

A Choose to Read Ohio Toolkit

Use this toolkit to plan book discussions, library programs, or classroom activities.

Meet Debbie Rigaud, who was born in New York to Haitian immigrant parents, grew up in New Jersey, and now lives in central Ohio.

Select from a range of discussion questions and extension activities to deepen the experience of reading *Simone Breaks All the Rules*.

Discover websites, readalikes, and other resources to explore topics and themes in depth.

Simone Breaks All the Rules

By Debbie Rigaud



About the Book

Simone Thibodeaux's life is sealed in a boy-proof container.

Her strict Haitian immigrant parents enforce no-dating rules and curfews, and send Simone to an all-girls school. As for prom? Simone is allowed to go on one condition: her parents will select her date (a boy from a nice Haitian immigrant family, obviously).

Simone is desperate to avoid the humiliation of the set-up—especially since she's crushing on a boy she knows her parents wouldn't approve of. With senior year coming to a close, Simone makes a decision. She and her fellow late-bloomer friends will create a Senior Year Bucket List of all the things they haven't had a chance to do. On the list: kissing a boy, sneaking out of the house, skipping class (gasp!), and, oh yeah—choosing your own prom date.

But as the list takes on a life of its own, things get more complicated than Simone expected. She'll have to discover which rules are worth breaking and which will save her from heartbreak.



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Book Details

Simone Breaks All the Rules by Debbie Rigaud.
Scholastic, 2021. ISBN 9781338681727. 320 pages. Ages 12-18.
Leveled reading: 760 Lexile.
<https://shop.scholastic.com/parent-ecommerce/books/simone-breaks-all-the-rules-9781338681727.html>

Available as an ebook and digital audiobook through the Ohio Digital Library:
ohiodigitallibrary.com



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“To me, being Haitian feels like this Venn diagram of experiences that overlaps many cultures... It’s like everyone is a little Haitian, and they don’t know it.”

About the Author

Debbie Rigaud began her career covering news and entertainment for magazines. Her writing has appeared in *Seventeen*, *CosmoGIRL!*, *Essence*, *J-14*, *Trace*, *Heart & Soul*, and *VIBE Vixen*. She is the coauthor of Alyssa Milano's **Hope** series and the author of **Truly Madly Royally** and, most recently, **A Girl's Guide to Love & Magic**.

Debbie was born in New York to Haitian immigrant parents and grew up in East Orange, New Jersey. She now lives with her husband and children in the Columbus area.

Author Resources

Debbie Rigaud's official website

www.debbierigaud.com

Author Interview: Debbie Rigaud on *Simone Breaks All the Rules*

missprint.wordpress.com/2021/08/12/author-interview-debbie-rigaud-on-simone-breaks-all-the-rules/

Emma Carbone interviews Debbie Rigaud for the Miss Print blog.

Debbie Rigaud on the Joy of Breaking Rules (video, 6 minutes)

youtu.be/LdmobXIEK7A

Kirkus Reviews interviews Debbie Rigaud.

Debbie Rigaud on the Value of Light Reads (audio, 26 minutes)

www.podbean.com/media/share/pb-wiki2-c42693

Ohio author Mindy McGinnis interviews Debbie Rigaud for the *Writer Writer Pants on Fire* podcast.

For publicity and speaking engagement inquiries:

Contact Debbie's agent Laura Dail at ldail@ldlinc.com

or publicist Elisabeth Ferrari at EFerrari@Scholastic.com.

Go Further

*Ideas for extending the experience of reading **Simone Breaks All the Rules**.*

Jean Michel-Basquiat (1960-1988) was a famous artist whose father was a Haitian immigrant. His work is still prominently featured in galleries and on fashion brands like Tiffany's, Coach, Gap, Old Navy, and Doc Martens. Jay Z and Beyoncé are big fans, and they own some of his work!

Using online resources available to students through INFOhio (infohio.org) and to all Ohio residents through Ohio Web Library (ohioweblibrary.org), research Basquiat and his continuing influence on Haitian American culture.

More on the last page!

Talk About It

Topics to share when discussing **Simone Breaks All the Rules** with teens.

Educators: Every CTRO book may be used to support Ohio's English Language Arts reading, writing, and speaking and listening standards. Other Learning Standards, such as Social Studies: Contemporary World Issues (HS) and Social and Emotional Learning: Responsible Decision Making (HS), may also apply. Discussion questions and educational activities for **Simone Breaks All the Rules** align with Learning Standards for Grades 7-12.

Librarians, parents, and others: These activities are also for library programs, family activities, and other projects. Learning Standards define what students should know and be able to do at each grade. For more information, see the Ohio Department of Education website, education.ohio.gov. From the Topics dropdown menu, click on "Learning in Ohio."

Spoiler warning! Some discussion questions refer to key elements in the book. Do not read if you do not want to find out what happens.

- The first scene of the book shows Simone's sister Anne being set up on her prom date. What Haitian American etiquette is expected? What is Simone's reaction to the event, versus her sister's? What are some ways that Simone feels overprotected by her parents?
- What are some stereotypes that Simone has encountered related to her Haitian culture? What issues has she faced with making friends at school?
- How does Simone's senior thesis about "Teen Heroes in History" influence her behavior? How do her heroes influence the making of the Playlist? How does Simone use what she has learned about teen activism as a positive influence?
- How is Simone's cousin Gabby's upbringing different from her own? Is Simone jealous of her cousin? Discuss how Gabby supports Simone (or how she doesn't!). Should Gabby have started dating Gavin?
- What does Simone find in common with the Home Girls? In what ways does she connect with Amita, since they are both daughters of immigrants? How does Kira fit into the group?
- How does The Playlist help the girls take control of their lives? Do you find the Playlist to be reasonable? What do you think of Simone's parents' reactions when they find the list? How does the list conflict with "Mummy's List of Bad"?
- What did you think of Simone's parents setting her up with Ben? If they hadn't done this, she would not have met Ben! How does Simone connect to Ben as opposed to Gavin? What do Simone and Ben find that they have in common?
- Is Simone "turning into her mother" when she plays matchmaker with her friends' prom dates? What do you think of Simone's relationship with her mom?
- How does Simone's temporary butterfly tattoo inspire her? What does the butterfly represent to Simone?
- How does Simone feel about being a Haitian American who has never been to Haiti?
- How does Haitian body image differ from American body images? Simone's Grandmère points out that she has gained weight, and it's a compliment. Discuss Simone's positive self-image and her self-confidence.
- Were you glad that Simone ends up with Ben as her prom date? Does everyone end up with his/her happy Prom-ance?

Go Further (continued)

Start your own "Teen Heroes" research project. Start with heroes you're familiar with, then let your research lead you to new heroes. Use INFOhio or Ohio Web Library to find articles, using search terms such as "teen activists" or "teen activism."

Make your own Playlist! Simone and the HomeGirls make a list of goals to achieve before they graduate high school. What would be on your list? What milestones would you include? When in your life would you need to write a "Playlist"? Make it fancy: write your list with flair pens, hang it on your wall, and check your progress!

Simone is proud of her Haitian family and culture. Research some of the details mentioned in the book, such as Haitian folktales, Haitian language and etiquette, Konpa dancing, and the people mentioned in her senior thesis, such as Anacaona.

Ben's passion project is bringing the work of young Haitian artists into the local American gallery near his home in Queens. Check out the work of well-known Haitian artists, such as Manuel Mathieu, Laurent Casimar, and Franck Etienne, and writers such as Edwidge Danticat.

Explore More

*Additional ideas and resources to use with **Simone Breaks All the Rules**.*

Celebrating Haitian Women from Across the Spectrum

haitiantimes.com/2022/03/31/celebrating-haitian-women-from-across-the-spectrum/

In her research on teen activism, Simone learns about influential Haitians and Haitian Americans. Discover famous women with Haitian backgrounds, including Karine Jean-Pierre, the first Black woman to lead a White House press briefing in 30 years.

Prominent Haitian Americans in Sports

www.si.com/more-sports/2010/01/25/25-0prominent-haitian-americans-in-sports

Simone and Ben both love the New York Mets and baseball in general. Check out *Sports Illustrated's* list of famous Haitian American athletes.

Teaching About Haiti: A Booklist

socialjusticebooks.org/booklists/haiti/

This collection of K-12 books and teaching and learning resources from Social Justice Books features fiction and nonfiction titles from picture books to young adult books.

Check It Out

Recommended for readers of **Simone Breaks All the Rules** and fans of Debbie Rigaud.

When Dimple Met Rishi by Sandhya Menon

Clap When You Land by Elizabeth Acevedo

The Sun Is Also a Star by Nicola Yoon

American Street by Ibi Zoboi

Come On In by Adi Alsaid

Choose to Read Ohio, a project of the State Library of Ohio, the Ohioana Library Association, and the Ohio Center for the Book, encourages public libraries, schools, families, and others to build a community of readers and an appreciation of Ohio authors, illustrators, and literature. CTRO is adaptable for use in classrooms, libraries, bookstores, by book discussion groups, families, and other community groups.

Explore Choose to Read Ohio resources & toolkits:
library.ohio.gov/ctro.

Toolkit created by Kimberly Greenfield Karshner, Lorain County Community College, September 2022. Links and other information are accurate at the time of publication.