

99 Flavours of Suck

Author: Tania Hutley

Synopsis

Kane Knight is a typical teenage boy. He goes to school, hangs out with his friends and is obsessed with girls, well one girl in particular – Pippa Jensen. It's just a pity that she hates him. All and all life isn't too bad until Kane has an unfortunate encounter with a strange man named Shep Silver. Shep attacks him in the bushes one night and from that day on everything changes. Kane is now a werewolf. Even when he is not being a werewolf his normally good-looking face is ugly. He transforms every night when there is a full moon.

This is bad enough but Kane is extremely allergic to dog fur. When he is completely covered in the stuff the pain and itching becomes unbearable. To make matters worse Kane's transformation is caught on camera, the whole world becomes involved in his drama. Talk about embarrassing! Now Kane's best friend Jason seems to be getting very friendly with Pippa, the girl of his dreams. The only way Kane's nightmare will end is if the werewolf curse is broken. This can only happen if Kane is kissed by his soul-mate. This should be easy because his soul-mate is Pippa. Isn't it?

Text Type

99 Flavours of Suck, written by New Zealand author Tania Hutley, is a hilarious novel about a normal teenage boy whose life is suddenly turned upside down when he becomes a werewolf. While there is a fantasy element in the novel it is also very much grounded in reality with credible characters who deal with typical teenage issues.

Kane and Pippa both narrate the story from first person point of view, in alternating chapters. The novel has widespread appeal for both boys and girls because both male and female perspectives are included. The story is told in easy-to-read colloquial language and the author has adopted many teenage catch-phrases and vernacular to ensure that readers remain engaged and entertained. This book will appeal to anyone who enjoys a good laugh, is curious about werewolves and curses and has ever been in love.

Sharing the Novel

The novel has been divided up as follows: Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 5–20), Chapters 3–12 (pp. 21–119) and Chapters 13–26 (pp. 120–237).

During the shared sessions encourage students to make predictions and inferences about the text. Have them analyse the 3 main characters Kane, Jason and Pippa, and track how their characters develop and change as the story progresses. Where ever possible have students relate the issues that the characters in the story deal with to their own experiences. Have them identify themes and ideas presented in the text and explain how these are developed by the author. Most importantly, encourage students to enjoy the novel and talk about it with their peers – it is a really easy, enjoyable read.

Introducing the Novel

Have students study the front cover of the novel and read the blurb.

- Why do you think the novel is called 99 flavours of suck?
- Who is the main character in the novel?
- Why do you think he is doomed to a life of “itchy shame”?
- Who do you think the “one person who can save him” might be?
- What kind of novel do you think this is? Make a prediction about what might happen in the story.

Teacher reads Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 5–20) aloud. Students follow along in their books.

Comprehension Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 5–20)

- Why is Kane convinced that Pippa hates him?
- How does Kane feel when he gets to dance with Pippa? Why does he run off in a hurry? Why doesn't he tell Pippa the truth?
- How does Pippa feel about the incident with the “bee”?
- Who is Coco and where does Pippa find her when she gets home?
- Describe Mrs Fruple.
- What chaos has Coco caused in Mrs Fruple's house? Why doesn't Pippa want to tell her dad what Coco has done? What does Pippa's father tell her she has to do to make amends with Mrs Fruple?
- Why does Pippa's father want her to get rid of Coco? Who does he suggest that she ring?

Discussion

- What evidence is there in the first two chapters that suggests Kane is a popular student who enjoys a joke?
- Why do you think Pippa's dad suggests that she rings Kane's mother for help with Coco?
- What is the effect of having two different narrators?
- What do you think is going to happen next in the novel?

Students read Chapters 3–12 (pp. 21–119) independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension Chapters 3–12 (pp. 21–119)

- What are the symptoms of Kane's allergy?
- How does Kane feel about what happened with Pippa?
- Who is Harold? What does he want Kane's mother to do? Why is she reluctant to do the special?
- Who is Shep Silver? Why does Harold want Kane's mother to visit him?
- Why is it important that Kane's allergy remain a secret?
- Why does Kane's mother insist that Kane accompany her to Shep Silver's house?
- Describe Shep Silver. Why does Kane shake his hand? What strange thing does Shep do to Kane's hand?
- Why is Kane's mother so eager to find the dog?
- How does Kane feel as he sits alone in the car?
- What does Mrs Fruple want Pippa to do as well as give her the money? What would she accept as full payment? Why doesn't Pippa agree to the deal?
- Why is Coco in trouble with Pippa's dad when she arrives home? How does she convince him to give Coco one more chance?
- Why does Pippa go to Jason's house? How does he react when he sees her? Why does Pippa regret what has happened with Jason and Kane in the past?
- What does the pet shop owner give Pippa? Why is Jason so surprised when he sees what is written on the piece of paper?
- What does Kane notice about his hand when he wakes up? Why does he need to get out of the car? What happens in the bushes? What does Kane believe has attacked him?
- Why does Kane's mother insist on taking him to the doctor?
- Why is Kane so embarrassed in the hospital waiting room?
- What is the "angel's" name? Why does she start talking to Kane's mother? Why doesn't Kane want to tell her what really happened to him? How does Kane feel after chatting with the girl?
- What does Kane's mother say about his injury that Angela overhears? How does this make him feel? Why is Kane disappointed that his wound isn't more serious?
- What does Pippa reveal to Jason about what she wants to do in the future? Why is she surprised that she tells him this?

- Describe what happens when Jason and Pippa meet Shep Silver. What advice does he offer Pippa about Coco? What does he do with Pippa's angel necklace?
- Why does Kane have such a bad night's sleep after he is bitten? What does he tell his mother she can do? Why does he do this?
- How does Kane react when Jason tells him that he visited Shep Silver with Pippa?
- Why isn't it fun going to sickbay? What time does Kane wake up from his sleep? Why is he disorientated? Why does he decide to stay in the sickbay? Describe what happens when Kane looks at the full moon.
- How does Pippa feel using the charm on Coco? How has Coco changed since the visit to Shep Silver? What makes Coco whimper and hide in the corner of her cage?
- Where does Kane wake up? What time is it? What is strange about his situation? Where does Kane run to?
- How does Jason react when he sees Kane? What is wrong with Kane's face?
- Why does Pippa decide to take Coco over to Kane's house?
- What conclusion does Kane reach about his condition? What do the boys find out from the internet? Why does Kane decide to visit Shep Silver?
- Why does Kane insist that he and Jason ignore Pippa? How does Jason feel about doing this? What do you think their pact might be?

Discussion

- Describe Kane's character. How does he change when he becomes a werewolf? How does being a werewolf affect his confidence? What would you do if you were in Kane's situation?
- What do you think happened between Jason, Kane and Pippa? Why is Pippa reluctant to become friends with them again?
- What evidence is there to suggest that Jason and Pippa have feelings for each other?
- What do you think is going to happen in the story next?

Students read Chapters 13–26 (pp. 120–237) independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension Chapters 13–26 (pp. 120–237)

- Why is Shep surprised that Kane "got changed"? Why does Shep think that Kane should give being a werewolf a chance? Why is it particularly unlucky that Kane of all people has become a werewolf? What does Shep tell Kane might cure him?
- How does Pippa feel about Jason's snub?

- What convinces Pippa to keep her appointment with Kane's mum? Why is she so impressed with Poochie-Mama?
- What happens when Kane and Jason run into the room? How does Kane's mother take charge? Who captures the incident on film?
- Where is Kane when he wakes up? How do Pippa and his mother react when they see him? How has Kane's face changed?
- What does Pippa realise when she learns that Kane is allergic to dog hair?
- What does Harold tell Kane's mum on the phone? How does she react to this news?
- How does Kane feel about having Pippa in his house?
- Describe the footage of Kane. How does Kane feel when he sees it? What is included in the footage that is a surprise to everyone? What does Kane see himself doing that makes him feel mortified? Why does Kane feel like his life is over?
- How do Jason and Pippa propose to help Kane? Why do they think that Kane needs a marketing plan? Why does Pippa think that they need to make sure Kane remains on television?
- How do the other students at Kane's school react to the footage?
- What realisation does Pippa come to about her marketing campaign?
- Why does Pippa decide to lend Kane her angel necklace?
- What does Jason reveal to Pippa about his pact with Kane? How does Pippa feel when she learns the reason for Kane and Jason dumping her as a friend?
- What does Jason ask Pippa to go with him to? Why doesn't she answer him right away?
- What does Jason suggest they do to set the mood for when the girls come to kiss Kane?
- Why does Kane want Jason to hang a poster up in hospital?
- How does Kane react when Jason tells him that he invited Pippa to the dance?
- What conditions does Pippa put on Harold and his film crew?
- Why is Coco in trouble with Mrs Fruple again? What does Mrs Fruple threaten to do with Coco? What does Pippa have to do to make it up to her?
- Why does the thought of a mob of girls waiting for kisses at his door make Kane's guts churn?
- How does the charm that Pippa gives him help Kane? Do you think the charm is good or evil? Explain your answer.

- How does Kane react when Mrs Fruple kisses him? Is Pippa justified in taking her over there? Why/why not?
- Why does Pippa give Coco to Mrs Knight? How does this make her feel?
- How does Jason comfort Pippa after Kane asks them both to leave his house? Why is it a big deal that Pippa invites Jason over to watch the show?
- Why does Pippa think it is a good thing that Kane looks pathetic on TV?
- What is Kane's good news? What is his bad news?
- Why does Kane think that Pippa might be his soul-mate?
- Why does Kane return to school?
- Why does Pippa begin to doubt Jason's feelings for her? Why does she think he invited her to the dance?
- Why does Pippa think that Kane is going to kiss her? Why doesn't he do it?
- What is one of the things that Pippa likes the best about Jason?
- Why does Pippa have a go at Kane? How does Kane react to her comments? Why does Pippa immediately regret opening her mouth?
- Why does Kane's mother think that he has changed? What does she think he has to be grateful for? Who visits Kane on his birthday? What does he give him as a present? Why doesn't Kane invite him in? Who else visits him?
- Why does Kane decide to go to the dance? What does he plan to do there? Why does this make him feel guilty?
- What happens when Kane kisses Pippa? How does this make Kane feel?
- How does Jason react after Kane kisses Pippa? Why does this surprise Kane? What realisation does Kane come to about Jason?
- What happens when Kane kisses Jason?
- How does Pippa react to the kiss?
- Why does Pippa enjoy teasing Kane so much?
- Why isn't Kane allergic to Coco anymore?
- What good news does Mrs Knight receive?
- Who is Kane's surprise visitor? Why has she come over?
- Describe what happens when Kane and Angela kiss.

- Why does Kane give the angel necklace back to Pippa? Why is she surprised when she touches it?
- Why is Pippa and Jason's kiss a "revelation"?
- How does Pippa get back at Mrs Fruple?

Discussion

- What do you think Kane's experience as a werewolf has taught him? In what ways do you think he will be different afterwards?
- Describe Jason. What characteristics and qualities does he possess that make him a good friend?
- Describe Pippa. What has happened in her past that has badly affected her? Why does she lack self-confidence at times?
- Do you agree with Kane that everything happens for a reason? Explain your answer.
- Identify a theme in the story. How is this theme developed by the author?

Activities

Advertisement – Write a script for a television promo for Poochie-Mama's show. Practise your script and then make a video to show the class.

Static Image – Design your own poster for the Magic Kiss campaign.

Writing – Write a letter to the author explaining what you liked about the story.

Static Image – Design a poster advertising the novel that would be suitable for display in your own library.

Plot – List 15 important events in the novel in the order in which they occur.

Plot – Choose an important event that occurs in the novel. Explain why this event is important and how it affects the outcome of the story.

Theme – Identify a theme or a main idea in the novel. How is this theme developed by the author? How did the theme make you feel? Is the theme relevant in today's society? Why/ why not?

Character – Rewrite a chapter told from Pippa's point of view from Kane's point of view, or vice versa.

Character – Choose a main character in the novel and write a paragraph explaining the different ways the author uses to present these characters. How are their feelings, behaviour, personality and motivations revealed to us?

Research – Complete a research assignment about werewolves and the myths and stories surrounding them. Present your findings to the class as an oral presentation.

Poetry – Write a poem about Pippa and Jason’s first kiss. Use adjectives and figurative language to convey the magic.

Notes written by Vicki Ladd