



Book club 8: Love & identity

Nate Plus One
by Kevin van Whye



Rules

In this book club you will discuss *Nate Plus One* by Kevin van Whye in a group of 4-6 readers. You will start a conversation by responding to discussion questions about the text. The book club opens with a brief introduction that one of you reads out loud. The book club then continues in four rounds

- 1 Round 1 consists of 5 quiz questions about the text. One of the group members acts as the quiz master who reads each question out loud, after which everyone (including the quiz master) writes down their answer. The correct answers will appear on the screen after you have turned over the final question card. You may then check your answers and calculate your scores.
- 2 Round 2 consists of genuine questions that you have. Each group member consults the group about a part of the text that they thought was unclear. Together, you try to find answers to the questions that are raised. After everything has been cleared up, your group is ready to proceed to the next round.
- 3 Round 3 consists of questions for discussion. There are two categories to choose from. The person with the most correct answers to the quiz questions gets to be the first to turn over a card and respond to the question. The other members of the group may then add to the discussion by responding and sharing their ideas. Take turns until all cards are flipped.
- 4 Round 4 is when you get to review the text. How many stars would you give the text and why? Discuss this together until you have reached a shared verdict. Use the text box to explain your choice.

This book club was developed by the editors of LitLab, a digital laboratory for high school literature research. For more teaching materials, visit www.litlab.nl. A teachers' manual and a didactic justification of this teaching method are available at www.litlab.nl/docenten.



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Introduction

'I can't help but replay Gemma's words from last night: "A crush stays a crush unless you actively do something about it."

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Easier said than done.' (p. 13)

Nate Plus One by Kevin van Whye follows the journey of Nate, a high school senior who has a secret crush on his best friend, Jai. When Nate's mother unexpectedly has to cancel her trip to South Africa for a cousin's wedding, Jai steps in as Nate's plus one. Throughout the trip, the two boys spend all their time together, experiencing both awkward and romantic moments. Despite (*ondanks*) his desire to express his feelings, Nate finds himself unable to do so. What is holding him back? And what does it truly mean to accept yourself and stay true to who you are? These questions lie at the heart of Nate's journey in the story. In this book club you are invited to discuss these questions, and to find answers to your own questions about the book.

Round 1: Understanding the plot

Take turns turning over a card and answering the question. After the person whose turn it is has answered, the rest may add to that answer or share their own views.

Round 2: Initial questions

Take turns selecting one of the excerpts (fragmenten/stukjes) from the book listed below. Formulate a question you would like to ask one of the characters, and work together to find an answer to that question.

1. Nate explains his stage fright: 'Jai laughs ... on another stage.' (p. 4-5)
2. One of Nate and Jai's awkward moments: 'I'm joking ... over and over.' (p. 31-32)
3. Nate wants to learn more about his dad: 'I'm in my room ... with a heart.' (p. 91-92)
4. A homophobic uncle: 'Uncle Richard ... happiness comes first.' (p. 206)
5. The song lyrics: 'Run to you ... run to you' (p. 246-247)

Round 3: Discussion

Take turns turning over a card from a pile of your choice and answer the discussion question. The other members of the group may then add to the discussion by responding and sharing their ideas.

Round 4: Opinion

Review *Nate Plus One* by rating the novel on a scale of one to five stars, and then provide an explanation for your choice. Discuss what aspects you enjoyed and what aspects you didn't, and provide reasons for your opinions. Reflect on whether the discussion influenced your individual perspective, and if so, how. Incorporate examples and arguments from your responses to the discussion questions to support your review.



Question 1

Nate, Gemma, and Jai are best friends. Who was the last person to join this circle of friends?

Question 2

After high school Nate would love to go to the Thornton School of Music, but he is afraid to apply. Why?

Question 3

In South Africa Nate decides to stay at his grandmother's house instead of at a luxurious hotel. Why?

Question 4

Nate says: 'It's like I'm stuck between my past and my future'. Who is his past and who is his future?

Question 5

When Nate and Jai first met, one of them felt an instant attraction towards the other. Who felt the attraction first?

Answers

1. Jai
2. He has stage fright. / He's afraid of performing in front of an audience.
3. Because his dad lived there.
4. Tommy is his past, Jai is his future.
5. Jai



Question

3

Question

2

Question

1

Answers

Question

5

Question

4



Personal connections? 1

It takes a long time before Jai and Nate have the courage (*moed*) to express their feelings to each other. Why does it take them so long? How did you feel about this?

Personal connections? 2

According to Nate 'Opposites attract'. What does this expression mean, and how does this apply to Nate and Jai? Do you believe that opposites really attract?

Personal connections? 3

Music plays a central role in this book. How does music help Nate express his feelings? What role does music play in your own life?

Personal connections? 4

When Nate tells his grandmother about what happened between him and Tommy, he wants her advice. She suggests that he should talk to Tommy and find closure (*afronding/afsluiting*). What piece of advice would you give Nate?

Personal connections? 5

After Jai sees Nate and Tommy kissing, he cuts off all contact and leaves South Africa. How would you have reacted if you were Jai?

Personal connections? 6

Do you think it's necessary for a boy like Nate to 'come out' (*uit de kast komen*)? Do we expect the same kind of honesty from heterosexual people about their inner feelings? Discuss the different expectations about homosexual and heterosexual people that exist in our society.

Personal connections? 7

Nate says: 'It hasn't been the stuff you see in movies or read about in books, but then again – whose life is like that anyway.' In what way do you find the events in this book realistic?

Personal connections? 8

What is the most important thing you learned from this novel about the experience of having romantic feelings in a world that doesn't always accept those feelings?



Personal connections?

3

Personal connections?

2

Personal connections?

1

Personal connections?

6

Personal connections?

5

Personal connections?

4

Personal connections?

8

Personal connections?

7



Food for thought? 1

How do past events that happened in Jai's life affect (*invloed hebben op*) his relationship with Nate?

Food for thought? 2

One of Nate's reasons for going to South Africa is to get to know his father better. Do you think Nate succeeds (*slagen*) in doing so?

Food for thought? 3

Nate's grandmother tells him that she understands his situation of not being accepted for who he is and who he loves. How come she understands this and how is her situation comparable (*vergelijkbaar*) to Nate's?

Food for thought? 4

Nate is openly gay and has had his coming out some time ago. How do you think the theme of being gay and coming out is handled in the book?

Food for thought? 5

What differences did you notice in how the characters feel about Nate being gay? How do you think the characters' backgrounds influence their views?

Food for thought? 6

Could this book have a message for young people – and if so, what might it be?

Food for thought? 7

Have you read other novels or seen movies about relationships between gay or lesbian people? If yes, do you feel that those novels or movies helped you understand Nate's feelings, and how? If no, what is the main difference between a novel like *Nate Plus One* and love stories about heterosexual relationships?

Food for thought? 8

Nowadays, there is a lot of discussion between literary critics and movie critics about gender and sexual diversity in movies, tv-series and literature. Do you think it is important to promote this diversity? Explain your answer and use examples from your reading experience of *Nate Plus One* to make your case.



Food for thought?

3

Food for thought?

2

Food for thought?

1

Food for thought?

6

Food for thought?

5

Food for thought?

4

Food for thought?

8

Food for thought?

7