

# After the Kiss Study Guide

## After the Kiss by Terra Elan McVoy

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.



# Contents

<a href="#">After the Kiss Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 1-6.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 7-12.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 13-20.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 21-26.....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 27-31.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">21</a>
<a href="#">Style.....</a>	<a href="#">23</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">25</a>
<a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>	<a href="#">26</a>



# Plot Summary

After the Kiss is a novel by Terra Elan McVoy. Written in verse, this novel tells two sides of one story. Camille is new in town and looking to find something or someone to help her forget the wonderful boyfriend she left behind in Chicago. Becca already has the perfect boyfriend, but having to take a job to pay for damage done to her car in an accident that was her fault puts a strain on the relationship. While Becca is working hard, her boyfriend goes to a party where he hits it off with Camille. Unaware that Alec has a girlfriend, Camille spends a week talking to him through email and text messages. This culminates with a kiss at a party that weekend. However, Alec disappears as quickly as he came into Camille's life, leaving her feeling lost. Becca, on the other hand, is devastated to learn of Alec's betrayal. After the Kiss is a novel that takes a look at both sides of the coin when a boy allows reality to cloud his judgment and he makes a mistake.

Camille has just moved to Atlanta, the third such move in the same number of years. Camille finds it more and more difficult to make these moves. This time she has left behind a boyfriend whom she discovers is not as easily replaced as her friends have sometimes proven to be. However, Camille is determined to adjust by throwing herself into new friendships.

Becca is a happy, well-adjusted young woman whose only unhappiness is the fact that her boyfriend goes to another school and they can only see one another for any length of time on Wednesdays and the weekend. This becomes a bigger issue when Becca is in a fender bender that was her fault, resulting in the need to get a job to pay her mother back for the damage done to the car. This results in less free time to spend with Alec.

Camille begins going to the lake, a house owned by a young college man who prefers the company of teenagers, causing him to open his house for parties each Saturday night. Here Camille meets Alec. Unaware that Alec has a girlfriend, Camille enters into a flirtation with him over the Internet. The following week when Alec shows up at the lake, he surprises Camille by giving her a kiss.

Unaware that the kiss was caught by cellphone camera, Alec is surprised when Becca confronts him about it. Becca ends their relationship on the advice of a co-worker and immediately regrets it. Becca's grief is compounded when Camille shows up at the coffee shop where she works. Becca's friend suggests that Becca befriend Camille so that she can win her trust and then destroy her with a dirty trick sometime down the road. For this reason, Becca is more than considerate each time Camille comes into the coffee shop.

Camille is devastated that Alec has cut off all contact with her. This devastation grows even more when Camille realizes the money she has been saving up for years so that she might go backpacking in Europe after graduation is nowhere near enough.

Depressed, Camille calls her best friend in San Francisco. This girl comes for a quick visit and makes Camille see that her depression is rooted more in her grief over the



ending of her relationship with the unnamed boy from Chicago than in Alec or even her desire to go to Europe after graduation.

Camille admits to herself that she misses the Chicago boy more than she realized and she decides to use her savings to go visit him. Becca, on the other hand, realizes she is better off without Alec and commits herself to going to a small, academically focused school in North Carolina.



# Chapters 1-6

## Chapters 1-6 Summary

Chapter 1. Camille. Camille, whose father has a job that requires him to relocate every few months to a year, has just moved to Atlanta, Georgia from Chicago. Camille likes the house and finds her new school, teachers, and friends to be somewhat interchangeable with her previous schools and friends.

Chapter 2. Becca. Becca has just started school again after the winter break and finds it to be very similar to her classes the previous semester. Becca once had a lot of friends, but now finds time for no one but Freya, the friend who introduced Becca to her boyfriend, Alec, at the lake house where all the teens go to party on the weekends. Becca and Alec go to different schools, so they only really see each other on Wednesdays, when he does not have baseball practice, and the weekends. Becca and Alec continue to go to the Lake House each weekend where they manage to escape his friends for time alone.

Chapter 3. Camille. Camille has found a comfortable group of friends, but she finds it amusing that they do not appear to be interested in committing to one another, but have sexual encounters with whomever they want. Camille enjoys exploring the cities where she lives, but she finds Atlanta lacking in many of the aspects she enjoyed in the previous cities where she lived. Camille receives an artistic postcard in the mail that has no signature and she pretends not to know who it is from. It makes Camille remember a trip to the museum in Chicago after their arrival and meeting a good-looking boy who worked at the coat check station. The same day, Camille receives a care package from her friend Luli in San Francisco, where she lived three moves ago.

Chapter 4. Becca. All Becca seems capable of thinking about is Alec. When they are not together, she thinks about him constantly. Alec is the catcher on his high school's baseball team. Becca goes to all his games. At night they talk before going to sleep. They text before and after school. At school, Becca works on a magazine to showcase student writing, hoping to put out a better magazine this year than last. One afternoon after school, Becca is going shopping with Freya when she tries to change lanes and ends up hitting another car.

Chapter 5. Camille. Camille gets a job volunteering at an animal shelter. Camille also goes shopping with her new best friend, Ellen, but finds her taste in vintage clothing unappealing. Camille misses San Francisco and Luli in particular. For this reason, Camille and Luli spend one night on the phone having a virtual sleepover. Later, Camille counts money she has been saving since her father began moving them all over the country.

Chapter 6. Becca. Becca's mother tells her she must get a job to pay for the repairs to her car. This means she will not have as much time to spend with Alec. Becca gets a job



at a coffee shop owned by her neighbor, Emmett. Her first day on the job does not go well and Becca worries that she will not fit in with her co-workers. Alec is not overly supportive.

## Chapters 1-6 Analysis

This novel is written in two types of verse. Camille writes in a second person type of poetry that lacks capitalization, similar to the poetry style of e.e. cummings. Camille's poetry is full of descriptions and emotion. Becca's narration is more of a traditional type of rhyming verse that is also full of emotion.

Camille is a few months from her high school graduation, an only child whose family moves frequently because of her father's job. Camille puts on a brave face, but all the moving is beginning to have a toll on her. Camille left behind a boyfriend in this latest move and she is trying to pretend it does not matter. However, the reader can see by her behavior that it is a feat easier said than done. This leaves Camille in a situation where she is going out of her way to try to fit in and to find a boyfriend.

Becca is a typical teenager. She lives alone with her mother. Becca's father left the family some years before and she is still angry with him enough so that she does not ask him for help to pay for damage done to her car in an accident. Becca also has a brother who has been something of a rival in their childhood, but who has become more of a friend now that he is in college. Becca is an over achiever at school, working hard on a magazine designed to showcase students' work. The rest of the time, Becca obsesses over her boyfriend, Alec. However, when she has to get a job, Becca feels a lack of support from Alec and grieves their lack of time to spend together.

Going by the title, the reader can see where this novel is headed. Camille is searching for a boy to help her forget the one left behind while Becca has the perfect boyfriend. However, Becca's perfect boyfriend is immature and less than supportive of her emotional needs. The reader can see trouble brewing in Becca's relationship that will more than likely lead to a kiss between Becca's boyfriend and Camille. The reader can only wonder what will happen then, after the kiss.



# Chapters 7-12

## Chapters 7-12 Summary

Chapter 7. Camille. Camille does not understand the pressure her friends and classmates feel in their attempts to get into the best schools. Camille has no interest in college. Later, Camille gets another mysterious postcard. This causes Camille to remember the first time she spoke with her Chicago boyfriend. That weekend, Camille goes with her friends to a party at the Lake House. Ellen tells Camille who everyone is, including a very good looking baseball player from another school. That weekend Camille hooks up with a boy.

Chapter 8. Becca. Becca finds her job overwhelming and wishes she had more time to spend with Alec. Becca continues with her school work, but is so overwhelmed with homework that she cannot stop worrying about it even when she manages to sneak off to see Alec. Alec gets mad at her distraction and sends her away. Alec goes out while Becca is at work, leaving her feeling left out. Then on Valentine's Day, Alec forgets about her.

Chapter 9. Camille. Camille is embarrassed to realize the boy she hooked up with at the Lake House is Edgar, a short young man who is part of her circle of friends. She goes out with him once, but finds him inconsiderate and rude. Camille is relieved when Edgar hooks up with another of their friends. Camille misses the coffeehouse she used to frequent in Chicago, so she begins to look for another in the Atlanta area. That weekend there is a bonfire at the Lake House. While attending, Camille meets Alec, the baseball player who likes to create haiku.

Chapter 10. Becca. Becca is unhappy because she and Alec are fighting. Becca is annoyed with Alec's lack of understanding. In a short time, Becca regrets their fight and makes an attempt at apology. However, when she calls him later, Alec is short with her. At the same time, Becca continues to struggle at work. So she decides to stay home rather than attempting to go to the Lake House.

Chapter 11. Camille. After working at the animal shelter, Camille drives around and finds a nice coffeehouse. Camille thinks about the baseball player a lot and even tells Luli about him. However, Luli's reaction is less than what Camille anticipated. Luli suggests that Camille is still in love with the guy from Chicago and the baseball player is just a distraction. That Saturday, Camille prepares to go to the Lake House, but tells herself she is not anticipating seeing the baseball player. Camille does not see the baseball player almost all night. When he finally approaches her on the deck, he suddenly kisses her, taking her by surprise. Although Camille spent the weekend trying to forget the kiss, her friends ask all about it on Monday.

Chapter 12. Becca. Becca has to wake early to go to work on Sunday morning. Becca tries to call Alec, but he pushes ignore on his cellphone. During her break, Becca's



friend Freya shows her a picture of Alec at the Lake House kissing another girl. Becca's co-worker, Nadia, tells her to break up with Alec. Becca confronts Alec and they argue. Becca ends the relationship. It is painful to her, like an amputation.

## Chapters 7-12 Analysis

Camille seems to be searching hard for a young man with whom she can have an intimate relationship. Her friend, Luli, thinks Camille is trying to replace her boyfriend in Chicago, but warns her this is not possible. Instead, Luli thinks Camille should reconnect with the boy in Chicago, by responding to his postcards, but Camille refuses. She prefers to burn bridges with everyone in her former hometowns. For this reason, Camille hooks up with one of her friends only to find that he is unpleasant and inappropriate. Then Camille hooks up with Alec, unaware that he has a girlfriend. This leads to Becca learning about her boyfriend's betrayal and breaking up with him.

Becca's relationship with Alec has clearly been suffering. Alec seems to feel that Becca has been ignoring him and for this reason he has become unhappy with their relationship. Alec does not understand how hard it is for Becca to keep her job and keep up with her school activities. Alec's lack of understanding leads to tension between the two of them. This is perhaps what causes Alec to turn to Camille. Whatever the reason, Alec has cheated on Becca and gotten up Camille's hopes of a romantic future between them. It is a difficult situation involving the emotions of two young girls, both impacted equally by his betrayal.





# Chapters 13-20

## Chapters 13-20 Summary

Chapter 13. Camille. Camille receives another mystery postcard and it causes her to think more about her relationship with the unnamed boy in Chicago. The baseball player stops responding to Camille's emails. Then she goes out with her mother and Ellen and feels a little left out when her mother hits it off better with Ellen than her. That Saturday, Alec is not at the Lake House, leaving Camille feeling even more betrayed. Camille finds solace both in the coffeehouse and her job at the animal shelter, where she witnesses a dog's adoption.

Chapter 14. Becca. Becca continues to grieve her relationship with Alec. Becca receives a text message from Alec, but erases it. Then Freya tells her how the girl Alec kissed searched for him all night at the Lake House, but he never showed. Becca tries to concentrate at school, but finds it hard. Then the girl Alec kissed shows up at the coffeehouse. Becca's co-workers try to console her, but Becca spends the whole time staring at the girl. Freya tells Becca to befriend the girl so she can hurt her later with some cruel trick. Becca's brother tries to give her advice. When Becca sees the girl again, she makes an attempt at friendship despite her emotions.

Chapter 15. Camille. Camille enjoys the coffeehouse and the different people who go there. Camille continues to feel ignored by the baseball player, so she decides to go to one of his baseball games. However, the player comes over and asks her to leave, saying he cannot concentrate with her there. The only pleasantness in Camille's day is the kindness of the counter girl at the coffeehouse.

Chapter 16. Becca. Becca continues to be nice to Alec's girl despite her feelings. At the same time, Becca's mother wants to know if she still plans on going to FSU, the college Alec planned to attend. At school, Becca begins to realize that most of her friends have deserted her since she spent so much time with Alec. She decides to befriend a girl named Jenna whom she hopes can help her get back at Alec's Lake House girl. At the same time, Becca finds herself getting along better with co-workers and even indulging in something of a crush on Denver, the cook.

Chapter 17. Camille. Camille gets a note from the baseball player, but she is not sure what to think about it. She decides to ignore it. Camille feels betrayed by the baseball player when she goes to the Lake House to respond to his invitation and he ignores her. Then some girl grabs her arm and tells her she has already caused him enough trouble with his girlfriend. Camille is shocked to learn he has a girlfriend.

Chapter 18. Becca. Freya calls Becca and tells her that she has told off Alec's girl for her. Becca is unsure how to feel about this news. Later, Becca makes an effort to reconnect with some of her old friends. Freya is pushing Becca to get revenge on the Lake House girl, but she does not come to the coffeehouse. Instead, Becca finds herself



invited to a party at Nadia's house. Becca thinks of this as the first adult party she has attended and she greatly enjoys it.

Chapter 19. Camille. Camille is upset about what happened on Saturday at the Lake House, so she skips school on Monday. Camille cannot stop thinking about the baseball player's faceless girlfriend, about how much pain she must have caused. The whole situation causes Camille to think again about the boy she left behind in Chicago, of the day they said their goodbyes. Camille tries to write a note to the guy in Chicago, but fear that she waited too long makes her stop. At school, Camille tries to avoid her friends, convinced they knew the baseball player had a girlfriend and purposely did not tell her. However, Ellen refuses to be ignored. Later, Camille counts her money again, beginning to worry that her parents will not like her plans to go to Europe.

Chapter 20. Becca. Becca finally manages to befriend Jenna when the teacher pairs them together to prepare a duet in guitar class. Becca then learns that she has been accepted to St. Andrews University in North Carolina, but she is afraid to tell her mother because it is a small and very expensive school. The submissions for the literary magazine at school have finally been collected and Becca spends an afternoon with the rest of the staff reading through them. At work, Becca continues to struggle. Saturday night, Becca has a sleepover with Freya. On Sunday, Becca sees Nadia's boyfriend kissing another woman.

## Chapters 13-20 Analysis

Becca is consumed with grief for her relationship with Alec. The reader begins to see what a large part of her life Becca's relationship with Alec truly was. Becca is lost without him not so much because she loved him so deeply, but because he took up so much of her time and thoughts. Becca even pushed some of her friends away because she was so busy either being with Alec or preparing to be with him. Therefore, their breakup has left her like a boat without a sail. Becca has no purpose, no friends, and no motives.

Becca slowly begins to put her life back together. School has always been important to Becca and she has always been a good student. At first her grades begin to suffer, but Becca soon pulls it together and manages to keep herself on track. At work, Becca continues to struggle with some of the work, but she makes friends with several of her co-workers. In fact, Becca develops a crush on a man with whom she works.

As Becca begins putting her life back together, she becomes aware of Camille's presence in her life. Camille and Becca never exchange names, never become friends. However, thanks to the picture Freya showed her, Becca knows that Camille is the girl who kissed Alec at the Lake House. For this reason, Becca is devastated to see Camille in her coffeehouse. Becca never lets on to Camille that she knows who she is. In fact, Becca tries to befriend Camille with the idea of revenge. This slowly begins to fade, however, and Becca is simply a nice counter girl whom Camille thinks briefly about from time to time.



Camille, at the same time, is hurt when Alec brushes her off and never answers any of her emails. This hurt is compounded when she learns from Freya that Alec had a girlfriend. Camille is not the kind of girl who would want to hurt someone else; therefore, she is devastated by this news. If Camille had known the truth, she never would have become involved with Alec. Therefore, Camille is both hurt by Alec's actions and by the guilt of what she has done.

Camille is lonely. She moves often, too often to make any really good friends. In fact, the only really good friend Camille has is a girl in San Francisco, where she lived three moves ago. Although Camille works hard to make friends and keep them, she feels as though all her friends are just poor imitations of ones she has had before. Not only this, but Camille feels that she must burn bridges each time she moves to keep from getting hurt again. This is why Camille has not kept in contact with her boyfriend in Chicago. However, as the novel continues to develop, it is clear to the reader that Camille really loves and misses this boy. This leaves the reader wondering if perhaps Luli was right and Camille's relationship with Alec was just an attempt to get over her former boyfriend. Ironically, it seems that Camille was exactly that for Alec, an immature young man who turned to another when his girlfriend became too busy to spend time with him.



# Chapters 21-26

## Chapters 21-26 Summary

Chapter 21. Camille. Camille has always dreamed of going to Europe after graduation, which is why she has been saving her allowance, birthday money, and other monies for years. However, a trip to the bookstore proves to Camille that her small savings will not be enough to support her trip. Camille decides she must get a job, but her parents refuse the idea. This makes Camille just that much more depressed. Camille calls Luli in a panic.

Chapter 22. Becca. Becca struggles with the idea of telling Nadia what she has seen. Finally she decides she must tell her. However, when she does, Nadia informs Becca that her boyfriend is married and the woman Becca saw him kiss was his wife. This makes Becca realize that Nadia is a hypocrite. Becca suddenly realizes what a fool she has been.

Chapter 23. Camille. Camille apologizes to her parents. Later, Camille finds out that Luli has changed her spring break plans and will be coming for a visit. Camille spends the rest of the week cleaning up in preparation for Luli's visit. Ellen and Camille make up. Camille and her father go to pick Luli up at the airport. Luli goes to school with Camille and fits in perfectly with Camille's new friends.

Chapter 24. Becca. Becca's brother comes home for a few days over spring break. They talk for a while and Ian supports Becca's decision to go to college in North Carolina and encourages her to tell their mother. Becca soon realizes she is looking at the world with different perceptions. She has accepted the changes in her life, including Nadia, and is looking forward to the future. Then she gets a text from Alec.

Chapter 25. Camille. Camille takes Luli to the coffeehouse and, within earshot of Becca, they discuss the baseball player. Luli again tells Camille she does not really care about the baseball player, that she is just hurting from missing the Chicago guy. Camille then takes Luli to the animal shelter and introduces her to her favorite dog, Shasta. Before Luli leaves at the end of the week she suggests Camille contact the boy in Chicago and that maybe she is destined to do something else with the money she has saved. Camille and Ellen then have a sleepover and Ellen tells Camille about a guy in Virginia she loves.

Chapter 26. Becca. Becca tells her mother about the college in North Carolina and, not only is her mother supportive, but she agrees they should make a trip there over spring break. Becca then introduces her new friend, Jenna, to her old friends. They all get along well. Becca's life is coming together. Then one day Alec walks into the coffeehouse. They talk and Alec asks Becca to come back to him. Becca refuses.



## Chapters 21-26 Analysis

Camille's world falls apart after she realizes what she has done by hoping for a relationship with Alec. Camille learns that the money she was hoping would take her on a trip to Europe after graduation is not enough. This, added to her guilt and hurt about the whole situation with Alec, leaves Camille in a depression. Luli, Camille's best friend from San Francisco, comes to visit her. It helps Camille to have someone who knows her so well to hear and understand all her fears and hurts. It also helps when Luli tells Camille that maybe she was not meant to go to Europe, just like she was not meant to be with the baseball player. She was meant to be with the guy from Chicago.

Where Becca's life begins moving in a good direction, Camille finds herself sidetracked, but slowly moving back on track. Camille finally realizes that she does still love the boy in Chicago and that she has to overcome her fears that she has waited too long. Camille knows she needs to turn to the Chicago boy and finish it, or complete it, once and for all.

At the same time, Becca has chosen her own path in life. Becca had planned her whole future around Alec, but now she is making her own choices and relying on herself for her future. At the same time, Becca is growing more confident, more assured of herself. Therefore it is difficult when Alec comes back into her life and asks for her to return to him. Becca makes the best decision for herself. Perhaps, in Becca's case, Alec's betrayal was a good thing, the thing she needed to realize that there is more to life than a boy.



# Chapters 27-31

## Chapters 27-31 Summary

Chapter 27. Camille. Camille goes to the coffeehouse and she sees Alec speaking with Becca. Camille realizes that the counter girl was Alec's girlfriend and wonders if she knew who Camille was. Camille assumes not since she was always nice to her. When Alec passes Camille, he tells her he wishes he had never met her.

Chapter 28. Becca. Becca is sad about her decision not to go back with Alec. It hurts when Alec sends Becca a text that says simply, please. Becca does not know what to do, but in the end she ignores it. Becca is fired from her job. However, she decides to get another job to help pay for college.

Chapter 29. Camille. Camille is at the animal shelter when she meets a man who is not supposed to get another dog, but seems to have fallen in love with Shasta. Later, at home, Camille finds out that she has been accepted to Berkeley, the only college she might consider attending. Camille decides to have a party and she invites all her new friends. Later she writes an email to Alec, more to help herself with closure than to ask him for anything. Camille then decides to use some of her saved money to go to Chicago to see her boyfriend.

Chapter 30. Becca. Becca speaks to Alec again and again tells him it is over. Becca feels as though she is a new woman and she looks forward to the future.

Chapter 31. Camille. Camille writes to her boyfriend in Chicago, warning him that she is coming.

## Chapters 27-31 Analysis

Camille finally realizes that the counter girl at the coffeehouse, Becca, is Alec's girlfriend. Camille is shocked and realizes that Becca must have not known who she was. Camille feels bad and wishes she could make it right with Becca, but does not know how. Becca and Camille never see one another again. However, Camille does write to Alec to tell him how he made her feel and to give herself some closure. This whole episode has been difficult for both girls, but Camille does not really realize how bad until she sees Alec with Becca.

Becca is faced with Alec asking her to come back to him, but she is strong and decides her life is better without him in it. This is an important realization for Becca because so much of her life revolved around Alec for so long. Becca has turned her whole life around, made new friends and learned a few truths about what it means to be an adult. This has been a good growing time for Becca and now she has grown beyond Alec.



Camille and Becca never really see one another beyond the service/customer relationship. This is unusual in such a book. The author, however, tells their story parallel to each another. It is not really important for these two girls to interact with one another. Each girl is struggling with her own coming of age moments and each must figure out life in their own way, on their own. The only thing these girls have in common is Alec. Therefore, it is perfectly reasonable that the author never really brought them together.

In the end, the reader must have some sympathy for Alec. Alec is a typical high school boy. He has big dreams and plans that depend not only on his own hard work, but the support of those around him. Therefore, when Becca becomes bogged down in her own problems, he begins to drift away from her. Alec meets another girl who is just as unique, just as strong and independent, just as intelligent. They hit it off and Alec kisses her, but he soon realizes what a mistake he has made turning his back on the girl that he really loves. Alec is filled with regret and he tries to make it right, but by making this mistake, he has highlighted the mistakes the two girls in his life have made by making him such a priority in their lives. There are different reasons why each girl has made a mistake by being with Alec, but the results are similar and their understanding of that mistake is the point of the entire plot of the novel.



# Characters

## Camille

Camille is a seventeen year old girl. Camille's father has a job that requires him to move every few months to a year, so Camille has spent most of her childhood moving from town to town, never staying long enough for relationships to really build and last. For this reason, Camille has come to the conclusion that people are mostly interchangeable and that she does not need to keep in contact with people she has left behind because there will be someone to replace them in her new town. The only exception to this rule is Camille's friend, Luli.

Camille had a boyfriend in Chicago with whom she was very close. When she left, Camille left things badly. Camille refuses to contact this boy, whom she refuses to name throughout the novel. Instead, Camille seeks out a boy to replace this boy, someone with whom she feels she could have a real connection, with whom she can have a good relationship. In this pursuit, Camille has a flirtation with a baseball player who is something of a poet. Camille is unaware that this boy already has a girlfriend. Therefore, Camille does not understand why this boy suddenly stops talking to her and twice sends her on her way after they share a very passionate kiss.

When Camille learns the truth about her baseball player, she is devastated and filled with guilt. It takes a visit from Luli to convince Camille that her problem is that she is still in love with the boy from Chicago. For this reason, Camille finds herself beginning to make deeper connections with the people in her new home town, Atlanta. Not only this, but Camille makes the decision to go to Chicago to visit her previous boyfriend.

## Becca

Becca is a seventeen year old girl, who is a good student and has a bright future in front of her. However, Becca has designed her future completely around a boy, Alec. Becca's every thought, every action, deals with when she will next see and be with Alec. However, when Becca is in a car accident and must get a job to pay for the damage to her car, she finds herself spending less and less time with Alec, causing him to act out with impatience.

Becca's life seems to fall apart when she learns that Alec has kissed another girl. Becca breaks up with Alec on the advice of a co-worker and soon finds herself struggling with a future that no longer seems quite so clear. In time, Becca comes to realize that being with Alec is the best thing that could have happened to her.





## Alec

Alec is a high school student. Alec is a poet and hopes to go to college with the help of a scholarship for baseball. Alec and Becca met at the Lake House and have been dating since. Alec goes to a different school than Becca; therefore, their time together is limited during the school year, especially during baseball season.

Alec dislikes Becca's lack of attention toward him once she gets her job. Alec also has a lack of understanding about Becca's struggles with work and her inability to be cheerful when she is exhausted. For these reasons, Alec and Becca's relationship becomes strained. Soon after, Alec meets Camille. They hit it off and Alec seems to really like Camille. He kisses her suddenly one night at the Lake House, surprising even her. The reader wonders if Alec did this out of anger for something Becca did or did not do. The reader never really finds out why. However, this one kiss changes everything for Becca, Camille, and Alec. In the end, Alec loses Becca and he blames it on Camille.

## Freya

Freya is a friend of Becca's. Freya is a gossip who often annoys people. For this reason, Becca is one of Freya's only friends. Freya tells Becca about Alec's kiss with Camille and other information about Camille and Alec's brief relationship. Freya also pushes Becca to get revenge on Camille, causing Becca to be friendly with Camille despite knowing who she is.

## Ellen

Ellen is Camille's friend in Atlanta. Camille compares Ellen to Luli, her best friend in San Francisco. Ellen befriends Camille on her first day at her new school and introduces her to her large group of friends. Later, Ellen takes Camille to the Lake House where she meets Alec. Ellen seems to be something of a hypocrite who Camille thinks might have set her up with Alec, but later she realizes that Ellen did not do it on purpose and feels that she and Ellen have a great deal in common.

## Luli

Luli is Camille's friend from San Francisco. Luli is the only person from one of her previous home towns with whom Camille has kept in contact. Normally Camille would burn the bridges between herself and her previous friends since they could not possibly see one another again. Luli, however, would not allow Camille to cut her out and they continue to be just as close despite the distance between them. It is Luli who convinces Camille that Alec was not right for her and she should contact her boyfriend in Chicago. Luli plays the part of conscience for Camille in this novel.



## **Ian**

Ian is Becca's older brother. Ian helps Becca see that Alec was not everything that Becca thought he was. Ian also helps Becca see that high school is not as important as it seems, but just a stepping stone to the real world. Ian is a good brother who helps Becca see the growth that has taken place in her life in the course of the novel.

## **Becca's Mom**

Becca's father left the family when she was young; therefore it is just she and her mother. Becca's mother is a strong woman who is a fair, but tough disciplinarian. Becca respects her mother and is therefore willing to follow her rules. The relationship between Becca and her mother becomes closer after Becca's break from Alec.

## **Camille's Mom**

Camille's mother is a woman who adapts easily to change. Camille sees how easily her mother embraces the new towns to which they must move so often and she takes her cues from her. This causes Camille to cut herself off from people she knew and cared about in previous places, something that leads to Camille's relationship with Alec and the heartache she experiences in this novel.

## **The Chicago Boy**

Throughout the novel Camille talks about the boy who should remain nameless in Chicago. This boy turns out to be Camille's boyfriend, a young man she cares for deeply but has decided to leave in the past to avoid future pain. However, Camille cannot forget this boy and in trying to replace him with a new boy, she ends up destroying Alec and Becca's relationship. In the end, Camille contacts this boy and tells him she is coming to see him over spring break, making it clear to the reader that she has chosen not to burn that particular bridge.



## Objects/Places

### Postcards from Chicago

Camille receives three postcards from Chicago each of which has a unique piece of artwork on it. Each is unsigned, but Camille knows they are from her boyfriend who works at a museum in Chicago.

### School Literary Magazine

Becca's school publishes a literary magazine once a year that features writings from students. Becca is the editor and takes the job very seriously, especially since the previous year's magazine was badly done.

### Cellphones

Becca and Alec often speak to one another by text message on their cellphones. Later, after their breakup, Becca receives several messages from Alec on her phone.

### Becca's Car

Becca damages her car in a fender bender that leads to her having to get a job.

### Second Hand Clothing Store

Ellen, Camille's Atlanta friend, takes her to a second hand clothing store. Camille is less than impressed.

### Coffeehouse

Becca works in a coffeehouse owned by her neighbor, Emmett. Camille finds this same coffeehouse and becomes a frequent visitor.

### The Lake House

The Lake House is a teen hangout on the weekends. The house is apparently owned by an older man who enjoys the company of young teens. This is where Becca met Alec and where Camille meets Alec.



## **Atlanta**

Atlanta is the city to which Camille and her family move at the beginning of novel.

## **Chicago**

Chicago is the city where Camille and her family lived prior to the start of the novel.

## **San Francisco**

San Francisco is where Camille and her family lived three moves previously. Luli still lives there and is one of the only people Camille still contacts from her past.



# Themes

## Coming of Age

Coming of age is the theme of Becca's part of this story. Becca is a teenager who has built her whole life around her boyfriend in a very short time. She has decided to attend the same college as her boyfriend, plans her days around when she can see him, and even spends her days waiting for his call or text message.

As time passes, and Becca is forced to get a job, she discovers that her inability to continue planning her life around Alec is causing trouble between them. Alec wants Becca's full attention, but he has little sympathy for the stresses in Becca's life. This causes tension that eventually leads to Alec cheating on Becca by kissing another girl. Becca thinks her world has fallen apart when she and Alec break up.

After Alec, Becca finds herself making new friends, experiencing new things, and making plans for the future that she had not intended to make. This leads Becca to discover truths about life and the future that she never would have experienced before. Becca discovers a few difficult things about life, too. All in all, Becca does a lot of growing up in this novel, discovering that she can only rely on herself, both in a good and a bad way.

## Friendship

Friendship is an important theme to both plots in this novel. In Camille's story, friendship is important because of all the friends she has had in the many places where she has lived, and the many friends she has left behind to make new ones. Camille finds it easy to make new friends because she has the attitude that friends are interchangeable. However, as the novel progresses, Camille begins to discover that most of her friends are unique creatures unto themselves and that they are not as interchangeable as she had first assumed. At the same time, Camille begins to appreciate the value of good friends, especially when it comes to Luli, her one friend who has remained in her life despite her many moves.

In Becca's story, friends are important because Becca has lost most of her friends in the course of her relationship with Alec since she had little time for anything other than Alec. When Alec is gone, Becca finds herself with only one friend. Becca's one friend is a gossip, Freya, whom she has always seen as a nuisance. In time, however, Becca soon realizes that Freya has been hurt in her life as well and her gossiping is just a survival mechanism, not unlike some behaviors in which Becca has indulged since her father's abandonment of her family. In the end, Becca begins reacquainting herself with her old friends and discovering new friends.



## Burning Bridges

Camille has moved a lot in her lifetime. Each time she moves, Camille must leave behind friends and make new friends. For this reason, Camille has learned how to burn the bridges that connect her with those she has left behind so that she will not have the emotional distress that comes with trying to make a friendship work over distance.

As this novel progresses, the reader learns that this time is different for Camille. When her family left Chicago, Camille left behind a boyfriend. Camille misses this boy so much that she refuses to say his name, to even think it, to prevent the pain that comes with missing him. For this reason, Camille does not respond to postcards this boy sends her and she tries to find a new boyfriend to take his place. In the end, however, Camille realizes that she cannot always burn the bridges of her past as easily as she thought she could. At the end of the novel, Camille returns to Chicago for spring break and reconnects with her former boyfriend.



# Style

## Point of View

The novel is written in verse. There are two different narrators. Camille writes in the second person, referring to herself as you throughout the novel. Camille's verse is a modern type of poetry that does not include rhymes, but is more like thoughts randomly meandering over the page. Becca writes in the first person. Becca's poetry is more traditional, a rhyming poetry that is random in its style, but reminiscent of both classical and modern writers.

The point of view of the novel is as unique as the two characters who serve as narrators. Camille is a hip, modern girl whose writing is also hip. Camille's point of view is distant, as though she is talking to herself inside her own head, but it also invites the reader inside to see and feel Camille's emotions right alongside her. Becca, on the other hand, is more traditional even though she is also a modern girl whose life is filled with modern devices. Becca uses tradition, but puts a twist on it that also brings the reader in, showing the reader her passion while also describing her emotions.

## Setting

The novel is set in Atlanta. The main characters are modern, big city girls who have found a niche for themselves in the big city. While each girl lives in her own part of the city, they find common ground in the coffeehouse where Becca works and Camille is a frequent visitor. This is the only location that the two girls have in common besides the party location of the Lake House and is where Becca chooses between hostility and friendship with Camille.

The setting of the novel is a backdrop to a larger story. The setting is of little importance aside from the fact that it is the latest in a long string of new homes for Camille. However, the coffeehouse provides an interesting setting that is important to both Camille and Becca's stories. In Becca's world, the coffeehouse is a place of angst, the place where she learned of Alec's betrayal and where she struggles every day to survive in a world that she does not yet understand. Camille, on the other hand, finds the coffeehouse to be a place of refuge until she sees Becca and Alec there together. This makes the coffeehouse an important setting in the novel.

## Language and Meaning

While the language of the novel is simple English, it is language that is used in beautiful and unique ways. The novel is written in verse; therefore the author has taken great pains in picking the perfect words for each girl's story. Camille's words tend to be informal, rhymeless words that ramble as though the reader is overhearing her



thoughts. At the same time, Becca's are rhyming words that have been chosen and used in specific ways.

The language of the novel is appropriate to the main characters and the intended audience of the book. It is simple language that does not include any slang, but it is a language that teenagers would use and will understand as readers. At the same time, the language is used to create unique poems and verse that fill the novel not only with a lovely plot, but also with well written poems that are both entertaining and artistically created. The language works in this novel because of its perfection in verse and because of its appropriateness to the overall plot of the novel.

## Structure

The novel is divided into multiple sections. Each section begins with the name of the character who is currently narrating. Then each section is further divided by the name of each poem as it appears in the novel. In Camille's sections, each poem is characterized by its lack of capitalization and its use of second person pronouns. Becca's sections are characterized by her more traditional poems.

The novel contains two plots and several subplots. The first main plot follows Camille as she struggles to survive in her new hometown, Atlanta. As Camille struggles with this new place, she burns bridges between herself and those she left behind in Chicago, including a boyfriend. The second main plot follows Becca as she devotes her life to a boyfriend who ends up betraying her. One subplot follows Becca as she struggles to hold down her first job. Another subplot follows Camille as she struggles to decide what to do with her future. All the plots come to a satisfying conclusion at the end of the novel.





## Quotes

"pulling in the driveway all you can think is that this is the kind of house they were trying to duplicate back in charlotte: the real southern living deal—a big beautiful old (but newly renovated) house in an area they are calling the Virginia highlands, with no hills to be seen and two states separated from viginia." Camille, pg. 4

"Hickeys—are little vampire footprints telling me he was here and here." Becca, pg. 11

"you think yes in some weird way that makes a little sense—it isn't like the idea is foreign—but at the end of the day you still wish you had put your hands on her shoulders and simply told her that it's all fine and good if nobody is really with anybody and that's all okay with everybody, but the real point should be to be nobody—not to be anybody. that's the whole point." Camille, pg. 13

"The chaos of the accident still shakes my bones, and blurs my vision. My pulse is a small child running from a too-dark room. My mouth says I am okay to everyone around the frayed iron bands of fear still constricting my throat." Becca, pg. 28

"don't linger. don't hover. you are not going to stay." Camille, pg. 45

"I can tell, for example, after two rings and a click that for the first time he has seen my number, hit IGNORE." Becca, pg. 60

"but lucky your mom is there by your side, her wide-eyed smile next to you, turning its beams on you, refusing to let you shrink. refusing to leave you alone." Camille, pg. 91

"But I guess I don't need to—she's shown me she's always been my friend—I just need to keeping coming back, keep honoring my end of the deal." Becca, pg. 96

"I might be an amateur—I may not know everything, but I know sense when I see it, and this sure ain't it." Becca, pg. 117

"We shine when he comes home." Becca, pg. 126

"Beautifully it lived, and hideously faded. I will not write any more words of hearts betrayed. And you, being hurt, may have your tears for me, but I will not offer you fidelity. You'd be, I think now, a little unworthy."  
Becca, pg. 150

"i hope that you'll see me. i hope you'll say yes." Camille, pg. 153



## Topics for Discussion

Who is Camille? Why has she moved to Atlanta? Where has she lived previously? How does Camille feel about her family's frequent moves? Why do they move so often? How does Camille's mother deal with these moves? How does Camille feel about the way her mother handles them? How does Camille deal with these moves? What does this suggest about Camille's personality?

Who is Becca? Why is she so obsessed with her boyfriend? Is this normal behavior? Why is Becca excited when Wednesdays come around? What are Becca and her boyfriend supposed to be doing on Wednesdays? Where did they meet? Who introduced them? How does having this particular boyfriend impact Becca's future? What college does she plan to go to? For what reason?

Why does Camille begin going to the Lake House? What is the Lake House? What do teens do there? For what reason? Why do they have to pay? How does Camille feel about these parties? Who does Camille meet at these parties? Why does she make out with one of her friends at one of these parties? Why is Camille interested in meeting a new boy? What does Camille hope to gain from having a boyfriend?

Why does Becca have to get a job? How does this job impact Becca's life? How does this job impact Becca's relationship with Alec? How does Alec feel about the job? Why do Alec and Becca begin fighting? Why does Becca go home early the night Alec meets Camille? What might have happened differently if Becca had not gone home early that night?

How does Becca learn that Alec has kissed another girl? How does she react? Why does Becca decide to break up with Alec? Would she have broken up with him without the advice to the contrary? What might have happened differently if Becca had not broken up with Alec? Why does Becca later refuse to get back with Alec? How does this show the growth Becca's character has experienced?

Why does Becca befriend Camille? What does Camille think of Becca? What did Becca intend to do to Camille? Why is it hard for her to be nice to Camille at first? Why does Becca later begin to like Camille? What does this say about Becca's understanding of what happened between Camille and Alec? How does Camille respond when she realizes that Becca is Alec's faceless girlfriend? Why?

Why does Camille feel she cannot keep in contact with friends she has left in other cities? Why does she attempt to burn the bridge between her and the boy in Chicago? How does this lead to Camille meeting Alec? Would Camille and Alec become something more if he had not had a girlfriend already? Would Camille have allowed this relationship to take the place of her one with the boy in Chicago? Why does Camille go back to Chicago over spring break?