My Best Friend is a Goddess

By Tara Eglington

Book Summary:

Emily has been friends with Adriana since Year One, way back when Adriana had a huge gap between her teeth and was super skinny. Emily wasn't any less awkward looking, but the girls are the best of friends and that is the way it has always been.

When Adriana's mother dies, very suddenly, everything changes. Adriana's father accepts a job in Borneo and the girls spend Year 10 apart. Despite the rubbish internet connection (on Adriana's side of things) the girls manage to stay in touch. And then Adriana returns home. And she has gone from awkward to AMAZING and turned into a goddess!

Issues covered:

Bullying
Identity
Self-image
Friendship and Relationships
Grief
Art and myth
Social Media- Instagram

Appropriate Ages:

High school readers

ISBN: 9780732299903

E-ISBN: 9781460703922

Notes by: Mandy Newman

CONTENTS

This novel will help teachers to initiate and facilitate discussions on a range of social issues that are very topical and students are passionate about.

This book invites students and teachers to discuss, analyse, write and think about issues such as the role that social media and perceptions of beauty have on self worth and how does social media aid bullying. Students will enjoy having the opportunity to discuss these issues, particularly if they are encouraged to say what they truly think.

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM The Australian Curriculum divides the study of English into three distinct strands, Language, Literature and Literacy and these can be found at http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/English/Content-structure. These notes are divided into sections following the three strands.

Language:
> Language variation and change
> Language for interaction
> Text structure and organisation
> Expressing and developing ideas
> Sound and letter knowledge

Literature:
> Literature and context
> Responding to literature
> Examining literature Creating literature Literacy:
> Texts in context
> Interacting with others
> Interpreting, analysing and evaluating
> Creating texts

Bullying

This novel will help teachers to facilitate discussions with students to think about bullying through the eyes of a victim. This perspective will make it easier for students to recognise how instances of gossip, spreading rumours and making videos can make a person feel insecure or threatened.

Invite the students to do a character analysis of Adriana and examine why she wanted to leave Jefferson High and why she does not want to return. Was she justified to feel as she did? What role does Adriana's diary play? What is the difference between what Adriana writes in her diary and how she acts with her family and Emily and Dylan? Why does she act differently with different people? What does this tell us about people and the impact of bullying?

Host a class discussion

1. Ask students to define bullying. Is isolating someone or spreading vicious rumours via a video on social media as harmful as physically hurting someone?

2. Can gossip and spreading malicious rumours have a devastating effect? Why?

3. Examine how bullying is treated in the novel. Does Adriana fit the stereotype of a victim of bullying? Why? Why not? Who do students think will never be the victim of bullying? If a girl or boy wins an award for having the most attractive physical feature is that bullying?

4. How can schools address bullying adequately? What can students and teachers do to stop the spread of gossip? Should they? Why?

5. In an ideal world what should other students do if they witness another student being bullied or receive a video that could be hurtful? What happens in the real world? How can this be changed?

6. What is the role of individual consent? Does it matter if someone does not consent to their image being distributed on social media? What does the law say?

Divide students into groups. Ask them to write a single sentence blurb for this text that captures one aspect of bullying. Have each group make a two-minute book trailer using their sentence as the inspiration. Choose key quotes and characters that are relevant to their perspective on bullying.

Friendship

This novel will help teachers to facilitate discussions with students about friendship and social stratification, the cycle of popularity and what that means for peer relations, self esteem and friendship.

1. Invite the students to do a character analysis of Adriana and Emily and map out their friendship over the course of the book. Encourage students to pinpoint the factors that lead to a changing dynamic between them.

2. Ask students in pairs to draw a graph of the social stratification at Jefferson High. Ask students to identify, using textual evidence, the criteria for being a member of The Tens. Ask them to discuss the role that appearance plays as a central determinant of social status among girls in the novel. Ask your students to determine what kinds of behaviors do young people have to engage in, in order to fit in? Does Theo confound the students' expectations? Why?

3. Ask students to discuss what role social media plays in being seen as popular.

4. When Adriana joins The Tens, what behaviours does she adopt and how does this impact her friendship with Emily?

5. How does Emily feel about the change in Adriana? Is Emily reasonable with her response? What impact does the change in her relationship with Adriana have on her self esteem?

6. Compare the friendships Adriana develops with The Tens and the friendship between Emily and Theo, what lessons can you draw about friendship? How important is having common interests?

7. Ask your students to reflect to what degree friendship is about learning to accept and embrace change in our lives? What discoveries have students made about themselves and friendship?

8. Complete the What if exercise. Invite students to write about a friendship experience that has left them wondering if they should have acted differently - compose a creative writing piece outlining how they could have acted differently.

Social media, identity and self worth

This novel will help teachers to facilitate discussions with students about the role that social media and perceptions of beauty have on self worth. Students will enjoy having the opportunity to discuss these issues, particularly if they are encouraged to say what they truly think.

Ask your class if being active on social media impacts on the development of your emotional life? Plot the development of the friendship between Theo and Emily. What issues does Emily have to face? What perception does she have of herself? Is this how others see her? What is the role of art and myth in their relationship? Why is Adriana compelled to return to Dylan? What is it about him that draws her to him?

Host a Class Debate

Using evidence from the characters in My Best Friend is a Goddess, select from these topics for a class debate:

The Dove Self-Esteem Project recently found that "Social media creates an environment where disordered thoughts and behaviors really thrive." Is this true for the characters in My Best Friend is a Goddess?

Is there a "perfect image" of who young people should be, on social media? What is it? What do some of the characters in My Best Friend is a Goddess perceive to be the perfect image?

What are some of the benefits of social media? How can social media strengthen the resilience and wellbeing of all young people?

What do The Tens see as perfect? What about the other characters – Emily? Theo? Dylan? Are these standards reflections of reality? Is it real life? Is that a problem?

Recent research found that the more time we spend on social media sites, like Facebook, comparing ourselves to others, the more depressed we get. Discuss.

Ask students to write a reflection of what they have learned about social media, identity and self worth after reading My Best Friend is a Goddess.

Grief and loss

There are many different examples of grief and loss in My Best Friend is a Goddess. Adriana has lost her mother and her father has lost his wife. Emily has no contact with her father. Adriana grieves over her lost relationship with Dylan. Emily grieves over the loss of her relationship with Adriana. Every adverse life event involves at least some elements of loss.

1. Ask students to find examples of how loss has impacted on Emily, Adriana, Daniel and Dylan. Ask the students to write a poem that conveys their own experience of loss.

2. Both Emily and Adriana use their journals to share their inner most thoughts. Ask the students to find two contrasting passages to compare what each character writes in her journal and how they behave.

What does this tell us about the writing process? Why is it important in fiction for there to be a gap between what a person truly feels and how they act? Ask students to then attempt to do the same. Ask them to create a teenage character, male or female, write a diary entry and then a scene at school where the character says the opposite of what they have written in their diary. What is the effect on the audience? How does the audience feel about the character as a consequence?

3. Diary entries and letters have long been used by authors as device for developing characterisation, why? Ask students to discuss why writing or drawing things that we are thinking or feeling, helps people to heal.

4. What role does a good friend play in dealing with loss? Who does Emily turn to when she and Adriana have a fight? What do Adriana and Emily both miss when they are no longer best friends? How important are peers during adolescence? Why?

Ask students to complete the What If exercise. After reading My Best Friend is a Goddess, and discussing and thinking about loss and grief, ask students to compose three scenes involving two characters. In scene one, have one character trying to deal with a loss and the other character not really engaging with how the first character is feeling. In scene two have character two have an epiphany about how they acted with the other character. In scene three have character two return to character one and tell character one how they would act differently now.