

SLICE

JUICY MOMENTS FROM MY IMPOSSIBLE LIFE

STEVEN HERRICK



TEACHING SUPPORT KIT

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CONTENTS

1.	Plot summary	3
2.	About the author	3
3.	Genre, structure and style	4
4.	Characters	4
5.	Themes	5

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1. PLOT SUMMARY

It's my diary of the last few months of Year Eleven. Dotted . . . pockmarked with study, dreams of Audrey, lunchtime chess with Noah, classes of yawning tedium with Mr Clegg, dreams of Audrey, sneering battles with Tim, football stories with Dad and more dreams of Audrey.

Darcy Franz Pele Walker, so named by his football-crazy dad after his two favourite players, wants to go out with Audrey Benitez. She practises yoga. Darcy twists himself in knots as he battles school bullies, chess games with nerdy Noah and the school excursion from hell. All to be close to Audrey.

Herrick takes us on a rites of passage journey through the maze of awkward adolescence.

2. ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steven Herrick was born in Brisbane, the youngest of seven children. At school, his favourite subject was soccer, and he dreamed of football glory while he worked at various jobs, including fruit picking. Now, he's a full-time writer and performs in many schools each year. He loves talking to students and their teachers about stories, poetry, soccer and even golf.

Steven's body of work includes poetry collections for young people and adults such as *Water Bombs*, *Love Poems and Leg Spinners*, *The Sound of Chopping* and *My Love, My Life, My Lasagne*. He has also performed his poetry in pubs and public venues in Australia and overseas.

Steven is renowned for his verse novels for young readers and young adult readers, including *A place like this* (1998), *the spangled drongo* (1999), *The simple gift* (2000), *Tom Jones saves the world* (2002), *Do-wrong Ron* (2003), *by the river* (2004), *Naked bunyip dancing* (2005) and *Lonesome howl* (2006). Several of his verse novels have won awards throughout Australia and have been released in the US and other countries.

His works have been shortlisted for Children's Book Council of Australia Awards on a number of occasions, and have won various awards including the NSW Premier's Literary Awards.

Steven lives in the Blue Mountains with his wife and sons. Visit his website at <http://www.stevenherrick.com.au/>

3. GENRE, STRUCTURE AND STYLE

- Discuss how the title is relevant to the story as a whole.
- Discuss how the cover image is relevant to the story. If you had to use a different image on the cover, what would you choose?
- *Slice* is a realistic teenage novel. It is told in the first person, which gives a sense of immediacy. How reliable is Darcy as a narrator – should we take everything he says at face value?
- First-person point of view is useful in comparing the behavior of the protagonist in relation to other characters – what is the difference when using other points of view? Discuss.
- How does the author use humour to convey the story? Is he successful?
- What are some features of Steven Herrick's writing that you consider to be original and distinctive? Provide examples.
- How does the author use dialogue to develop characterisation?

4. CHARACTERS

- Make a list of the book's characters, indicating their relationships to one another.
- Which character do you most identify with, and why?
- Do a case study of Darcy, Audrey or Noah, taking in their background, appearance, attitude, likes and dislikes, how they see themselves and how they relate to other people – especially members of their own families. Describe how they react to crises in their lives, explaining why they behave as they do.

5. THEMES

Family relationships

- How is Darcy's family different to Noah's and Audrey's?
- How do the characters deal with family problems? Do you think they are successful? What would you have done differently?

Bullying

- Do you think Darcy deals with being bullied in the best way? Does he have any other options?
- Why is Noah bullied? Do you think he is strong in the way he manages it?
- Why isn't Audrey bullied?

Writing and poetry

- Why does Ms Hopkins throw the poetry book out of the window and why does Noah go and pick it up?
- Why does Darcy love Shakespeare?
- Find three Romantic poets and a poem that has relevance to your life.
- Does poetry have a value in your life? Why or why not?

- Write a diary for the final six months of this school year. How is your diary similar to Darcy's? How is it different? Why?
- Like Darcy, write a school essay on 'my family'.

First love

- Do you think Darcy's infatuation with Audrey is realistic?
- Do you think Audrey is gutsy?
- Do you believe that Audrey has feelings for Darcy? Why?

Parents

- We see the parents through the eyes of the protagonists. Do you think they are portrayed fairly?
- What is special about Noah's relationship with his father?
- What sort of people are Audrey's parents?
- Do you agree with Darcy that *Some parents should be forbidden from naming their children?* Give some examples from your life.

Death and dying

- Noah and Darcy discuss death and dying while they are on the kayaking trip. Do you think they deal with the issue well?
- How would you deal with Noah's situation?
- As Noah's friend, how would you support him?

Friendship

- There are a number of friendships developed in this story. Discuss the friendships between:
 - Darcy and Noah
 - Darcy and Audrey
 - Tim and Braith
 - Miranda, Stacy and Claire
- How do the latter two groups relate to the three protagonists?

Sport

- Sport is a recurring theme in the novel. Discuss why it is important.
- What links the characters to sport?