

# **Nothing Can Keep Us Together: A Gossip Girl Novel Study Guide**

**Nothing Can Keep Us Together: A Gossip Girl Novel  
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## Plot Summary

Nothing Can Keep Us Together is a novel in the popular Gossip Girl series, telling the story of the lives of several privileged New Yorkers. In this installment, the main characters, including Serena, Blair, Nate, Chuck, Dan, and Vanessa, are approaching graduation and the end of their time together in New York. At the same time, Dan's sister Jenny must figure out what to do with herself during the next school year, because she can no longer stay at her current school.

The novel begins with the female characters selecting outfits for graduation, which must be white. This chapter also presents the conflict between Serena and Blair: Serena has "stolen" Blair's boyfriend, Nate. Blair, meanwhile, is living in Brooklyn with her friend Vanessa. When Vanessa's sexual escapades on their roof get to be too much for Blair, Blair moves back into Manhattan to stay at the Yale Club, of which her father is a member. There, she meets Lord Marcus, a member of the English aristocracy and a Yale alum, whom she begins to date, taking her mind off of Nate. Nevertheless, she and Serena are still in conflict, going up against each other for a role in a film, which Serena eventually gets. Their rivalry comes to a head at graduation, when they show up wearing the same outfit. All the same, the book concludes on an ambiguous note, in which they are possibly going to partake in a threesome with Nate.

Meanwhile, Jenny visits school after school, some of which she does not want to attend and others of which she is not allowed to attend. Finally, she submits an artistic portfolio to a school called Waverly Prep, where she is accepted. Delighted, she makes out with Nate at the end of year party at the Yale Club. At the same time, her brother Dan is seeing his friend Vanessa again, who is cheating on her current boyfriend, Aaron (Serena's brother), with him. His feelings for Vanessa make him renounce his college education, since he wants to defer for a year; however, his father, Rufus, buys him a car and convinces him to think it over during the summer.

Throughout the narrative, Nate is depressed. He smokes a lot of marijuana, and is upset that he is physically unable to have sex with Serena. Because of this, he steals a bottle of Viagra that he finds in his Lacrosse coach's office. When he is caught, though, he is nearly prevented from graduating, and is only allowed to do so by promising to spend the summer repairing the coach's house in the Hamptons. At the end of the novel, his girl problems are further complicated when Serena, his supposed girlfriend, catches him making out with Jenny; he then appears to initiate a three-way with Serena and Blair.



# Hey People! to D Is Mr. Popularity

## Hey People! to D Is Mr. Popularity Summary

Nothing Can Keep Us Together tells the story of a group of privileged high school students on the eve of their graduation from New York prep schools. The book opens with an email "newsletter" from the anonymous Gossip Girl, who talks about the upcoming festivities. She also starts to gossip about the main characters. In this email, Gossip Girl discusses how everyone will need white dresses for graduation, how Blair and Vanessa have become very close friends, and how Nate is now dating Serena, but still seems down in the dumps.

The story then shifts to Blair shopping for her white dress with a dowdy classmate, Alison, at a trunk show, while other classmates also search for their perfect dresses, including a pair of best friends, Rain and Isabel. Serena arrives with her new boyfriend Nate, whom she's stolen from Blair; Blair is upset but tries not to show it. Reflections from Nate's point of view show that the "love affair" isn't as romantic as it seems. The gossip around the trunk show is that Serena has been nominated to be the senior speaker at graduation. She tries to talk to Blair, who is curt and dismissive of her.

Outside the trunk show, Nate is upset about losing Blair, and smoking a joint. Serena comes out to join him, having shoplifted a hat, but the doorman is so in awe of her beauty and charm he lets her go.

The next "chapter" is a brief email from Aaron, Serena's brother, to Vanessa, his girlfriend, telling her how much he loves her.

Meanwhile, at the boys' school, Dan has been nominated to be senior speaker by Chuck, and is also delighted to find that his former friend Vanessa has invited him over to her apartment. He looks forward to making amends.

## Hey People! to D Is Mr. Popularity Analysis

In this section, the main characters and their problems are introduced to the reader. The first email from Gossip Girl will be cryptic to those new to the series, because she identifies them just by the first letter of their names (e.g. v, d, b, s). It becomes clearer whom she's referencing as the novel continues, since each chapter uses these initials to label the major action involved. In the meantime, it introduces the main plot point for conflict, that Serena and Blair have stopped being friends because Serena hooked up with, and is now dating, Blair's ex. Nate's conflict, his sadness about the breakup, is also shown, as well as Aaron and Vanessa's romance, which may be challenged by Vanessa's invitation to Dan.

The two events, dress-buying and the selection of the senior speaker, foreshadow the more significant event of graduation itself, which looms over the characters and their futures.



# **S Has Rendered Party School Totally Useless to S Demonstrates How to Be Naughty and Nice**

## **S Has Rendered Party School Totally Useless to S Demonstrates How to Be Naughty and Nice Summary**

While the older students are planning their graduations, Dan's little sister Jenny is searching for a new school. She and her father, Rufus, go to visit a notorious party school called Hanover, where Serena once spent some time. However, Serena has apparently ruined the school's party reputation, since she got in so much trouble that the rules have been made all the stricter. This puts Jenny off, and she and her father head over to Croton, another school. Meanwhile, Dan receives an email from Pierre Papademetriou, a professor at Evergreen College, where he is going in the fall, offering him a summer job.

Dan then goes to visit Blair and Vanessa's apartment in Brooklyn, which Blair has taken the trouble to carefully decorate. He and Vanessa give in to old feelings and end up having sex on the roof. At the same time, Blair, trying to shop in Williamsburg, hears the two of them and calls Chuck to pick her up and take her back to Manhattan. Disgusted by her roommate's behavior, Blair decides that she will stay at the Yale Club, the private club for the university where she will go in the fall and where her father went. Back at school, Serena talks to the professor who nominated her for senior speaker, who is lecherous and only tries to hit on her, but she is not interested.

## **S Has Rendered Party School Totally Useless to S Demonstrates How to Be Naughty and Nice Analysis**

The characters' futures come into focus more strongly in this section, as the book introduces their post-high school plans. Dan will be attending college on the West Coast, while Blair, Serena, and Nate will all be going to Yale. Chuck will have to go to a military academy. The lack of parental supervision, and the early maturity of the characters, is underscored by Blair's choice to go to her father's club rather than back to her mother's apartment. At the same time, Jenny, the youngest of the protagonists, will remain in the city or its vicinity for the upcoming year, but the uncertainty about her future sets her and her family on edge.

In this section, Jenny also serves as an identifiable character for the reader, who may be reading about the older characters with envy. Jenny wants nothing more than to be like Serena, as one can see by her visit to Hanover; however, her body type and appearance preclude this, showing how aspirational Serena's lifestyle really can be.



# **N's New Drug of Choice to V Experiments With Double Happiness**

## **N's New Drug of Choice to V Experiments With Double Happiness Summary**

Still distraught about his breakup from Blair, Nate also despairs that he is unable to have sex with Serena due to his emotional problems. Therefore, at the end-of-year party for his Lacrosse team, he remembers that the coach is rumored to take Viagra to help him maintain erections. Nate goes to the coach's office and finds a bottle of the drug in a desk drawer, and swipes it for his own use later. Meanwhile, at the Yale Club, Blair is equally upset. However, she meets a charming young Englishman, Lord Marcus Beaton-Rhodes, who offers to take her for a drink that night. She accepts.

Jenny's search for a new school isn't going any better in this section. Though she visits Croton and is happy to come across a connection there, Chuck's cousin, he takes her out with a group doing drugs, and particularly Ecstasy, in the woods. Jenny doesn't take the drug but secretly saves it for later. Nevertheless, the group is caught by the headmaster, who will never admit Jenny to the school now.

Back in Brooklyn, Vanessa is thinking about her boyfriend Aaron, who has left her a silver ring she dislikes. An aspiring filmmaker, she is also preparing the senior video and reflecting on her friends and acquaintances as she does so. Dan, meanwhile, receives another letter from the professor at Evergreen, describing the book of sex poems he will help to edit this summer.

## **N's New Drug of Choice to V Experiments With Double Happiness Analysis**

This section presents the beginnings or complications in each character's main conflict. Blair meets a new boy, while Nate steals drugs; Jenny still hasn't found a school; Vanessa contemplates her cheating; and Dan thinks about the summer. This creates enough tension in desires and motivations to keep the reader engaged: the promise of romance as well as very possible negative outcomes for most of the characters, who are doing drugs, cheating, and otherwise behaving badly, propel the story forward. By this point, the reader has seen each character several times, and read several sections from his or her point of view, creating a sense of engagement with the community depicted on the whole.



# **D Chooses Real Sex Over Sex Poems to See B Die and Go to Heaven**

## **D Chooses Real Sex Over Sex Poems to See B Die and Go to Heaven Summary**

Enamored with Vanessa, Dan decides to turn down the professor's offer for the summer, as well as his offer of admission at Evergreen, to stay with Vanessa. Blair, meanwhile is capping off her high school career with a nomination to be the school speaker. To show Serena that she's not bothered by her new relationship with Nate, Blair kisses Marcus, the lord, outside of school to show him off. Serena then goes with Nate to Bergdorf's, a department store, to try on graduation dresses, and is particularly pleased with a suit by Oscar de la Renta. Nate, however, has taken a Viagra, and insists on having sex in the changing rooms at the store. Unwittingly, Marcus takes Blair to the Oscar de la Renta store where she also tries on a suit, possibly given to her by the designer himself (though a Gossip Girl email directly afterward states that the designer has body doubles at stores around the world, casting doubt on this).

## **D Chooses Real Sex Over Sex Poems to See B Die and Go to Heaven Analysis**

The wisdom of various decisions gets called into question in this fourth section, as Dan chooses love over education, Nate takes drugs he probably doesn't need, and the former friends Serena and Blair unknowingly pick the same outfit for graduation. As in other sections of the book, the grave problems, such as foregoing an education or the theft of drugs, are mirrored in the glamorous world of the Upper East Side by things such as fashion, where picking the same dress is presented as an equally big issue.





# **Objects Reflected in Mirror. . . to S Gets to Say Her Lines Twice**

## **Objects Reflected in Mirror. . . to S Gets to Say Her Lines Twice Summary**

Discouraged by her prep school search, Jenny hears of a school called Waverly, which supports artistic education, her forte. However, she had gotten rid of her artistic portfolio earlier, and has to scramble to get her application together. In Williamsburg, Vanessa is editing interviews when Dan comes over and they have a liaison on the roof. They are almost caught by Vanessa's official boyfriend, Aaron, but narrowly escape discovery. Back in Manhattan, girls including Serena and Blair are auditioning for a friend's version of *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, Blair's favorite movie. Blair has brought Marcus with her, and he waits as she auditions. When Serena goes for her audition in the next chapter, however, she is more natural and an updated version of the character, which seems to be more what the filmmakers are looking for.

## **Objects Reflected in Mirror. . . to S Gets to Say Her Lines Twice Analysis**

In this section, each character is being forced closer to his or her greatest obstacle. Jenny seems to have found the perfect school, but faces the problem of being accepted on such short notice. Vanessa's fooling around has almost landed her in trouble, as she starts to be less careful about hiding their affair. Though seemingly unrelated to earlier events, the casting of *Breakfast at Tiffany's* further highlights the tension between Blair and Serena, as the differences between the two girls becomes more apparent. Unfortunately, they both seem to want the same things, which come naturally to Serena, but for which Blair must work hard. The casting of the film is the perfect example of these differences in character.



# Boys Will Be Boys . . . to Cheating for Old Times' Sake

## Boys Will Be Boys . . . to Cheating for Old Times' Sake Summary

In this section, about halfway through the book, Blair invites Serena and Nate to have drinks with her and Marcus at the Yale Club, mostly to show off her new relationship. There, Marcus talks with Nate about Lacrosse, since he has just graduated from Yale himself, where he played for the team, and Nate will be taking his place next year. The drinks go well, and everyone seems happy, though there is still tension between the two girls.

The Humphreys, meanwhile, are both preoccupied with other thoughts while taking their final exams; Dan writes love poems, while Jenny worries about her future at Waverly. The action then turns to the Chemistry final, where Blair writes Serena a note asking her about her graduation outfit but doesn't get a response, as Serena is daydreaming about starring in the movie.

## Boys Will Be Boys . . . to Cheating for Old Times' Sake Analysis

Seeming resolutions are only surface-deep in this section. Though the group at the Yale Club seems to enjoy themselves, the girls still have deeper issues that they haven't yet resolved, as their exchange during the Chemistry final reveals. Though Serena is envious of her friend's intelligence, she nevertheless daydreams about getting the part in the film for which they both auditioned, and does not directly answer Blair's query. Meanwhile, though Dan has made a decision, the reader must still question his blind faith in its correctness, while worrying about Jenny achieving her objective.



# Too Many Boys. . . to D Could Use a Little More Love

## Too Many Boys. . . to D Could Use a Little More Love Summary

Vanessa tries on a dress Blair has picked out for her graduation day, but decides that she's not going to the ceremony. Dan, meanwhile, has come over to see her and is becoming obsessed with her. At the graduation ceremonies, which take place in the next chapter, the action focuses first on the girls'. There, parents gossip about the location of Blair's father, which is quickly cleared up by Serena's mother. Vanessa isn't there, and neither is Serena, as Blair begins her speech.

Over at the boys' school, Nate starts to panic because the graduation program has an asterisk by his name, indicating that his graduation is "pending." This is due to an ongoing investigation into the Viagra theft, though only he knows this. Dan gives his speech, in which he talks about love and how he is foregoing college, to choose love instead. His father, in the audience, seems quite disturbed at this announcement.

## Too Many Boys. . . to D Could Use a Little More Love Analysis

The long-awaited graduation ceremonies bring surprises in this section, as might be expected, having served as the unifying point of action for the characters throughout the novel to this point. The absence of Vanessa and Serena from graduation shows their disdain for the ceremony that has been so important to others (namely, Blair). Meanwhile, Nate's possible failure to graduate takes his character one step closer to the self-destruction toward which he's shown tendencies throughout the novel. It is Dan, however, who truly shows publicly a destructive streak with his announcement. This highlights the romantic nature of his character, as well as his blind naiveté.



# **A Reads V Like a Book to Her Heart Is On Some Other Boy's Sleeve**

## **A Reads V Like a Book to Her Heart Is On Some Other Boy's Sleeve Summary**

While graduation ceremonies are still taking place in Manhattan, Aaron goes to see Vanessa in Brooklyn. There, he tells her he knows about Dan, but that she might have at least acknowledged the ring he bought for her. Though it is clear they are breaking up, he insists on taking her to graduation. There, Blair continues her speech, though not to the approval she expected. After she finishes, the headmistress announces prizes, including one to Vanessa as a young filmmaker. As the girls receive their diplomas, Blair and Serena, who has finally arrived, are next to each other alphabetically, and wearing the same suit.

Immediately following graduation, Nate goes home and finds a sweater Blair gave him, into which she sewed a heart charm on the sleeve. He removes the heart and puts it aside, taking the sweater with him.

## **A Reads V Like a Book to Her Heart Is On Some Other Boy's Sleeve Analysis**

This section resolves some problems, while other characters' issues are only made more complex. Aaron's confrontation with Vanessa frees her, and when she receives the award at school, she knows that she has chosen the right thing for her life. At the same time, the tensions between Blair and Serena are made explicit and visible with their same choice in clothing. Finally, Nate starts to recover from his breakup with Blair; the sweater symbolizes their relationship. However, because he is keeping "her" heart, the reader must question to what extent he is really recovering.



# **Will J Resort to Homeschooling? to Remind Me How Much I Love You**

## **Will J Resort to Homeschooling? to Remind Me How Much I Love You Summary**

Rufus reacts to Dan's news badly, wondering if he did the right thing in sending his kids to private schools. However, Dan is unconvinced by his arguments. Meanwhile, Jenny receives the news that she's been accepted into Waverly Prep.

Back at the Yale Club, Lord Marcus treats Blair very well, giving her a nickname ("Bee") and telling her that he wants her to come over to Europe soon to visit him. This only partially helps to mitigate Blair's reaction when Serena gets the part in the Breakfast at Tiffany's remake. Blair, who wanted the part so badly, freaks out. Nate also gives her the sweater back, minus the heart, which she notices. Later that day, Blair is throwing a party at the Yale Club for her graduation, and everyone is flirting with everyone else. Dan also finally tells Vanessa, who was not at his graduation ceremony, that he has decided to defer for a year so that they can be together.

## **Will J Resort to Homeschooling? to Remind Me How Much I Love You Analysis**

Jenny's news, as well as Lord Marcus's plans for the future, allow some resolution in this selection of chapters, which helps to mitigate the tension created in other areas. Nate's return of the sweater has unclear motivations, as does Dan's decision to stay in New York for Vanessa. The tension between Blair and Serena also builds with the final decision about the movie role. Blair's graduation party, to which all of the characters have ended up or are on their way, will prove to be the testing ground for the remaining, unresolved, issues.



# **N's Trail of Tears to D Rethinks His Summer Plans**

## **N's Trail of Tears to D Rethinks His Summer Plans Summary**

At the party, Nate is typically depressed, and can't stop crying, though he has resolved his issues with the coach and has graduated on the condition that he repairs the coach's Hamptons house all summer. He sees a girl that he knows from the French school, but is still inconsolable. Jenny sees an opportunity, and propositions Nate. He gives in, and the two of them go to make out in the bathroom.

Meanwhile, Blair goes to the bathroom and hears Rain and Isabel gossiping about Lord Marcus. They have heard that he is engaged back in England, possibly betrothed to another girl to connect the families. Blair confronts Isabel, who says that it is better for Blair to know, and that someone should tell her.

One major character who is not at the party is Dan, who is still in discussions with Rufus. When Rufus presents him with a car and offers to teach him how to drive, Dan agrees to take the summer to think his decision over.

## **N's Trail of Tears to D Rethinks His Summer Plans Analysis**

The party, where all of the characters have gathered together, forces the remaining issues to their crisis points. Nate's moment with Jenny in the bathroom will most likely ruin whatever relationship he still has with Serena, but possibly end the tension he has been feeling. Blair's eavesdropping foreshadows Lord Marcus's departure in the next section, while the rumors presented here for the first time will remain unconfirmed in this volume. Dan's crisis, on the other hand, is momentarily resolved, as he caves in to his father's gift and request. This demonstrates Dan's materialistic side, though he often thinks of himself as a pure romantic and less shallow than his classmates.



# **Sex, Drugs, and Rock 'n Roll to You Know You Love Me**

## **Sex, Drugs, and Rock 'n Roll to You Know You Love Me Summary**

Three plot points provide major twists at the end of the novel. Jenny gives Nate the Ecstasy she still has left over from her trip to the boarding schools, which makes him extremely happy, but which also precludes her from having sex with him, as she intended. Back in her room, Blair discovers that Marcus has left to go back to England, but has left her tickets to England and a bee necklace. When she goes back downstairs, she sees Jenny and Nate emerging from the bathroom together. Nate happily starts making out with Serena, then possibly Blair as well, and the novel ends on this note of a possible threesome.

## **Sex, Drugs, and Rock 'n Roll to You Know You Love Me Analysis**

Though not all of the characters' problems are resolved in these last chapters, this is typical of a series, which wants to encourage readers to follow the next installment. Here, the open questions of what Dan will actually end up doing after the summer, and what the real story with Lord Marcus is, remain unsolved. Similarly, though the tension between Serena and Blair seems to have momentarily abated, their threesome with Nate is bound to have some kind of consequence. Therefore, while most of the novel's issues have been wrapped up with their graduations, the novel provides ample motivation to keep reading.



# Characters

## Blair

One of many protagonists, Blair gets the lion's share of space in this narrative. Though Blair has a lot going for her, since she's pretty, rich, and has been admitted into Yale, she nevertheless is experiencing a harder period in her life because she has lost her boyfriend and best friend in one go. Therefore, her introduction to Lord Marcus seems like a stroke of well-deserved good luck. At the same time, certain characteristics come to the forefront as the novel continues. Blair is an extremely loyal friend, as evidenced by her friendship with Vanessa, which makes Serena's betrayal all the harder to take. At the same time, Blair is hard and can be very cold, dismissive, and ambitious. Not afraid to work for what she wants, Blair gets excellent grades and expects results when she sets her mind on something; again, this makes her rejection for the movie harder for her. At the same time, Blair's father's absence, as he lives in France, as well as her mother's remarriage and new baby, have made Blair mature before her time, as she basically lives alone. The novel implies that she used to have an eating disorder, but is recovering from it; this is in line with the intensity and perfectionism she demonstrates in other areas of her life.

## Serena

Blair's counterpart, Serena is the "bad girl" who nevertheless often gets what she wants without even trying. She gets the part in the movie very naturally, for example, and is also going to Yale, though she demonstrates none of Blair's intelligence. Furthermore, she acts badly, committing crimes like shoplifting, taking drugs, and immorally, such as when she steals her best friend's boyfriend. Nevertheless, Serena's good nature and her cheerfulness do make her a sympathetic character, though a flawed one. In the book, while many of the other characters have to face their fears and therefore grow, Serena has no such trajectory. She does not seem to repent for her mistakes, nor does she apologize to Blair (or to anyone, for that matter). Therefore, in a novel full of characters changing as they face graduation and growing up, Serena is one of the most static protagonists.

## Nate

Seemingly the perfect guy, Nate has also been accepted at Yale, where he will play Lacrosse next year. However, he has his own problems. He can't seem to control himself among girls, for though he appears to have genuine feelings for Blair, as evidenced by his weepiness and sadness throughout the novel, he cheated on her with Serena, and then cheated on Serena with Jenny. His second major characteristic is his drug use. Most often depicted as high throughout the book, Nate doesn't try anything harder than marijuana, but crosses a line when he steals the coach's Viagra.





Nevertheless, he will have to pay for this with his summer, though his fears about not graduating don't come to pass. If anything, Nate is "rewarded" at the end of the book by making out with Jenny, then with both Serena and Blair at the same time.

## Lord Marcus

Lord Marcus is Blair's love interest, whom she meets at the Yale club. He is an aristocratic Englishman who just graduated from Yale, where he played on the Lacrosse team.

## Jenny

Dan's younger sister, Jenny has to leave her current school after a series of scandals. She has a hard time finding another appropriate school, but is finally accepted by Waverly Prep, where she can focus on her art. More of a "wannabe" than the other characters, Jenny idealizes Serena. She also makes out with Nate at the end of the book.

## Dan

A romantic writer, Dan thinks that he will forgo college in favor of his current love interest, Vanessa, who is cheating on her boyfriend with him for most of the novel. This is called into question at the end of the book, though.

## Vanessa

An independent teenager who loves making films, Vanessa lives in Brooklyn; first with Blair, and then on her own. She has a steady boyfriend, Aaron, but cheats on him repeatedly with Dan, before Aaron breaks up with her. She does not think that traditional things like graduation matter, but increasingly partakes in them as the novel continues.

## Chuck

A rebel with a questionable sexual orientation, Chuck is more of a peripheral character in this book, nominating Dan for senior speaker and helping Blair move to the Yale Club.

## Aaron

Aaron is Serena's older brother and Vanessa's initial boyfriend.



## **Isabel and Rain**

Two of the girls' classmates, Isabel and Rain are inseparable friends.

## **Coach Michaels**

Nate steals Viagra from Coach Michaels, his Lacrosse coach.

## **Rufus**

Rufus is Dan and Jenny's father.

## **Harry**

Harry is Chuck's cousin, whom Jenny meets at Croton.



## **Objects/Places**

### **Upper East Side**

Most of the action takes place on the Upper East Side of New York City.

### **St. Jude's**

The boys' school that the main characters attend is named St. Jude's.

### **Constance Billiard**

The girls' school that the main characters attend is called Constance Billiard.

### **Waverly Prep**

The school Jenny will ultimately attend the following year is Waverly Prep.

### **Croton**

Croton is a boarding school Jenny visits.

### **Yale University**

Serena, Nate, and Blair will attend Yale University the following year.

### **The Yale Club**

The Yale Club is where Blair goes to stay after leaving Vanessa's apartment.

### **Williamsburg**

The Brooklyn location of Vanessa and Blair's apartment is Williamsburg.

### **The Rooftop of Vanessa's Building**

Vanessa has sex with both Dan and Aaron on the rooftop of Vanessa's building.

## **Bergdorf's**

Bergdorf's is the department store where casting for the film is held.

## **Fred's film**

The movie for which Serena and Blair both audition is Fred's film.

## **The Oscar de la Renta Suit**

Serena and Blair wear the same Oscar de la Renta suit to graduation.

## **Blair's Heart Token**

Blair's heart token is a small gold object that she had sewn into Nate's sleeve; he removes it.

## **Viagra**

Nate steals Viagra, pills for erectile problems, from his Lacrosse coach, Coach Michaels.



# Themes

## Friendship

Despite the backstabbing and gossip that goes on in the book - in fact, partially because of it - friendship ends up being one of *Nothing Can Keep Us Together's* main themes. In spite of the disparate backgrounds and social status of the various characters, the one major unifying force in the book is friendship. Many of the characters have a long history with other characters in the novel, some of which is only implied. Nevertheless, Serena and Blair's friendship in crisis draws the reader's attention towards the depth of this friendship in the first place, and how long the two of them have known each other. In fact, they are so similar on a certain level that they separately end up choosing the exact same dress for graduation. Similarly, Chuck comes to help Blair out when she feels trapped in Brooklyn, just as Blair helps Vanessa find the perfect dress for graduation. Between the boys and the girls, the line between friendship and romance blurs often, and is almost indistinguishable: Dan and Vanessa started as friends, as did Serena and Nate. Overall, the picture of friendship that the book presents is an enduring one, despite the many challenges that appear in the narrative.

## Young Love

Corresponding to the first theme of friendship, young love is presented in the novel as an overwhelming force. It is often confused with lust, as in the case of Serena and Nate. Nevertheless, this lust can be read as sometimes having deeper roots, such as in the sexual relationship that develops between Dan and Vanessa. The narration often highlights the intensity of this love, without criticizing it. For example, Blair fantasizes about marrying Lord Marcus. This also highlights the fact that she is old before her time, just as Lord Marcus's supposed engagement to another girl might throw a wrench in the plans that she has for them. In this context, the challenge that Nate's cheating presents to Blair and Serena's friendship can be seen as even more threatening, as the intensity of the love that Nate and Blair had for each other becomes apparent in Nate's depression, and his subsequent lack of physical passion, that occurs after they break up. Symbols reinforce this theme throughout the novel. The most important of these is the heart that Blair had sewn in the sweater she gave to Nate, literally embodying the phrase "to wear your heart on your sleeve."

## Glamor

The exclusivity of the Upper East Side is reinforced in nearly every chapter of the book. The characters all have privilege and money, to some extent, though Dan, Vanessa, and Jenny are poorer than the majority of their friends. Still, the two forms of glamor - fueled by art or fueled by money - motivate each character to some extent. For example, Jenny is torn between the two different kinds of glamor. On the one hand, she has



artistic talent, like Vanessa and her brother in different fields; on the other hand, she longs for the kind of life that Serena and Blair lead. This motivates her first search for boarding schools, and shows two separate sides of her personality, as well as the two separate sides of the world of the book. On the other hand, the money-fueled glamorous life that Serena and Blair have is inspired by movies like *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, and involves shopping at fancy department stores, dating nobility, going to Ivy-League schools, and other trappings of the wealthy. The book presents both kinds of glamor in an idealized light; at no point in the book does money itself become an issue for any of the main characters, nor is their talent truly questioned. These dual kinds of exclusivity create an aspirational world for the reader.



# Style

## Point of View

The mixed points of view that the book presents provide a tense, yet compelling, narrative. The story is mostly in the third person, but in alternating limited points of view. This provides a more omniscient perspective on the characters and their activities. The omniscient voice is embodied in the first-person narration of Gossip Girl herself, whose identity is never revealed. She passes commentary on the characters' activities, and lets the reader know what to think about their various goings-ons. Other first-person narratives take over at various points in the form of emails and letters written by certain characters to the others. The reader experiences Aaron's passion first-hand through his email to Vanessa, while the quirky summer activities proposed by the Evergreen professor give a sense of Dan's alternatives. Finally, the heavy emphasis on dialogue and action demonstrate the consequences of each character's personality and perspective on the issues. By providing closer access to these characters through the close limited points of view, the novel gives the reader access to the exclusive world of the Upper East Side, without making it too narrow by giving outside perspectives from characters like Vanessa and Dan.

## Setting

The action of the book takes place in New York City, in the present day. Certain activities, such as Jenny's search for a boarding school, necessarily take place outside of the confines of Manhattan; however, the book mostly alternates between Brooklyn and the Upper East Side. Brooklyn is characterized as arty, young, slightly dirtier; this is where Vanessa lives, and where Blair lives at the beginning of the book. However, it becomes clear that this is not the proper setting for her, and she retires to the Yale Club back in her true territory. The Upper East Side is characterized by the restaurants, stores, boutiques, hotels, and other glamorous locales where the characters spend their time. It is a limited world in which the action takes place, further delimited by the schools themselves, which are divided by gender.

## Language and Meaning

Overall, the language of the book is simple and straightforward. The characters do speak like normal teenagers, but don't use a lot of slang. This creates a narrative that is almost universally accessible. However, there are various brands, works of art and literature, and other "keywords" that come up during the course of the book, which von Ziegesar uses as shorthand to provide connotations and atmosphere for her characters. For example, though she doesn't go into detail about Breakfast at Tiffany's, the associations that come with the movie (Audrey Hepburn, pearls, luxury, exclusivity) reinforce the world she has created when she references it for the movie casting.



Similarly, Yale and its exclusivity, as well as the limited appeal of a sport like Lacrosse, also help to create a world that the reader can instantly recognize as privileged and elite.

## Structure

The book is comprised of short chapters. These chapters can run as short as one or two pages, and become longer as the action intensifies, creating more dramatic tension and keeping the reader engaged. The chapters alternate among the characters and their different perspectives, providing a diverse yet dynamic story. At the same time, the setting of contemporary New York is highlighted by the "new media" the author references and intersperses with the more traditional narration of the chapters themselves. These include the Gossip Girl e-blasts, which unite the various stories, as well as the emails that Aaron and Vanessa exchange. The fact that the professor at Evergreen chooses to write letters, rather than emails, highlights the different world which Dan will enter this summer, since the professor forgoes email in favor of a more old-fashioned, but literary, means of communication.

The cliffhanger at the end of the novel emphasizes the fact that this is an installment in a series. Though it doesn't take the reader long to identify the characters and their main attributes, the structure of the book does rely upon earlier events, and ends on a note that encourages readers to return for later events.





## Quotes

"Look. Blair is totally pretending she didn't see them come in. Oh my God, and Serena is, like, walking right up to her!"

(Where the Girls Go, p. 9)

"'I was just voted senior speaker,' Dan admitted, like he'd been campaigning for it for weeks. Secretly, he was dying inside that Vanessa and Aaron were still together, but he wasn't about to let her know that."

(D is Mr. Popularity, p. 23)

"Croton was supposed to be full of kids who'd been kicked out of their New York City private schools for bad behavior."

(S Has Rendered Party School Totally Useless, p. 32)

"Nate flicked the tears away from his gorgeous green eyes with his thumb and dropped his barely touched slice of pepperoni pizza into the garbage."

(N's New Drug of Choice, p. 59)

"Vanessa went back to Blair's segment, watching it over and over and trying to edit it in such a way that Blair wouldn't sound totally demonic."

(V Experiments With Double Happiness, p. 78)

"Blair whirled around, her heart already aflutter at being mistaken for a size two, and nearly choked on her own saliva when she saw who it was."

(See B Die and Go to Heaven, p. 95)

"Serena worried that she should have dressed up like the other girls."

(S Gets to Say Her Lines Twice, p. 115)

"Serena watched her admiringly. Blair totally deserved to go to Yale."

(Cheating for Old Times' Sake, p. 137)

"'Dude,' Charlie murmured to Nate as he stumbled by, 'what's with the little star?'"

(Oh the Places You'll Go! - Not, p. 154)

"'I guess I failed to raise you properly,' Rufus sighed heavily as he stared into a troughlike glass of red wine."

(Will J Resort to Homeschooling?, p. 172)

"And if she was going to change her image, it seemed prudent that she do something drastic, like lose her virginity."

(J Considers Losing it Before Boarding School, p. 199)

"'We're all too beautiful,' he said by way of explanation. 'I can't stop kissing us.'"

(You Know You Love Me, p. 217)



## Topics for Discussion

For those who have seen the television series based on these novels, compare and contrast the major characters' depictions. On what themes do the respective works choose to focus, and how is this evident in the work?

Compare and contrast Serena and Blair. Though they are rivals, how different are they in reality?

Matching outfits appear in several scenes in the novel. What is their significance?

Discuss Nate's decline throughout the book. How does he grow as a character, or does he? How do the book's major themes influence him?

What role does Chuck play in the narrative? Why is he necessary to the action?

Jenny's future is uncertain for the majority of the narrative; how does this contribute to the novel's style? With what possibilities does the novel present her? Is her ultimate decision the right one? Use evidence from the novel to support your argument.

How do the various styles of writing combine into a cohesive narrative? Use textual citations to support your argument.

Discuss the role of parental influence in the novel. How are the main characters shaped by their parents' presence, or lack thereof?