

Slammed: A Novel Study Guide

Slammed: A Novel by Colleen Hoover

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Plot Summary

Slammed is a young adult novel written by Colleen Hoover, and is about the struggle of eighteen year-old Layken Cohen to deal with her mother's terminal cancer, and her love for Will Cooper, her English teacher and neighbor.

When the novel begins, Layken's father has been dead for six months, having died of a heart attack. Julia, Layken's mother, and Kel, Layken's younger brother, move to Julia's hometown in Michigan since they can no longer afford to live in Texas, and so Julia can take a better job. Kel at once befriends Caulder, who lives with his older brother, Will, across the street. Will and Layken hit it off immediately -only later to discover that Will is Layken's teacher. While Layken pushes ahead with their relationship, Will tries to hold it off. He is twenty-one, and graduating from college early. His parents were killed a few years before in an auto accident, and Will has been taking care of his brother since. He has a lot to lose.

All the while, Will teaches Layken about life, as does Layken's mother - who is actually dying of cancer, having moved to Michigan to be near a specialist. Will also teaches Layken about poetry, and about how poetry can be therapeutic and important. Eventually, Layken's mother tells her to go after Will, and to think with her heart instead of her head. Layken does so. When the novel ends, she and Will have been dating for more than a year, and Layken's mother has passed on. But her mother leaves a note for her and her brother, telling them to keep on living, and signing it with her love.



Part 1, Chapter 1 - Part 1, Chapter 10

Part 1, Chapter 1 - Part 1, Chapter 10 Summary

Part 1, Chapter 1 - Eighteen year-old Layken Cohen, and her younger brother, Kel, who is nine, help to pack a U-Haul truck for their family's move from Texas to Michigan. Their father had passed away six months before, and their mother can't afford to stay in Texas. Layken is a combination of "Layla", the Eric Clapton song, and "Ken" from Kennedy, the political family her father loved. Layken walks through the house one last time, remembering her father and the memories they shared, such as when she was five and horribly cut her own hair, and her father comforted her by giving her a magic hair clip.

The trip to Michigan is made in two days, and the neighborhood in Ypsilanti looks nice. The new house is very small, though. As they pull up to the new house to meet the landlord, Kel has already made a new friend. Ypsilanti is where Layken's mother grew up, and her high school friend, Brenda, has offered her a job, prompting the move. Layken pretends to be a zombie and chase both her brother and her new friend. They are caught by the boy's older brother who tells Layken to eat them. The older brother is attractive twenty-one year-old Will, who lives across the street. The younger brother is Calder. Will says he has to get his brother to school, and offers to help unload when they get home around four.

Layken, her mother Julia, and the landlord unload the U-Haul. That night, pizza is ordered for dinner. Layken's mother says she noticed Layken talking to Will, and Layken shrugs it off. The next morning, Layken goes to get the coffeepot out of her Jeep, for it has snowed the night before, but she slips and falls, and Will sees her. He gives her his jacket, and brings her to his house for a bandage. She notices he is very muscular, and very kind. When she leaves, he insists she take his jacket with her. While Brenda, Kel, and Layken's mother return the U-Haul, Layken is sent to the grocery store, but doesn't know where to go. Will volunteers to go with her. Despite his attempts to get her to open up, Layken is very defensive. They finally find common ground in the band, The Avett Brothers, a favorite of Layken and her father, and of Will. She then tells him about her father, and his death, and a concert they never got to go to. As they pack up the Jeep at the store, Will kisses Layken on the forehead.

Back at the house, Will introduces himself to Julia. Julia nudges Layken's shoulder to give her daughter her approval. Will decides he is going to take Layken out on a date the following night.

Part 1, Chapter 2 - Layken's mother gives her some last minute date advice, such as not eating anything with onion or garlic in it. Will makes himself and Layken grilled cheese sandwiches for dinner, because they have to get somewhere in time. They hold hands as Will drives. He brings her to a club -Club N9NE -that is hosting a slam -a poetry reading using words and body motions. Layken gets a chocolate milk with ice,



and Will tells her he likes her. Layken is mesmerized by the first performance, and she begs Will to perform. Will reluctantly agrees, and recites a poem about death -the death of his parents -and Layken realizes that all Will has in the world is his little brother. Layken and Will kiss, and Layken is amazed that they already have a connection. Layken is sad that Will will be away for three days in Detroit for a family thing, but is amazed by her emotional state because of him. Back inside her house, Layken's mother is waiting up, and she tells her mother that she loves Michigan.

Part 1, Chapter 3 - Monday morning rolls around, and Layken begins school. She cannot wait to get home and see Will. School passes well enough. A girl named Eddie helps show Layken around. But her next class is an English elective -and Layken is stunned to discover that Will is the teacher -and Will is stunned to discover that Layken is still in school.

Part 1, Chapter 4 - Will and Layken agree to talk more later. A student named Javier calls Layken hot, and Will tells him to get out. Eddie is also in the class, and after the class ends, she gives him Altoids because she thinks he has a hangover. Layken says nothing to Will, takes two of the Altoids, and leaves. Layken pulls up into her driveway, but stays in her Jeep, trying desperately to think everything through. But then Will shows up. He explains he is a student teacher, but that he will soon be a full-time teacher, and that when she said she was eighteen, he imagined she would be in college. He explains how much he needs the job he has. There is a lot at risk, and Layken doesn't want to risk anything. Layken says she understands his points, and Will tells her to withdraw from his class so they won't be around each other anymore, because it isn't appropriate. Layken is heartbroken.

Part 1, Chapter 5 - The next morning, Layken is still heartbroken. At school, Layken plans to switch from Poetry to Russian Literature. When Layken brings the form to Will to get it signed, he apologizes for the previous night, and says that they will have to find a way to work things out, and that things can only get easier. He says she doesn't have to transfer, and the transfer form is thrown out. Eddie then introduces her boyfriend, Gavin, to Layken.

In class, performance poetry is the new unit. Gavin explains to the class it is similar to what goes on at Club N9NE. Will agrees to perform for the class if everyone in class makes it to Club N9NE at some point over the semester.

At lunch, Layken sits with Eddie and Gavin, and a boy named Nick comes to ask for food, because he is hoping to gain nine pounds for his weight class. Eddie decides that Layken needs a boyfriend, but Layken disagrees. At home, Layken's mother has gotten sick. Layken's mother also confronts her about Will being a teacher, and then heads over to Will's house as he gets home. Will asks to talk inside, and Layken's mother goes in. Will explains to Julia that he thought Layken was in college because she is eighteen. Julia says that Kel and Caulder don't need to know what is going on. Will asks if Julia will inform the school about what is going on, so he can be prepared, but since there is nothing going on between Layken and Will, Julia doesn't have to make a call. Outside Will's house, Layken screams at her mother, asking her why she didn't wait for an



explanation before confronting Will. She then rushes to her bedroom, and doesn't come out until her mother leaves for work.

Later, Kel asks Layken for some red Kool-Aid packets. A short time later, Kel and Caulder bring Layken outside, where Will has been brought too. A snowman is lying on the ground behind Layken's Jeep, and the red Kool-Aid is serving as blood. Will finds it amusing, and Layken goes to get her camera. Layken apologizes for her mother, and Will says he understands. He says she's lucky to have her mother. Layken realizes she is. Julia and Layken make peace with each other, and Layken's mother tells her not to do anything stupid.

Part 1, Chapter 6 - Layken and Will don't speak for a few weeks after the snowman. Eddie continues trying to get Layken a boyfriend, but Layken keeps rejecting Eddie's ideas. Eddie has even changed seats with Nick in Will's class in order to try to make something happen there, but it doesn't work. All Layken wants is Will, and she hopes that Will will become jealous seeing Layken's attention to Nick. But Layken thinks Will must have already moved on, and she has to find a way to break free of the hold he has on her. Will announces that the students will be composing poetry to read in front of the class. While the class gets to work writing, Layken notices Will watching her, and realizes he is just as confused as she is.

After school, Layken's Jeep won't start. Will comes to help and checks her engine, and Layken wants to know why Will is speaking to her after he told her not to speak to him. He explains he is not over her, that he would have taken the year off if he could have, just to be with her. He knows she is in pain because of him, and it hurts him, too. Nick suddenly appears, and offers to take Layken home. Will tells Nick to do just that. Layken is impressed by Nick's sports car. They also pick up Caulder and Kel. At Layken's, Nick invites Layken to Getty's Pizza with Eddie and Gavin. Layken says she'll let Nick know. Inside, Kel and Caulder joke about Nick, and Kel says he saw Layken kissing Will. Layken tells him and Caulder it was not what it looked like, and that it should never be repeated. Layken tells her mother about the Jeep, and she says to leave it at school until it can be figured out. She then leaves early for work, saying she has to run errands.

Later, after a shower, Layken answers the door when Will comes to collect Caulder. But neither Layken nor Will can find the two boys. They find both boys asleep in Will's car, their hands in the shape of guns, having apparently fallen asleep while playing. Will brings Layken inside to return her keys to her, explaining he has had a new alternator put in, and it is his treat for the Cohens taking care of Caulder so often. They begin to talk about possible solutions to their problem. Layken suggests her getting a GED, but Will opposes this. She says she'll wait for him until she graduates, and Will says that it is a long time to wait. They begin kissing, and Will says they have to stop, but Layken doesn't want to. Will tells her that it isn't good for either of them to be doing this. He tells her she deserves better, she deserves to be first, and that with Caulder and his job, she can't be first. Layken says that this is why she'll wait for him. She says she is falling in love with him. Will tells her that this can't happen again, and she leaves, calling him an asshole.



Part 1, Chapter 7 - Layken recalls the day in school when she was told about her father's death, and had then learned about the five stages of grief after death. Layken wonders if those stages can happen over a period of time. If so, she is at the second stage of anger. Gavin performs his poetry before Will's class. Gavin's poem is about Eddie. Layken reads her poem next, and calls it "Mean." She lists all the synonyms associated with mean, including "asshole." As class ends, Layken tells Eddie she will go on the date with her, Gavin, and Nick, in front of Will. Will later brings Layken to his classroom to talk about everything going on. Eddie interrupts to drop off Layken's backpack that she had left behind, only to see Layken in tears. Eddie leaves. Layken tells Will that she will tell Layken it is all about her profanity in her poem. Will says he regrets everything, and Layken calls him a bastard. At home, Layken hears her mom on the phone, telling someone that she will tell her children soon, and alone, and that she loves the person on the other line. Layken imagines her mother has already moved on after only seven months. Layken later asks her mother permission for the date with Nick, Gavin, and Eddie on Thursday, and she consents. Will is hiring a sitter for Caulder because that is slam night. Layken's mother is suspicious.

The next day, Layken skips English, explaining to Eddie that the previous day was about Layken's language in her poem. Eddie tells Layken she can always talk to her, about anything, and that she won't say anything. She says that she knows that the previous day was more than just a talking-to about bad language, but she doesn't know how much more. Eddie reveals she is a foster child, who has been through nine homes in seven years. The name "Eddie" is a nickname from the movie Eddie Izzard, because he has the same nose as Eddie, and she pretended he was her father. Layken thanks Eddie for skipping with her, and Eddie says she needed it, too. She also tells Layken that Nick is not the right guy for her, but she still has to go on the date.

Part 1, Chapter 8 - At home, Layken's mother has gone out for a few hours, and Caulder goes to Kel's house before dinner. Layken takes the time to snoop through her mother's things to figure out who her new boyfriend is, and she finds a poem she mocks, and then puts back in its place. Layken's mother arrives home, and so does Kel, and she has no patience for either of them. She tells her mother that she doesn't keep secrets.

Layken and Kel get up late the next morning because the power has gone out, but Will's car is still in his driveway. Layken knocks on their door to see if they are awake, and they are just getting up. Layken offers to bring Caulder to school for Will. Will then rushes to get dressed and leave. By the time Layken gets to school, she is late for Math, so she skips. In second period, Eddie asks where Layken was. She realizes Layken overslept because of the power outage, and gives Layken her makeup bag. In class, Layken points to Will's tie, which is underneath his shirt, put on in such a rush. Layken realizes Eddie has noticed this. For their date that night, Nick says he will pick Layken up, because she lives on the same street as Will. Layken has no idea how Nick knows this.

On the date, Eddie lets Layken know that Nick knows Layken isn't interested in him, so there is no pressure. They have pizza, and then go to Club N9NE. The three later explain to Layken that Will had been a senior when they were freshmen. Will had been



a star football player with a scholarship, and a girlfriend named Vaughn who had been homecoming queen. She dumped him two weeks after his parents were killed and Will lost his scholarship when he left to take care of his brother. Layken tears up, realizing that Will is really being protective of her. Eddie gives her a tissue.

Part 1, Chapter 9 - At Club N9NE, Eddie brings Layken to the bathroom. She does Layken's hair and makeup for her. As they leave the table, Layken and Eddie see Javier and Will at their table with Nick and Gavin. Eddie winks at Layken, who insists it isn't like that, but Eddie says if it is like that, it won't go any farther than her. The only available seat for Will is next to Layken, which he takes. Eddie goes to perform. Her real name, she says, is Olivia King. And she slams about a pink balloon given to her by her mother, and how when she turns eighteen, she doesn't want any pink balloons. Meanwhile, Javier's legs keep brushing against Layken's and it creeps her out. Will trades seats with her. Gavin reveals that in his senior year, Will started a prank war from which he earned the nickname "Duckie" because in revenge, he was duct-taped into his car while taking a nap. Layken realizes that she can at least be friends with Will, for now. As everyone leaves, Will tells Layken that Kel can spend the night since it is so late.

The next day, Caulder spends the night with the Cohens. Layken decides she will move back to Texas as soon as she turns eighteen. She discovers some opened mail and bank statements. She sees over \$170,000 is in the account, and the house back in Texas hasn't been sold. She is enraged, wondering why her mother has forced them to move away for no reason. Layken then goes out to the movies with Eddie and Gavin. But Layken's mother believes she is going to see Will. Layken says she is leaving with Eddie as she pulls up, and Layken tells her mother she knows about everything. They get pizza, and go to the movie.

Part 1, Chapter 10 - At home, Layken discovers her mother has been crying, and she is apologizing for not telling Layken sooner. The old poem was from her father, and other things have to be taken care of. She has lung cancer. She explains that they all have to be prepared. Around midnight, Layken goes to Will's house, and Julia follows. Julia consents to letting her daughter spend the night with Will, and he holds Layken while she cries.

Part 1, Chapter 1 - Part 1, Chapter 10 Analysis

When Colleen Hoover's novel *Slammed* begins, Layken is a brave and confident, but emotionally insecure eighteen year-old girl. She is haunted by the death of her father, and she is greatly pained by the jarring move that is made from her home in Texas to the frigid northern climate of Michigan. Layken believes she is going to hate Michigan, until she meets Will, older brother of her younger brother Kel's new best friend. Will's appearance in the novel sharply marks the coming course of events, altering the trajectory of Layken's life. He introduces her to poetry and love, and the two only later realize that they are student and teacher. While Layken wants a secret relationship, Will -justifiably so- wants to put things on hold.



Layken is angry and disappointed by the turn of events, but she realizes she is falling in love with Will. Her new best friend, Eddie, comforts her, and helps her to navigate her way through the new school. Yet, despite the distance Will tries to put between himself and Layken, the two keep meeting up and bumping into each other. It is a hot and cold sort of romance, one that ultimately makes Layken believe that Will truly does not want to be with her. She resolves in her mind that she will be moving back to Texas when she graduates. But everything takes a dramatic turn for the worse when Layken discovers that her mother is already seeing someone new, and that there was no financial reason to leave Texas. Yet, upon confrontation, Julia explains to Layken that she has cancer.

Ironically, it is Will to whom whom Layken runs, and it is Will who accepts her with open arms. Will allows her to spend the night, and Julia consents to this as well. As Part 1 ends, the reader wonders where the relationship between Will and Layken will turn next, and how Julia will feel about things.



Part 2, Chapter 11 - Epilogue

Part 2, Chapter 11 - Epilogue Summary

Part 2, Chapter 11 - The next morning, Layken wakes up, realizing she is in Will's house. Will makes her coffee. Will is taking Kel and Caulder to a movie so that Layken can talk to her mom. Layken doesn't know what to say to her mother because she is still mad at her mother. Across the street, Eddie shows up, and Layken waves her over. Eddie figures out immediately whose house Layken is in, but doesn't say anything. Layken explains that her mother has cancer. Eddie tells Layken she needs to go and talk to her mother. Eddie also asks for an explanation about Will, and Layken consents. Eddie promises not to tell anyone, not even Gavin. Layken explains everything that has happened between her and Will. Eddie then announces that they are going to go and talk to her mom.

Part 2, Chapter 12 - Eddie introduces herself to Julia as Layken's best friend, tells Julia that Layken has questions that need to be answered, and then leaves. Julia reveals her cancer was discovered before Layken's father died, and that the move to Michigan, to see a doctor who treats the kind of lung cancer she has, had already been planned before the death. But then the cancer spread. Julia blames herself for her husband's heart attack, giving him so much stress from the cancer diagnosis. Layken wants to know why she wasn't told sooner, because she could have helped. All that can be done now for Julia is to manage the pain. Layken is stunned. She and her mother hug. Julia explains that Brenda will become Kel's guardian, so Layken doesn't have to give up her life, give up college. But Layken opposes this. She says that Kel should not be told yet, and that he will not be given up to Brenda. Layken leaves for Will's house.

Layken sleeps a few hours in Will's bed, and when she gets up, she has the urge to clean. So she listens to the Avett Brothers as she cleans. She even goes on to alphabetizing the books and CDs in the house. When Will and the boys get home around seven, she is alphabetizing the recipe cards. Will has the boys go to Kel's house, and Will talks to Layken. She is inconsolable, and Will picks her up and douses her with cold water, and then puts her into the shower with cold water. He tells her to take a shower, to calm down, to wash her hair -and she does, grudgingly admitting that Will is right. In the meantime, Will gets pajamas for Layken, and a towel. After the shower, they hug. Will explains she was losing it, and she needed to calm down. He makes her some chocolate milk with ice, and says he wants to be friends. She reluctantly accepts this. She and Will lay down on the floor in the dark, hold hands, listen to the Avett Brothers, and fall asleep. She tells Will about Brenda and Kel.

Eddie comes in a short while later after they have both fallen asleep. She and Layken talk while Will continues sleeping. As Will wakes up, Eddie leaves. Will wants to know what Eddie was doing there. When Layken doesn't respond, Will realizes that Eddie knows everything, and he tells Layken to go home. Layken tells Caulder to head home, and Layken tells Kel they will be going ice-skating the following day. They spend the day



together, and she spends every dollar in her savings account between meals and going to the arcade with Kel.

Part 2, Chapter 13 - Will is late to class, and he brings booklets of paper stapled together with the poems of all the students. Will gives Eddie and Layken detention slips. He then tells his students to grade the poems, and Layken wants to know why. Will tells her to ask again later. When everyone is finished, Will asks Layken to ask her question again. She does. Will explains the point of poetry is that it means something to the writer, not to the reader. Eddie dramatically asks where the detention will be when class ends, and Will explains that it will commence in his classroom at 3:30.

Will directly asks Eddie about what she intends to do about the knowledge of him and Layken. Will explains how serious the situation is. Eddie promises not to say anything, and tells him it isn't a big deal. Will tells them that it is a big deal, that if they get careless, and something slips, he will be ruined. Will gets angry, and then quiets down when he brings out a picture of Caulder. He explains that Caulder survived the wreck that killed his parents, that it was a miracle he survived. Will then leaves, and Layken and Eddie finish out their detention. Eddie wants to know how Layken hasn't fallen in love with him, and Layken says she has.

Part 2, Chapter 14 - Layken recalls she almost had sex once, when she had a boyfriend in college, the friend of the older brother of her old best friend, Kerris. Back home, Layken finds her mother, Kel, and Caulder all carving pumpkins. Layken asks her mother if they can all carve just pumpkins that night, and her mother agrees. Will arrives to get Caulder, but Julia invites him in to carve pumpkins, too. Layken admits she had detention, and Will tells Julia she skipped his class. Julia then says she's buying Will dinner for that. Will and Julia get along very well, while Kel and Caulder carve pumpkins. It is a warm, happy moment, and Layken wishes it could be that way forever. Taking out the trash later, Layken sees Will also taking out the trash. They talk about Eddie and everything that has happened. He hugs Layken, and tells her that no one is ever ready for things like death, or to accept it. He then heads home. At home, Layken begins writing poetry for herself. Julia tells Layken that tonight is her last night of work.

Part 2, Chapter 15 - In class, Will sets up a projector, determined to show his class why people write poetry. He explains that other people can feel the things in poetry that has been written by others -such as the Avett Brothers. The projector is turned on, and the words are Will's -his poem from the night of the date with Layken. He points out specific phrases, with the intention of making Layken understand. Layken suddenly realizes her mother isn't preparing her for her death, but for life. Layken rushes home. Her mother is asleep. She strokes her mother's head, and some hair falls out, which Layken puts in the magic clip her father gave her all those years before. She then lies down next to her mother, and holds her hand.

Part 2, Chapter 16 - Layken makes lasagna for dinner -Kel's favorite. She and her mother talk about Kel. Julia finally consents to letting Kel stay with Layken. That night, they tell Kel what is going on. He is saddened, and has many questions, which his mother answers. Kel asks that they never make lasagna again, and they all laugh. Julia



invites Will and Caulder over for dinner. Will laughs while Kel gets his mother to leave him her computer. Layken realizes this is what Will wanted: for there to be acceptance. They talk about the next few months. Layken will be taking her mother to and from treatments when she can, and Will will do everything he can to help out with Kel. After dinner, Julia heads to bed, hugs Will, and nudges Layken once more, giving her approval -but Layken knows that the approval doesn't matter anymore.

Will helps Layken do dishes. He and Caulder will be gone that weekend, to see their grandparents in Detroit. Will prepares to head out, and kisses Layken on the forehead. She is coming to accept the fact that they didn't work out. Layken decides her first priority will be her mother, then Kel, and then life.

At Getty's Pizza, Gavin has everyone bring pink balloons for Eddie's birthday. He asks Layken to hold them until relieved by the bathroom. Each balloon has a name on it. Joel, Eddie's foster father, comes to get the balloons and to send Layken up front. Eddie is happy to see Layken. Before they eat, they go outside. Gavin reads a letter he did not write, about Eddie coming to live with Joel. Joel comes outside, and as the letter indicates that the past has no hold on her now, Joel releases balloon by balloon, with names from Eddie's past. Joel explains he really does want to be Eddie's father, and she embraces him.

Part 1, Chapter 188 - Layken goes driving around Detroit in her Jeep. She has realized she has come to accept so much in her life, especially because of Will. She realizes he was right all along, and that one day, she will thank him for it all. She even accepts that things have turned out the way they have with Will for the better. Layken goes to Club N9NE, and Will is there, performing a piece about his love of the ocean, and how now he wants a lake. Layken is breathless and goes to the bathroom. Layken realizes Will is in love with her, and she wonders if she has seen her there. As she leaves the bathroom, Eddie and Gavin show up. Eddie has new earrings from Gavin, and Layken realizes she has to leave before Will sees her.

Javier finds Layken leaving, and catches up to her, offering to walk her to her car. But she forgets her purse and her keys inside, and asks Javier to go and get them. Javier says Layken shouldn't stay back in the parking lot by herself, and Layken says she'll text Eddie, and asks for his phone. Javier says his phone is dead, brings Layken to his truck to charge it, and begins kissing her. As Layken tries to stop him, Will pulls Javier off of Layken and punches him, and Javier punches Will back. As Javier goes to hit Will again, Layken steps in between, and Javier hits Layken in the back. Will goes after Javier, and Gavin separates them. Eddie brings Layken her purse.

Will brings Layken to his house, and gets her some ice for her back. He then goes and brings Julia over. At home, Layken explains everything to her mother. The next morning, Caulder is over eating breakfast, saying his brother had something to do, and he has brought Layken's Jeep home. Layken is called to the office, where the principal, Mr. Murphy, Will, Javier's father, and Officer Venturelli are waiting. Layken explains in detail what happened, excluding Will's poem, and as she leaves, Javier's father apologizes for his son. At home, Layken talks to Will, who says he is going to finish his student



teaching at a different school, and that everything will get sorted out. He excuses himself, because he is on the way to a meeting with his college faculty adviser.

Part 2, Chapter 18 - At home, Layken helps her mother clean. Kel and Caulder announce they want to be cancerous lungs for Halloween. Will is a little mortified by this, but Julia is amused and lets it slide. Will is invited over to help make the costumes. Will and Layken go to his house to get a measuring tape, and Will explains that all that happened was that he got a slap on the wrist since he was defending a student. Will's internship will be finished in Detroit, so he will be doing a lot of driving -and Layken offers to help take care of Caulder. Will explains he thought she was kissing Javier back the night before, and he was jealous -but when he discovered that Javier was actually hurting her, he wanted to kill him. Will explains he saw Layken when he was finishing his poetry. Will and Layken then kiss. Layken wants to know if they can be together now that he is no longer her teacher, but then he freezes, telling her he had a moment of weakness. Layken takes the measuring tape and leaves Will behind.

Part 2, Chapter 19 - Will and Caulder go to Detroit. Following the weekend, Halloween arrives. Layken brings Will over to see the costumes Kel and Caulder are wearing. They are proud of their grotesque costumes. Will later calls Layken, telling her there's been an incident, and he can't get through to Julia, and that he can't get home from Detroit. Kel and Caulder need someone to pick them up. Eddie agrees to go with Layken. At school, Kel and Caulder are sitting in the office. Mrs. Brill, the principal, says the costumes are offensive and distracting. Slowly and calmly, Layken explains the reality of the situation, and the principal allows the boys to return to class. They win their costume contest, and get fifty dollars each. Layken calls her mother and Will to let them know how things turned out.

Part 2, Chapter 20 - Weeks pass by, and Eddie helps take care of Kel and Caulder when Layken is busy with her mother, and Will is busy with work. Will accepts a job at a junior high, which signals to Layken that things are over. Will has only been over once in two months, and Layken tells Julia that Will is busy with work. Julia and Layken begin getting their finances in order, and Layken will be taken care of. Meanwhile, Julia has lost all of her hair, and she is wrapping Kel's Christmas presents.

Will is graduating from college early, and Julia insists that Layken go to his graduation. Julia says that both Will and Layken have been thinking with their heads, and not their hearts, and that Will's decision was wrong. They need to be happy, and not let anything get in the way. She explains the night that Layken spent at Will's house, he told her that he was going to let her go so Layken could have more time with her. She tells Layken to go see Will. Layken gets changed, and puts her mother's hair in her jewelry box, while she puts the magic clip in her hair.

Part 2, Chapter 21 - Layken goes to Club N9NE, and performs a piece of poetry she has written. She knows Will is there. It is about her love for Will, and being schooled by all the people in her life. And she doesn't see Will when she gets offstage. She is heartbroken, and as she leaves, Will's voice rings out, saying she shouldn't leave before she gets her score. Will then performs a piece, about letting things get in the way of the



girl he loves. He then rushes over to her, and kisses her, and tells her he loves her. She tells him she loves him.

Epilogue - It is Christmas morning two years later. It is the second Christmas Layken and Will are together. Julia had passed away in September of that year. Layken misses her mother dearly, but she is happy to have Will, who is now working on his master's degree instead of teaching, and living off of student loans for the time being. Will brings over more gifts and a letter -from Julia. The letter tells them to keep making lasagna, to laugh, to never judge, and thanks them for giving her the best years of her life. The letter is signed with her love.

Part 2, Chapter 11 - Epilogue Analysis

As Part 2 begins, things have shifted dramatically. Reeling from the death of her father and the move to Michigan, Layken is now also confronted with the fact that her mother has terminal cancer. She seeks refuge and solace in Will, who consents to wanting to be friends, and Layken hopes that she is able to be Will's friend for the time being, even though she is still in love with him. As their friendship moves on, Will teaches Layken about poetry and handling death, for he himself has been through so much pain and hardship himself. It is upon learning about these hardships and pain that Layken falls even more in love with Will, and even more miserable since she cannot be with him.

Nevertheless, over the next few weeks, as Will and Layken grow more and more apart, Layken comes to realize that Will has been right about everything all along. There is only one thing that Will has been wrong about -and it is something that Layken has also been wrong about: their love for one another. At Julia's insisting, Layken decides to open up her heart once more, and to go after Will, to let him know she doesn't hate him, and that she loves him so much it hurts. At Club N9NE, the two confess their feelings to one another through poetry at a slam event. By the time the novel ends, another year has passed, and Layken and Will are happy and comfortably together. Julia has, sadly, passed on -but their cobbled-together family is still going strong.



Characters

Layken Cohen

Layken Cohen is the main character, narrator, and principle protagonist of the novel *Slammed* by Colleen Hoover. Layken is a beautiful eighteen year-old girl who appears to be independent and courageous, but is deeply haunted by the death of her father six months before, and saddened by the move from her native Texas to Michigan with her mother, Julia, and her brother, Kel. Layken quickly meets twenty-one year-old Will, who lives across the street with his little brother, Caulder. Layken goes on a date with Will to a slam contest, and the two are incredibly attracted to one another, and kiss several times. But at school, Layken discovers Will is her teacher -and Will is horrified by the revelation. While Layken wants a secret relationship with Will, Will puts the brakes on things, because he has his career and his brother to worry about.

Layken attempts to be friends with Will, but keeps falling deeper and deeper into love with him. Her world is rocked once more when her mother admits she has terminal cancer, and Layken takes refuge in Will, who teaches her over time to accept things like death, and to focus on life. Layken figures out that Will is in love with her too, but he doesn't seem to want a relationship at all anymore. But ultimately, Julia tells her daughter to follow her heart instead of her head, and Layken confesses her love to Will in a poem at a slam contest. Will, in turn, confesses his love to her. When the novel ends, they are still together, and a year has passed. Julia had died a few months before, having left a letter telling her children to live life, and sealing it with her love.

Will Cooper

Will Cooper is the older brother of Caulder, and the neighbor and English teacher of Layken -as well as the object of her unfailing love. Will is twenty-one, is on track to graduate early from college, and is student teaching when he meets Layken, and dates her. He is horrified by the fact that she is still a student, and tries to put the brakes on their relationship, though he cannot quite succeed. Over the coming months, Will is there for Layken as she discovers her mother has cancer, and is there to pull Javier off of Layken when he attempts to force himself on her. Will is ultimately given a new school to student teach at because of this, yet he continues to help care for Layken and her brother. At long last, Layken confesses her love for Will in public at a slam contest, and Will does the same in turn for her. He secretly keeps and then gives a sack of Christmas gifts and a letter to Layken and Kel from their mother for Christmas, after she dies. At the end of the novel, Layken and Will are still together, and seem to be going strong.



Julia Cohen

Julia Cohen is the mother of Layken and Kel, and the neighbor of Will and Caulder Cohen. Dying of cancer, and reeling from the death of her loving husband, Julia relocates her family to her hometown of Ypsilanti, Michigan, to be near a cancer specialist. She advises her daughter on dating, and cares deeply for her son, entertaining his happy childhood. Julia struggles with her daughter over her relationship with Will, ultimately coming around to accept it, and encouraging her daughter to go after Will. Julia ultimately dies a little less than a year later, leaving gifts and a letter behind for her children, telling them to live life, sealing it with her love.

Kel Cohen

Kel Cohen is the nine year-old brother of Layken, and the son of Julia. He is also the best friend of Caulder Cooper. His favorite food is lasagna, and he looks up to his big sister. He is shocked and saddened by the news of his mother's cancer, but with the help of his mother, Layken, Caulder, and Will, Kel is able to handle his mother's death, even making light of it by dressing up as a cancerous lung for Halloween.

Caulder Cooper

Caulder Cooper is the younger brother of Will Cohen, and the best friend of Kel Cohen. Caulder is a lively, energetic, and friendly kid, who takes an instant liking to Kel when he moves to Ypsilanti. Caulder is, himself, not without a haunted past. He narrowly survived the car accident that claimed the lives of his and his brother's parents. The survival is called miraculous.

Gavin

Gavin is the boyfriend of "Eddie" Olivia King. Gavin is kind and thoughtful, and conspires with Joel to give Eddie an amazing eighteenth birthday party.

Nick

Nick is friends with Gavin, Eddie, and Layken. Nick is constantly eating to gain weight in order to meet his weight class requirements, and he likes to tell Layken Chuck Norris jokes.

Javier

Javier is a student in Will's poetry class. He is brash and abrasive, and tries to force himself on Layken while at Club N9NE. But Will intercedes, beating up Javier in Layken's defense.

Joel

Joel is the foster father of Eddie. He is very caring, compassionate, and kind, and asks to be Eddie's father when she turns eighteen. Eddie happily accepts.



Objects/Places

Michigan

Michigan is the main setting of the novel. It is where Layken and her family move, and where Layken's mother, Julia, was born. It is where Detroit and Ypsilanti are located.

Ypsilanti

Ypsilanti is the small town outside of Detroit where Julia is born, and where she moves her family following the death of her husband. It is where Will and his brother live, and where Layken, Kel, and Caulder attend school, and where Will teaches school.

Detroit

Detroit is a city in Michigan, and is where Club N9NE is located. It is where Will, Layken, and their friends go to get to Club N9NE.

Club N9NE

Club N9NE is the hosting place of slam competitions every Thursday night. It is where Will takes Layken on their first date, and where they ultimately confess their love to one another.

Club N9NE Parking Lot

The Club N9NE Parking Lot is located outside of Club N9NE, and is where Javier forces himself on Layken, but is interrupted by Will, who beats him up.

Will's House

Will's house is located across the street from Layken's house, and is where Layken tends to go in times of trouble. She spends the night there at one point, and her brother often hangs out with Caulder over at Will's house as well.

Purple Magic Clip

A purple magic clip is given to Layken by her father when she cuts her hair the wrong way when she is little, to make the haircut better. Layken keeps the clip with her for the rest of her life, putting her mother's hair in it for a while, and later wearing it when she confesses her love to Will at Club N9NE.



Poetry

Poetry is what Layken, Will, and their friends read to one another in class, and in slam competitions at Club N9NE. It is also what Will and Layken use to confess their love to one another in public.

Avett Brothers CDs

Avett Brothers CDs are what Will and Layken listen to repeatedly throughout the novel, while they drive, as they clean, and as they relax. The music is a bonding point for them, one which never lets them go.

Letter

A letter is what Julia writes and leaves to her children after she dies. The letter tells her children to never stop living life, and Julia seals the letter with her love.



Themes

Coming of Age

Coming of age is a major and dominant theme in the novel *Slammed* by Colleen Hoover. The theme of coming of age involves the spiritual, emotional, ethical, and character growth of an individual when faced with real life issues and events. Coming of age primarily affects the character of Layken Cohen in the novel, and her coming of age comes about by way of her mother and Will.

When the novel begins, Layken is emotionally unstable, and reeling from the death of her father and the move to Michigan. Things are only further complicated by her instantaneous love for Will, the cooling of their relationship, and the revelation that Julia has cancer. She is unsure how to handle much of anything at all, though she pretends to know what she is doing. Ultimately, through her time with Will and her mother, she grows into a stronger, more capable person.

Will teaches Layken that she needs to prioritize her life, that poetry can be a beautiful emotional outlet, and that he will always be there for her. This compassion is completed in his love for her, and she becomes surer and more confident of herself, and in the things she feels and believes. She also discovers that she can get by on her own if she has to, which is something she was unsure of before. Layken's mother teaches her important things about love and family, as well as self-worth and life. Julia always tells Layken not to stop living life, and to go after Will if she truly loves him, which she ultimately does. By the end of the novel, Layken is handling the death of her mother, and the raising of her younger brother.

Love

Love is a major and dominant theme in the novel *Slammed* by Colleen Hoover. Love appears in the novel in two primary ways, both of which have lasting effects on the character of Layken in the novel. The first form of love is romantic, and the second form of love is familial.

In terms of romantic love, love occurs primarily between the characters of Layken and Will. Their attraction to one another is instantaneous, and they fall in love with one another very quickly. It is this love which helps to drive the plot, at first cause a rift between the two due to Will's position as a teacher, and later as a source of comfort and consolation against the greater tragedies of Layken's life. Will ultimately proves to be a calm in the storm for Layken as he helps her deal with her mother's cancer and death, and raising her younger brother.

In terms of familial love, love occurs primarily between Layken, her mother, Julia, and her brother, Kel. Reeling from the death of their father, Kel and Layken take comfort in one another, and in their mother, who, out of love, sacrifices her home in Texas seeking



cancer treatment, and the time to financially arrange for her eventual death. Everything Julia does, she does for her children, and ultimately her children come around to her, accepting her prognosis and confronting the cancer head on.

Friendship

Friendship is a major and dominant theme in the novel *Slammed* by Colleen Hoover. Friendship always involves mutual affection, loyalty, compassion, and caring between two or more people. Friendship occurs in the novel primarily between two sets of characters, and affects the novel in the same fashion, by enriching and consoling the characters involved.

The first friendship that takes place is instantaneous, between Kel and Caulder. Caulder has no other friends in the neighborhood, so the arrival of Kel means that he finally has a friend, and Kel has no friends upon arrival, either. The two become best friends, and become inseparable. Caulder's brush with death helps him to value life, and he helps Kel handle his mother's cancer by agreeing to become a cancerous lung for Halloween with him. The camaraderie that they share is limitless and unending.

The second friendship that occurs is between Layken and Eddie. Eddie is convinced they will become best friends immediately, but Layken isn't sure at first. Nevertheless, they hit it off, and become best friends quickly. Their loyalty to one another is so absolute that Layken entrusts the secret of her relationship with Will with Eddie. Eddie, in turn, entrusts Layken with the sad memories of her upbringing. The two confide in one another, and Eddie helps Layken to handle her mother's cancer by getting mother and daughter to talk to one another, and simply by being there to talk.



Style

Point of View

Colleen Hoover tells her novel *Slammed* from the perspective of main character and principal protagonist, Layken, in the first-person present limited-omniscient narrative. This is done for at least two reasons. The first is that Layken is narrating the events in present tense as they happen, meaning that her perspective is limited by what she knows at the time of her telling. The second, and more important reason, is that the events of the novel are the experiences of Layken's life. These experiences are of such a personal and intimate nature that a first-person narrator is best to relate these events. This also gives an added emotional weight to the novel, allowing narrator and reader to personally connect through personal and private telling.

Setting

Colleen Hoover sets her novel *Slammed* in the hometown of Julia, Ypsilanti, Michigan. This can be viewed in both a circular, and a symbolic light. Circularly, Julia's life begins and ends in Ypsilanti, and the lives of her children truly begin where hers began as well. In this light, Julia's story is begun and ended. Symbolically, Colleen Hoover's homecoming means coming home -going to Heaven. Throughout the novel, appeals and questions are sent God's way by various characters, and Julia's settling of her life reflects the fact that she has finally come to a place of peace -the peace to move on, to go Home.

Language and Meaning

Colleen Hoover tells her novel *Slammed* in language that is simple, yet poetic. This is done for at least three reasons. The first is that the novel is narrated by an eighteen year-old girl who has not yet gone to college, so her language is simple and straightforward. Secondly, Layken is an incredibly deep and emotionally complex person who has beautiful things to say, and these come out in poetic fashion in the prose. The third reason is that poetry occupies such a central part of the novel, both in terms of connecting with inner emotions and expressing the things people feel, that poetic prose is a fitting reflection of poetry itself.

Structure

Colleen Hoover divides her novel *Slammed* into two parts, with each part comprising multiple chapters, and the second part being concluded by an epilogue. The book's two parts are divided at the point where Julia confesses to her daughter that she has cancer, marking a dramatic turn of events in the plot. Everything in the first part builds up to the revelation of Julia's cancer; everything in the second part reflects the reaction

and efforts to handle that revelation, including Layken's relationship with Will. Indeed, it is ultimately Layken's mother who proves to be the catalyst for the renewed relationship between Will and Layken, which is revealed in the epilogue.

Quotes

"Believe me, I'm already dead,' I mumble as I open up the door and climb outside."
Part 1, Chapter 1, p. 9

"There are three questions every woman should be able to answer yes to before she commits to a man. If you answer no to any of the three questions, run like hell."
-Part 1, Chapter 2, p. 36

"I have no idea how to react. I had no idea that this was his life. That Caulder was his whole life. I'm amazed by his performance but devastated by his words."
-Part 1, Chapter 2, p. 53

"Write about anything, as long as it's something you're passionate about. If the audience doesn't feel your passion, they won't feel you -and that's never fun, believe me."
-Part 1, Chapter 6, p. 105

"Make up your freaking mind, Will! Last night you told me to stop loving you, and now you're telling me to stop hating you?"
-Part 1. Chapter 7, p. 133

"I look across the street at my house. My house that's not a home. I know my mom is inside, just yards away. I have no idea what I would begin to say to her if I walked over there right now."
-Part 2, Chapter 11, p. 185

"My mother sits next to me and I feel her arms encircle me, so I turn into her and hug her. My heart aches for her. For us. I tighten my grip on her, afraid to let her go. I can't let her go."
-Part 2, Chapter 11, p. 196

"It shouldn't matter what anyone else thinks about your words. When you're on that stage -you share a piece of your soul. You can't assign points to that."
-Part 2, Chapter 13, p. 216

"So? So what if the heartache you wrote last year isn't what you're feeling today. It may be exactly what the person in the front row is feeling. What you're feeling now, and the



person you may reach with your words five years from now -that's why you write poetry."

-Part 2, Chapter 15, p. 241

"You can't run to another town, another place, another state. Whatever it is you're running from -it goes with you. It stays with you until you find out how to confront it."

-Part 2, Chapter 17, p. 260

"When someone close to you dies, the memories of them are painful. It isn't until the fifth stage of grief that the memories of them stop hurting as much -when the recollections become positive. When you stop thinking about that person's death and remember all of the wonderful things about their life.":

-Epilogue, p. 352



Topics for Discussion

Discuss the theme of coming of age in the novel *Slammed* by Colleen Hoover. What does it mean to come of age? How does coming of age affect the character of Layken? In what ways does she come of age? Who is responsible for this? Is she a better person for coming of age? Why or why not? Provide evidence to support your conclusion.

What are the five steps of grief mentioned in the novel? Why are they important to Layken? Using those five steps, describe different events in Layken's life as she progresses through those steps.

Discuss the theme of love in the novel *Slammed* by Colleen Hoover. What kinds of love are present in the novel? How do each of these forms of love affect the character of Layken? How do they affect the overall plot? Is love a positive or a negative thing for Layken, or a combination of both? Explain.

Throughout the novel, Layken is frustrated because she cannot have a relationship with Will. What are Will's reasons for not committing to a relationship with Layken? Are these good reasons? Is Layken wrong or right to press Will for a relationship? Explain.

Discuss the theme of friendship in the novel *Slammed* by Colleen Hoover. What is friendship? Between which two sets of characters does friendship primarily occur? What are these friendships like? How do they help the parties involved? Why does friendship ultimately become so important to both Layken and Kel? Explain.