

Novel Analysis: DANTE'S KISS by Susan Nadathur (Chapters 1 and 2)

- Setting:**
1. Where does the action start? Where does it move to in chapter two?
 2. How does the place limit or modify the behavior of the characters?
 3. How did you visualize Dante's home/family? Is it similar or different to yours?
- Plot:**
1. What is the inciting incident (or catalyst) in chapter one that sets the story in motion?
- Character:**
1. Describe each of the following characters: Kiriela, Jadiel, Malakiy, Adriel, Dante.
 2. What do these characters do and say that reveal their thoughts and personalities?
 3. What does each of these characters want and why won't they be able to get it?
 4. Which character do you think will need to grow the most to get what he/she wants?
 5. Which character do you most identify with and why?
- Themes:**
1. What are the various ways that love is expressed in the first two chapters?
 2. Are any of those expressions unhealthy?
 3. What struggles do the characters have with the concept of freedom?
 4. What challenges do the characters have with the concept of obedience?
 5. What situations cause conflict between the young people and their parents?
- Metaphors:**
1. What visual imagery is used to symbolize pending danger in the first two chapters?
- Essay Questions:**
1. Write a one-page essay on the different kinds of love presented in *Dante's Kiss*.
 2. Write a one-page essay on the benefits and costs of freedom in *Dante's Kiss*.
 3. Write a one-page essay on how different family structures influences behavior in the novel.

Novel Analysis: DANTE'S KISS by Susan Nadathur (Chapters 3-21)

Discussion Questions

1. What social dynamics/conflicts exist between the Reggae and the Rockers?
2. Define how clothing defines and separates these two groups (Refer to what Dante says on page 49 when he thinks about Kiriela: "Unlike every other girl, she wore nothing to place her with a particular social group. No gold hoop earrings or painted acrylic nails to connect her to the Reggae girls. No spiked collars to pin her to the Goths)."
3. On page 32 Dante says, "I was a rocker in a rapper-controlled world." How does this statement affect and influence his identity?
4. Can you identify social groups in your school by the clothes they wear? If so, how does this affect student perceptions of particular groups or individuals based on what they are wearing?
5. On page 53, Kiriela says (referring to girls she thought were her friends), "For all their talk about how the three of us were going to be "tight," only Salena stuck around when my day nosedived." Has this ever happened to you with girls (or boys) you thought were your friends?
6. On page 60, Julián and Pedro mock Dante because he is a rocker. Do people make fun of you because you are different?
7. What do Dante's different reactions to the doctor and Officer Collado in chapter 10 tell you about his attitude toward authority figures? What does his dialogue reveal about his character in this chapter?
8. On page 91 Kiriela states, "Somehow I knew that everything I understood about myself was about to change." How is this statement significant?
9. What is the significance of Dante's dream in chapter 15? What does the eagle symbolize?
10. On page 113 Dante says that he, Carlos, and C.J. belong to the "out" group, the 5% minority of students who prefer rock over reggaetón. Who are the outsiders at your school?
11. On page 120, Kiriela is sent to the principal's office because her skirt is too short. She is forced to wear some other girl's skirt until she returns to school with her own at the correct length. What happens in your school when a student violates the dress code?
12. In chapter 19, C.J. is pressured into vandalizing the school. Have you ever been pressured into doing something illegal by a friend?
13. In chapter 21, Kiriela eats a *quenepa* for the first time. This fruit is native to Puerto Rico. What fruit is native to your state and identifies the area?

Essay Questions:

- 1) How does Reggaetón inform Puerto Rican social and cultural identity?
- 2) How does rock music conflict with that identity? (Refer to the exchange between Armando and Dante on page 35 and Susanna and Kiriela on page 42).
- 3) The eagle is present across a range of spiritual beliefs and philosophies. For example see: www.eaglespiritministry.com. Discuss how the eagle is a relevant symbol of Dante's journey.

Novel Analysis: DANTE'S KISS by Susan Nadathur (Chapters 22-53)

Discussion Questions:

1. In chapter 22, Dante pulls out a torn copy of S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*. He refers to Ponyboy as an intriguing character. Why do you think Dante identifies with Ponyboy?
2. At the beginning of chapter 24, Dante is startled awake from a bad dream. He remembers being chained to a prison wall, a feeble ray of light, and a golden sword. How do you interpret Dante's dream? What meaning might it have to Dante's life?
3. At the end of chapter 24, Kiriela asks, "Do you think we can change our destinies? Dante says, "I know we can." What do you think?
4. In chapter 26, Dante shares music from *Apocalyptica* with Kiriela. Do you share music with your girl/boyfriend? What songs have come to define your relationship?
5. In chapter 27, Dante talks about his mother. How has what he has experienced through her influenced his relationship with the girls he gets involved with? What part of your personal life affects your relationships/friendships away from home?
6. On page 180 Jadiel says to Kiriela, "You have to start dressing like what you are" (meaning a demon). Does the way you dress make you feel like who you are? How do you feel when you are required to confirm to a dress code, for example, a school uniform?
7. On page 193, Malakiy says, "Love is light." Do you believe that?
8. On page 202, Kiriela says, "Tell me who you're with and I'll tell you who you are." Do you think that's true?
9. When Dante joins Caleb, Salena, and Kiriela at a showing of *Sweeney Todd* in chapter 33, he's dressed differently. Instead of the usual black jeans and T-shirt, he's wearing black jeans, a long-sleeve black-and-blue-striped shirt, and a black pinstripe fedora. What does this change in dress tell us about his character arc?
10. In chapter 38, Dante's mother brings up the subject of his estranged father. Do you think this was fair to Dante? What emotions do you think he is experiencing when his mother forces him to talk on the phone with his father?
11. In chapter 40, Kiriela believes that Jadiel is capable of being saved. Do you?
12. In chapter 43, Dante performs "Libera Me" from the movie *Interview with the Vampire*. How does his performance define his character?
13. In chapter 46, Dante dreams he is transformed into a baby eagle. What is the significance of this dream to his personal journey?
14. Do you think Dante has made peace with his father?
15. How has Kiriela changed by the end of the story? Can you see an alternate ending for her?

Essay Questions:

1. In chapter 22, Dante refers to one of Puerto Rico's most famous composers—Raphael Hernandez. Research the life and accomplishments of this composer and discuss his contributions to Puerto Rican culture.