

Slider

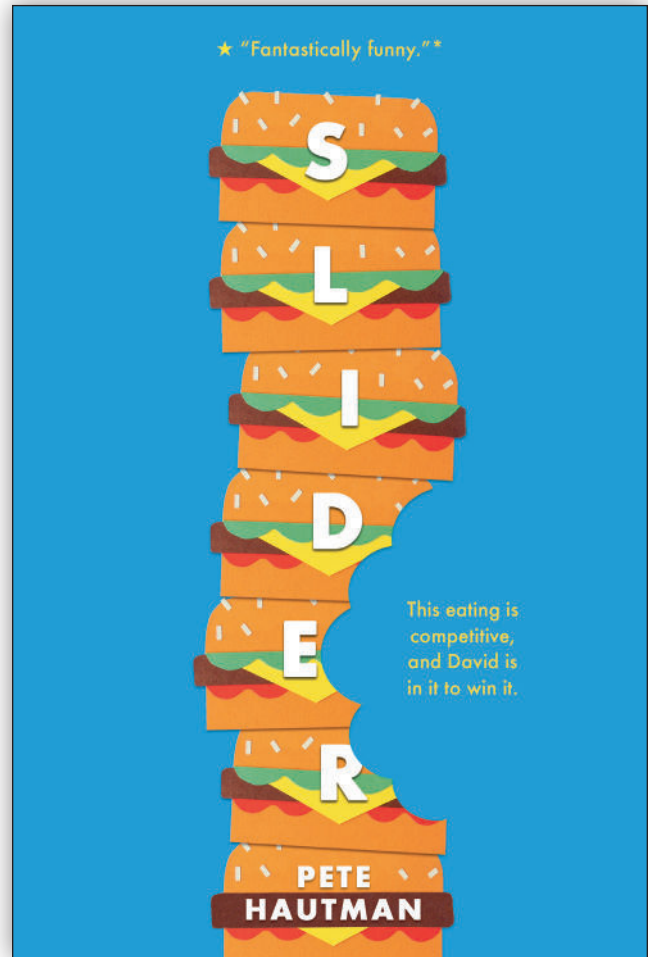
PETE HAUTMAN

About the Book

David might be scrawny, but he can eat a sixteen-inch pepperoni pizza in four minutes and thirty-six seconds. That's fast, although not yet fast enough to win the Super Pigorino Bowl. Some of the heavyweights—literally—in the competitive eating game will be vying for its \$5,000 prize, and David is desperate to pay off his mother's credit card bill before she discovers that he used her card without permission. Along with everyone else in the family, Mrs. Miller is often preoccupied with taking care of Mal, David's severely autistic younger brother, but there's no way that she won't notice an enormous charge on her bill for a mummified half hotdog. National Book Award winner Pete Hautman serves up a delicious middle-grade novel that is both laugh-out-loud funny and wonderfully tender.

Common Core Connections

This discussion guide, which can be used with large or small groups, will help students meet several of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts. These include the reading literature standards for key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL), as well as the speaking and listening standards for comprehension and collaboration and for presentation of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL). Questions can also be used as writing prompts for independent work.



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About the Author

Pete Hautman is the author of many books for young adults and adults, including the National Book Award-winning *Godless*, the science fiction trilogy *Klaatu Diskos*, and *Eden West*, which *Booklist* praised in a starred review as “thought-provoking and quietly captivating.” He divides his time between Wisconsin and Minnesota.



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Discussion Questions

1. “Being the middle kid of three is like being the beef in a SooperSlider—you’re just there to weld the bun together” (page 18). Why does David have such a low opinion of himself at the beginning of the novel? How does his self-image change over time?
2. Mal has a Wall of Things in his room. What do you think these objects mean to him? What does David learn about his brother from the Wall?
3. David thinks “Mal is an excellent judge of character” (page 17). Do you agree? Why?
4. Why doesn’t the family call Mal autistic? What are the disadvantages of using that label? What are the advantages?
5. Discuss David’s friendship with Cyn and HeyMan. What happens to the Three Musketeers when two of them pair off? How would you react in David’s situation?
6. Hunger isn’t the reason David likes to eat an enormous amount of food in a short amount of time. Money isn’t the full explanation, either. What do you think motivates him?
7. Egon Belt is an old man, but he continues to compete in fast-eating contests. Why doesn’t he stop? Why does he urge David to stop?
8. The sights and sounds of everyday life can overwhelm Mal. Do they sometimes overwhelm David, too? How does David protect his brother from the outside world? What does he do to protect himself?
9. “For every problem there is a solution” is a favorite saying of David’s father (page 39). Is Mr. Miller too optimistic? Are there some problems that can’t be solved? What is the biggest problem faced by the Miller family? What is their solution?
10. David feels terrible for having this thought: “Sometimes Mal feels like a huge ball and chain. Sometimes I wish he didn’t exist” (page 68). It’s hard to grow up with a severely disabled sibling. How does Bridgette cope with the challenges of being Mal’s sister? How do Mr. and Mrs. Miller cope with Mal?
11. Toward the end of the novel, Bridgette says, “I have to figure out how to latch on to myself” (page 213). What do you think she means by that?
12. “We have to learn Mal’s Rules,” David tells his father (page 170). Find some example of Mal’s Rules. How do they inspire David at the Super Pigorino Bowl?
13. “Sometimes you just have to do the wrong thing for the right reason,” says David’s father (page 220). Why does David believe that going to Des Moines is wrong? Why does he think his reason for the trip is right? Do you agree?
14. David believes that competitive eating is a sport, like weight lifting or gymnastics. Do you agree with him? Why?
15. David thought it was wrong for him to spike the Gurge’s pizza, but Egon Belt disagrees. What do you think? Why?
16. It’s rare for a novel to be very funny and very kind, but *Slider* is both. Take a close look at your favorite comic scenes. See if you can find shifts in mood. How does a comic moment turn tender?
17. What do you think is the significance of this book’s title? Does it refer to a person, a meal, or something else? Why?