

***The Soloist: A Lost Dream, an Unlikely Friendship, and the Redemptive Power of Music by Steve Lopez***

## Discussion Questions

(Adapted from the Sacramento Book Club Examiner's list of questions developed by Shelley Blanton-Stroud and accessed 9-4-09 at <http://www.examiner.com/examiner/x-13062-Sacramento-Book-Club-Examiner~y2009m7d8-Book-club-discussion-questions-for-Steve-Lopez-complicated-reflection-on-friendship-The-Soloist>)

1. Steve and Nathaniel's relationship changes over time. What does this say about the nature of human connections in general? Have you ever been in a relationship similar to theirs? How did your experiences differ?
2. Are you a fan of classical music? How has reading this book changed your feelings about classical music? Have you listened to any of the pieces mentioned in the book?
3. If you have studied music, did Nathaniel's comments about playing or listening to music seem familiar?
4. How did Steve's influence as a columnist help Nathaniel's recovery? Do you think that Steve ever exploited Nathaniel? Why or why not?
5. Visiting Disney Hall for the first time, Nathaniel says "It's like a dream. I don't know if it's a dream or purgatory (p. 114)". What does Nathaniel mean by this? Does it apply to any opportunity you have experienced in your own life?
6. What do you think about a person with a mental illness (or other illness) refusing to accept treatment? Is this always an irrational decision?
7. Dr. Ragins tells Steve about a treatment philosophy where the therapeutic relationship is more important than the traditional focus on diagnosis and treatment. Do you think that this is a valid way to reach with people with a mental illness?
8. Why do people behave generously at times? Can you think of a situation in your life where you did something a little risky to help another person? Describe what motivated you and how it all turned out.
9. Steve frequently muses on the freedoms that Nathaniel had. Why do you think Steve was so focused on this?
10. If you have seen the movie version of *The Soloist*, how does it compare? What are the advantages and disadvantages of telling this story in film or print?
11. While Galesburg, Illinois does not have a skid row, there are homeless people here. How is the homeless situation different here than in L.A.?