forest is never straightforward. Trace Andi's pathway out of her dark forest from Brooklyn to Paris, from the 18th century to the 21st century. Chart specific "roots" upon which she stumbles. What is the ray of light that eventually shines through Andi's dark forest?
- Discuss the difference between the humanities and science. How are the differences in these disciplines the basis of the arguments between G and Dr. Alpers? Dr. Alpers says, "A human heart isn't made of stories." G says, "Every heart is made of stories." (p. 71) Describe the Alpers family before Truman's death. How does Dr. Alpers's scientific mind keep him from understanding "matters of the heart" within his own family? How does he treat them like lab specimens?

- What is the significance of the key that Truman found? Why is Andi's dad so surprised that Truman had taken the key back? The key becomes Andi's link to Truman, and is a constant reminder of his death. How does the key ultimately unlock her grieving heart?
- Describe Andi's relationship with her peers at school. She forms an unlikely friendship with Vijay Gupta. Discuss the bond between them. How does he need her as much as she needs him? How are most of the parents of students at St. Anselm more interested in their children's success than they are in their children? Andi's father tells her that she is a genius and that she can do anything she wants. Yet, he knows so little about her that he doesn't understand what she wants to do with her life. It appears that Andi rebels against her father because of Truman's death. Debate whether they would have clashed over her desire to pursue a music career anyway. At what point does Dr. Alpers finally value Andi's music?
- Andi has a special relationship with Nathan Goldfarb, the head of the music department at St. Anselm. How does Nathan understand Andi's grief in ways others cannot?
- It's often tough for adolescents to know how to respond to a grieving friend. Andi seems to make it especially tough for her friends. Discuss her response to Rupert when he offers a hug. Debate whether her dysfunctional family contributes to her inability to accept help from friends. How does this change when she meets Virgil?
- Guilt plagues Andi throughout the novel. She doesn't respond well to therapy, and relies too much on *Qwellify*. How does Alex's diary offer Andi better therapy than sessions with Dr. Becker? G says that facts tell us "what we are," but they don't tell us "who we are." (p. 189) How does the *Qwellify* reduce Andi to a "what" rather than treating her as a "who"? At what point does she decide that she can face life without drugs?
- Andi discovers a diary that dates back to the French Revolution, and becomes obsessed with the plight of the young writer. Draw parallels between Andi's "personal revolution" and the French Revolution. Who is the "Green Man" that haunted Andi's Brooklyn neighborhood? Andi doesn't want to show the diary to anyone for fear that Alex would be taken from her. How does she need Alex to help her complete her journey out of darkness? What is the meaning of her encounter with Amadé Malherbeau?
- Why does the portrait of Louis-Charles remind Andi of Truman? The heart of 10-year-old Louis-Charles was stolen and smuggled out of prison. Describe Truman's metaphorical prison. How was Truman's heart stolen long before his death?
- A teacher at St. Anselm said about history, "What you see when you look at it tells you as much about yourself as it does about the past." (p. 299) What does Andi learn about herself from the events that led to Louis-Charles' death? Alex writes in her diary, "There is only one thing I fear now: love." (p. 301) Explain how losing Truman causes Andi to fear love.
- Why does Andi think that hope is dangerous? Explain the metaphor: "[Hope is] the crystal meth of emotions." (p. 199) Andi is surprised when hope grabs hold of her heart. Where does she find hope? How does her newly acquired hope change the course of her future?
- How does the juxtaposition of past and present equal a brighter future for Andi?



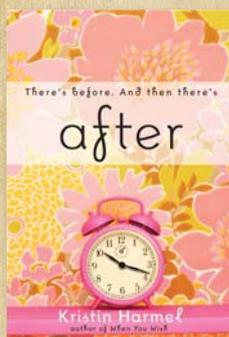
INTERNET RESOURCES

AMERICAN MUSIC THERAPY ASSOCIATION
www.musictherapy.org

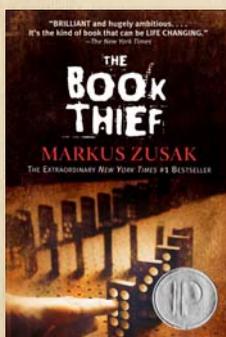
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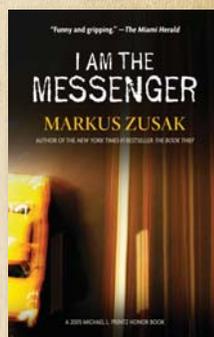
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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JENNIFER DONNELLY's first young adult novel, *A Northern Light*, won the prestigious Carnegie Medal in Britain, received the *L.A. Times* Book Prize for Young Adult Literature, and a Michael L. Printz Honor Award. She is the author of two adult novels, *The Tea Rose* and *The Winter Rose*. She lives and writes full-time in New York's Hudson Valley.

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