

YOU

By CHARLES BENOIT

Discussion Guide

About the Book

In this shattering portrayal of the life of an ordinary teen, tenth grader Kyle Chase makes a series of small—but ultimately destructive—choices that propel him into a downward spiral. Plagued by doubts, fears, peer pressure, boredom, frustrations, and an anger that turns all too easily to rage, Kyle is neither good nor bad—he’s just a typical kid who could be *you*.



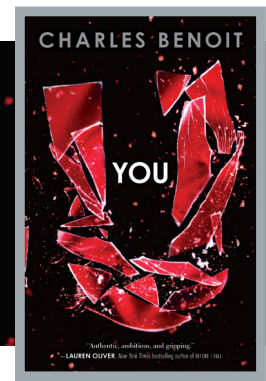
Discussion Questions

1. What do you believe is the first wrong step that Kyle Chase takes? Which of his subsequent choices contribute to the outcome? What would you would have done if the decisions had been yours? Do you think Kyle is a bad kid, a good kid who makes serious mistakes, a typical teenager, or none of these? Explain.
2. What are Kyle’s strengths and weaknesses? How might he have maximized his strengths and overcome his weaknesses? Kyle says he would return to eighth grade and start again if he could (page 12). Do you believe this is true, and would going back have changed Kyle’s life?
3. Are Kyle’s parents good role models for their son, and do they try to help him? Kyle says that his home life is “a reality show that’s stumbling along until it’s canceled” (page 104). What might Kyle’s parents have done differently? Do you think Kyle’s parents are to blame for what happens? Why or why not?
4. What do you think of Kyle’s friends? How do they influence his choices? Are they good friends when Kyle is threatened or in trouble? If you were Kyle’s friend, what advice would you give him?
5. Does your school have groups of students like those in the book—cools, nerds, jocks, hoodies, etc? If so, which group do you belong to? Are these sorts of categories and divisions positive or negative, support-building or isolating? Explain.
6. Ms. Ortman and Ms. Casey both talk about choices and student responsibility. Are their words meaningless platitudes, or do they really mean what they say? Could Kyle have taken charge of his life? If yes, why didn’t he? If no, why not?
7. How are Kyle Chase and Zachary McDade alike, and how are they profoundly different? Are they both equally accountable for their behavior? Why or why not? Do you feel sorry for either one of them?
8. Discuss how Zack McDade and Jake Burke act as bullies. Is there a bullying problem at your school? How should bullying be handled? Do you think Zack and Jake are the causes of what happens to Kyle?

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Discussion Questions (continued)

9. Kyle punches glass on two occasions in the story. What are the causes of these displays of anger? How are Kyle's punches the result of "Anger. Frustration. Fear. Hate. Love" (page 220)? Discuss the objects of these strong emotions. Who or what does Kyle really care about?
10. Why does Kyle fantasize about a perfect relationship with Ashley? What does he hope such a relationship would do for him? Do you think Ashley deserves Kyle's adoration? Is she a good friend to him? How are Ashley's reactions to Kyle's actions pivotal to the plot?
11. Communication—and the lack thereof—is central to this story. Is instant communication via cell phones and the Internet a good or bad thing, helpful or hurtful? How are rumors spread, and what damage can they cause? How does the ability or inability to communicate influence the outcome of this story?
12. Do you believe that the authority figures in the story treat Kyle fairly? What must young people do to navigate successfully through high school and beyond?
13. How does *You* end? What do you think Zack tells the authorities after the accident, and what does the planted evidence in Kyle's gym locker suggest? Did the ending surprise you?
14. Could Kyle have turned his life around, or was his fate foreordained from the beginning? Explain your opinion.
15. What effect does the second-person narration have on the way you read the novel? What emotions do you feel and what conclusions do you come to after finishing the novel?



Curt Brownell Photography

About the Author

CHARLES BENOIT is a former high school teacher and the Edgar Award–nominated author of three adult mystery novels. *You* is his first book for teens. He lives in Rochester, New York. Please visit him online at www.charlesbenoit.com.

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