

Praise for

ROCK 'N' ROLL SOLDIER

127th AGAIN Why is Dean happier with the second show for the 127th? Why does Dean agree to the gig in Pleiku?

SMOKEY How does Dean react to news of Smokey Porter's death? Why is he unable to cry?

THE RECORD Why is it so important to Dean to make the record with the band? Why does he mail a record off to Roy?

HOME Throughout the story, Dean thinks regularly of home and his life back in "the world." What are his feelings for home while he's in Vietnam? When he returns?

DAD Describe Dean's relationship with and attitude toward his father at the start of the story? Do they change? How? Why?

TET Why does Dean decide "it was time to get on with my life" after reading about the Tet Offensive in the newspaper?

WAR VET Why does Dean keep quiet when he overhears the war being discussed? If you had just returned from Vietnam, would you want to talk about it?

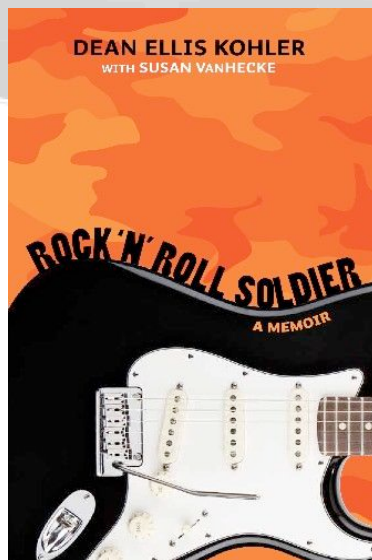
NASH Why does speaking with Graham Nash, the British rock star, seem "like the most natural thing in the world" to Dean? As Dean watches the Hollies tape their TV segment, why does he finally know "exactly what I was supposed to do"?

FAST FORWARD With your pre-reading discussion in mind, have your perceptions of the soldier's experience in Vietnam changed? How?

"A remarkable story about the transcendent power of music." – Graham Nash

"An easy and entertaining read as well as a coming of age story about a young man who was able to live his dream in the middle of a war – and survive." – Edward T. Luttenberger, National Vietnam War Museum

A MEMOIR

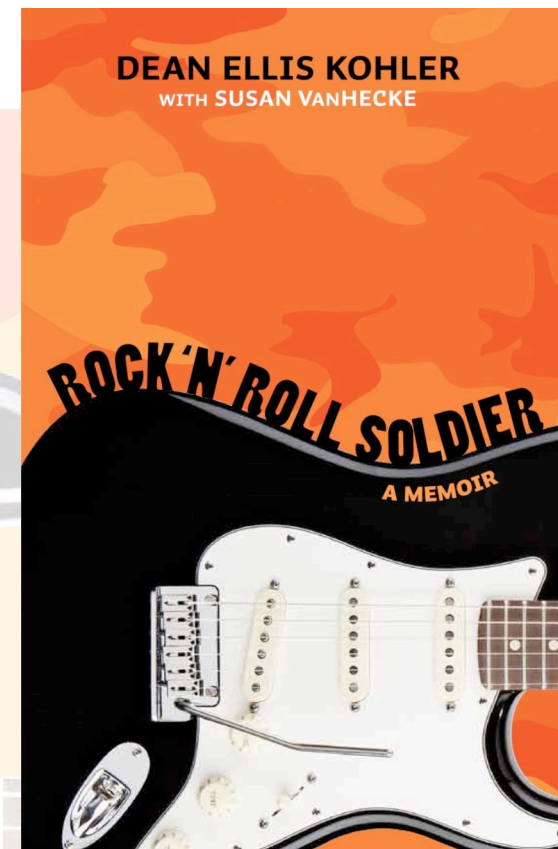


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Ages 14 and up

Grades 9 and up

HARPER TEEN
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DISCUSSION GUIDE

Guitar whiz Dean Kohler's just landed a recording contract... and his draft notice.

Rather than give up his rock star dreams, he improvises some equipment, teaches a few fellow soldiers to play, and forms a touring rock band – all without missing a single patrol in the Vietnam warzone. But when he and the band perform in increasingly dangerous terrain, Dean's music becomes a lifeline – for him and the soldiers he plays for.

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Scores of books have been written and movies made from the viewpoint of the combat infantry soldier in the Vietnam War. Yet many troops, like Dean Kohler and the 127th MP Company, were not directly on the frontlines. Discuss your perceptions of the soldier's experience in Vietnam.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

DUTY There were many ways to avoid serving in Vietnam; Dean mentions several in the book. So why did Dean go off to war? Would you?

THE 127TH Dean says of his MP company, "We were a team, a family almost." Find examples of how the 127th functions as a family for Dean and his fellow MPs.

CAPTAIN Leadbetter represents different things to different people. To the 127th, he's a figure of leadership and authority. He means even more to Dean. How and why?

TO KILL After Dean is fired upon his first night in Vietnam, he wonders if he could actually shoot an enemy. Yet, he's trained to do just that. Why does he feel conflicted? Would you? Do Dean's feelings about killing change?

WHO AM I How does Dean think of himself at the start of his tour in Vietnam? At the end? When he returns home? How and why does his self-identity change?

LOCALS How does Dean feel about the Vietnamese when he first arrives? Do his feelings change? Dean is warned to "trust no one" in Nam. How do these words affect Dean throughout the story?

DEATH Dean encounters death regularly while in-country. Do his feelings about and reactions to death change during his year at war? How? Why?

GOODRIDGE When Dean meets Goodridge, he says, "I felt helpless, out of control." Why does Dean feel this way?

MUSIC The poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote, "Music is the universal language of mankind." Find examples of how this might be true in Dean's story.

ROY After Leadbetter asks Dean to form a band, Dean lays awake and thinks of Uncle Roy. What does Roy represent to Dean?

GUITARS At the papasan shop, Dean says, "Standing there with a guitar in my hands again, I felt different. Like myself, but not myself." What does he mean?

FIRST 127TH GIG Why does Dean finally tell Sergeant Hall that the band is ready to perform? Why is Dean disappointed by the band's first gig for the company?

THE BANANA Why is it so important to Dean that the band be allowed to play for other soldiers? Why does Leadbetter permit it when it's clearly unauthorized? What does Leadbetter's support mean to Dean and the band's members?

GIRLFRIENDS How are Judy and Lynda different? Similar? What does Judy represent to Dean? What does Lynda represent to Dean? What does Dean represent to Lynda?

THE GUN Dean knows that taking Lynda to the gig is wrong, but he does it anyway. Why? When Lynda pulls the gun on Dean, how does he react? Why?

THE MOUNTAIN At the show on the mountain, Dean realizes that the Banana is no longer just a hobby. Why has the band become so vital to him?

TOP HAT Why does Dean want the top hat? Why do Dean and the band decide not to tell Leadbetter about the top hat ambush? The next morning, why does Sugden head for the shower in only the hat?

TRANSFER Why is it so important to Dean that Sugden not get transferred? On the jeep ride with Captain and Sugden, Dean recalls the execution of the VC bombers. How did the execution affect him?