



Title: A Christmas Kerril

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This reader guide may be duplicated for classroom, book club discussion group, or related purposes.

About the Book: *In this modern take on a holiday classic, high school junior, Kerril, faces her past, present, and future to be reminded of the good in others, and in herself.*

Haunted by the memory of the worst of her divorced parents' public Christmas blowouts, Kerril, will do almost anything to avoid the upcoming tinsel-filled season. Unfortunately, a teacher with a grudge casts Kerril as the lead in the school's holiday production. To add to the misery, she will star alongside ultra-awkward Adam as her love interest.

Wanting to ditch the play, Adam, her parents, and Christmas altogether, Kerril accepts an invitation to take off to a cabin with her ultimate dream crush, Perry – only Perry may not be the guy she hoped he was, and it's not until she's left Adam behind to fend for himself onstage that she realizes he might just be the guy of her dreams.

Discussion Questions:

1. *A Christmas Kerril* is a reimagining of Charles Dickens' classic *A Christmas Carol*. How are the two novels similar? How do they differ? Are there any similar themes or symbols used in both?
2. Discuss Kerril's reasons for her dislike of the Christmas season. Are any of her reasons valid? What steps could she take to make this a more enjoyable season?
3. Kerril visits her past, present, and future through the vehicle of lucid dreaming. If you could visit your past, present, or future and be a fly on the wall of your life, which would you choose, and what would you hope to discover?
4. Like Ebenezer Scrooge, in the name of self-protection, Kerril makes some poor choices and doesn't always treat people well. Discuss her poor choices and what she could have done differently.

5. Over the course of the novel, several things worked to change Kerril's mind about Christmas. List these people, events, or changes.
6. Adam faces his speech challenges in a very public way. Have you ever tried to overcome an inadequacy publicly? What was the result?
7. Will overcoming her aversion to all things Christmas help Kerril in attaining her dream of owning her own bakery? In what ways?
8. Where do you think Kerril will be a year from now? What will she do next Christmas? Will Adam, Perry, Brooke, or Aysha still be in her life?

Cross-curriculum Tie-ins:

Music - Make a playlist for *A Christmas Kerril* and describe why you chose each song.

Writing/Drama – Write a short scene that you can imagine in Adam's script. Include the characters of Kerril, Abe, and Daphne, and give them each lines. Play out the short scene and try to embody the character traits of Kerril, Adam, and Mara without overacting.

Activities and Projects:

1. Write an alternate ending for *A Christmas Kerril*. Here are few ideas to get you started: What if Kerril had gone off with Perry? What if she had arrived at the school before the snow storm and before the play started, with her parents at war? What if Kerril showed up at the school to find that Adam had left when he realized she wouldn't be there to help him?
2. Write the newspaper review for Ms. Clayburn's production of *A Christmas Kerril*.
3. Write a new lucid dream into the book for Kerril. Would you take her to her past, present, or future again, and what would she experience?
4. Create a book trailer, or mini Youtube video for *A Christmas Kerril*. Incorporate pictures, video clips, or music that you think would tell Kerril's story.

Related Reads:

If you liked this book, you may also enjoy:

- *The Ex Games* by Jennifer Echols
- *Alice in Wonderland High* by Rachel Shane
- *How to Save a Life* by Sara Zarr
- *Let it Snow* by John Green, Lauren Myracle, and Maureen Johnson
- *Falling For Alice* by Various Authors
- *My True Love Gave to Me* by Various Authors

Author Biography: Denise Jaden is, or has been, everything from a professional Polynesian dancer and fitness competitor to a mushroom farmer and church secretary. Most of her time now is spent homeschooling or playing with her young son (also a fast-drafter of fiction) or in front of her computer writing.

The first draft of Denise's debut novel for teens, *LOSING FAITH*, was written in twenty-one days during NaNoWriMo 2007. It was released from Simon & Schuster in September 2010, with her next one, *NEVER ENOUGH*, out in summer 2012. A companion anthology, *NEVER ENOUGH STORIES*, is available as a free ebook at various online book outlets. Her other fiction includes *FOREIGN EXCHANGE* (an editor's pick from *Evernight Teen*), and a story in the anthology *FALLING FOR ALICE*. Look for upcoming YA novels *A CHRISTMAS KERRIL* (Oct. 2015) and *AVALANCHE* (Leap Books, Spring 2016).

Her first non-fiction work, *WRITING WITH A HEAVY HEART: USING GRIEF AND LOSS TO STRETCH YOUR FICTION*, is available online wherever books are sold, and her second book for writers, *FAST FICTION*, was released from New World Library in 2014.

Denise lives just outside Vancouver, Canada with her husband and son.