



# Social Queue

## KAY KERR

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Fiction

RECOMMENDED READING AGE: 14+

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### CURRICULUM GUIDE

*The following teaching guide has been designed to embrace shared curriculum values. Students are encouraged to communicate their understanding of a text through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing.*

*The learning activities aim to encourage students to think critically, creatively and independently, to reflect on their learning and connect it to an audience, purpose and context. They encompass a range of forms with a focus on language, literature and literacy. Where appropriate, they promote the integration of ICT and life skills.*

### SYNOPSIS

Eighteen-year-old Zoe is partway through an internship at online magazine Bubble and trying to leave the trauma of high school behind her. When she writes a story about her experiences navigating romance and dating apps as an autistic person who has never dated before, she never expects it to go viral. And she certainly doesn't expect the comments from several old acquaintances who own up to having had feelings for her.

So, Zoe embarks on a series of not-quite-dates, in which she agrees to meet 'all the babes who loved her before' and write them up as a series on Bubble. Zoe's series resonates with readers, but she struggles to balance the pressures of trying to find her writing voice, facing moments from her past that she'd rather forget, and avoiding serious burn-out.

With everyone pushing Zoe towards a happy ending, will she find the space to figure out what she wants? *Social Queue* is a genuine, heart-warming romance that speaks to wider social issues of ableism, male entitlement, and learning to listen to the people around us.

### PRAISE FOR SOCIAL QUEUE

'A perceptive, honest, and warmly captivating romantic comedy that touched my heart. I adored it!'  
**Helen Hoang**

'A fun, honest and timely coming-of-age story that I wish I'd had when I was a teen. I absolutely LOVED it!'  
**Jen Wilde**

'An absolute delight! Relatable, perceptive and full of heart.'  
**C. G. Drews**

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kay Kerr is a former journalist and community newspaper editor from Brisbane. She lives on the Sunshine Coast with her husband and daughter, and works as a freelance writer. Kay was writing *Please Don't Hug Me*, her debut novel, when she received her autism-spectrum diagnosis.

### BEFORE READING

1. Read [this resource](https://pwd.org.au/resources/disability-info/social-model-of-disability/) (https://pwd.org.au/resources/disability-info/social-model-of-disability/) on the social model of disability. Reflect on how this challenges or aligns with your own understanding of disability. Read the author's note at the end of the book and discuss as a group.
2. Read the blurb of the book [here](https://www.textpublishing.com.au/books/social-queue) (https://www.textpublishing.com.au/books/social-queue). *Social Queue* is described as a 'funny and heart-warming story about deciphering the confusing signals of attraction and navigating a path to love.' What does this make you expect from the book? Discuss tropes in class, and make a list of tropes you might expect to find in a romance novel.
3. Think about the title of the book *Social Queue*. What do you think the title means? Why do you think the author has chosen this title, and played with the phrase 'social cues' in this way?



## WHILE READING

1. What similarities does Zoe see between her experiences as an autistic person and the way that people use scripting in their everyday lives?
2. Zoe says that she's making 2021 the year of 'new year, new me' (p. 8). What does Zoe think she needs to change about herself and why? Where is this messaging coming from?
3. What does Sara's message make Zoe question about herself (p. 152)? How does she navigate these feelings?
4. Josef tells Zoe to 'write from a scar, not an open wound' (p. 18). What does this saying mean? Why is he worried about Zoe writing the piece?
5. Why do you think Zoe has such a strong reaction to the police incident (p. 65)? What could greater training and education change about a situation like this one?
6. Both Maia and Harriet talk about the 'things' that happen to women sometimes. What 'things' are they referring to? Have you ever experienced anything similar? If you're not a woman, have you ever seen or encountered any of these behaviours? What did you do to stop it?
7. Does Zoe make the right choice when she leaves the wedding with Gabe? Would you have done anything differently?
8. Consider the email that Zoe sends Josef at the end of the book. How does this email show the ways she has grown since the start of the story?

## AFTER READING

### CHARACTER

1. The novel is written in first person (I/me), and so we primarily see Zoe the way she sees herself. But the responses to her story indicate that other people see Zoe differently. 'I didn't see myself that way through his eyes. I don't even know if I ever tried looking at us through my own' (p. 45).
  - Write a sentence that describes the way Zoe sees herself.
  - Choose one of the other characters in the book and write a sentence that describes the way they see Zoe.
2. Do you feel as if you're the protagonist of your own story? Zoe implies that she hasn't been in the past (p. 23) but is trying to be now. What does being the protagonist of your own story look like? Why might some people find this easier than others?
3. Aidan has clearly changed since high school when he meets Zoe. How does she observe this in her interactions with him? Do you think he deserves a second chance? What do you think he wants to say to Zoe when her article comes out?

## STYLE AND STRUCTURE

1. Zoe is both the narrator of the story and the writer of the articles in the story, and yet her voice is different in the two forms of writing. Discuss the differences and similarities between her voice as the narrator of the story and her writer's voice. Is one more genuine than the other? Why do you feel this way? What do you think Josef (and Zoe) mean when they talk about 'voice' in relation to writing?
2. Although the book primarily follows a traditional narrative, Kay Kerr uses a variety of text types to break up the prose (text messages, Instagram messages and the magazine articles). What impact does this have on the story? Do you like it? What other kinds of media have you seen used in fiction, and why do writers include these in their work?
3. How does Kay Kerr use humour to address some of the more challenging issues in the book?

## THEMES

### Anxiety

1. 'The idea of unseen notifications makes me anxious, and so I check my phone approximately every twenty minutes of the day, and a couple of times throughout the night as well. That is according to my screen time report, which is something else that makes me anxious' (p. 1). Can you relate to any of these feelings? Discuss the way that anxiety can amplify feelings like this to a point where they become debilitating.
2. How is the anxiety Jake experiences different from the anxiety that Zoe experiences? Make a note of the way that their anxiety shapes their individual choices and reactions on their first date. How is the similarity of their experiences also a positive thing?
3. Has anxiety ever prevented you from doing something that you wanted to do (like asking someone on a date)?

### Romance and dating

1. 'Zoe feels that she should like Jake because he's a 'nice guy'. What makes him a nice guy? How does Zoe describe her feelings towards him? What do you think she likes about him? Discuss why being considered 'nice' is a good thing or a negative thing.
2. 'I've never liked "enemies to lovers" as a romance trope, not if the "enemies" part includes actual hurtful experiences' (p. 54).
  - Where do you think this trope comes from? How can we start to move away from it?
  - What other romance tropes can you think of (use your list from earlier)? How do you feel about them?
3. What are the various 'red flags' that Zoe encounters on her dates, and in other online interactions? Are there any red flags you would add to this list?



### Disability and ableism

1. Zoe describes herself as wanting to scream when she reads the pitying sounding phrases Maia uses in her articles. Make a list of the phrases that Zoe identifies as problematic in the book. Next to this, write a short sentence explaining why each is problematic, and what a better alternative might be.
2. Discuss the term 'ableism' in class. What does it mean? You might need to do some research to feel confident in your understanding of this. Why was Gabe being ableist when he described Zoe as an inspiration in class at school? What other examples of ableism can you find in people's behaviour in the book? Does it matter whether or not ableism is intentional?
3. 'No, there's no need for euphemisms. "Disabled" isn't a dirty word' (p. 68). Why do you think people are afraid of using the word 'disabled'? What can we do to change the stigma around the term, and around disability more broadly?
4. When Maia asks Zoe to read her articles about the police incident she does so because she wants to do better. But for Zoe, 'it's like I'm being asked to train someone how to treat me and people like me like human beings' (p. 69). What could Maia do differently to avoid putting the pressure on Zoe to do the work here?

### RESPONDING

1. Zoe describes the romance stories she has been 'gorging on since childhood' in the early pages of the book: 'Two people meet each other, often in an unusual way, face minor challenges of miscommunication, before getting together and staying that way. Only, my life feels like one unending challenge of miscommunication, and there is nothing minor about it.' (p. 5)
  - What other stories (in books, film, or TV) can you think of that fit the narrative Zoe describes here?
  - How does Zoe's narrative differ from them?
  - Why do you think people like narratives that work to a formula?
  - What do you want from a story about love?

Using the formula above (or parts of it) come up with your own love story. How are you going to make it interesting enough to engage your readers?
2. Imagine that, like Zoe, you're just out of high school and have the chance to reinvent yourself. Describe a day in the life of the person you'd like to become.
3. Do you find understanding social cues and fitting in easy or hard? It bothers Zoe how 'people need the truth to be sugar-coated to be palatable. And that it's my job to remember the sugar' (p. 35). Do you agree with Zoe's statement here? Consider the following examples where Zoe adapts her behaviour to make other people feel comfortable:

- When she resists the urge to rub her arm after Maia squeezes it (p. 27-28)
- When she contains her fury at Maia for putting her on the spot in the work meeting (p. 98-99)
- When she makes sure that she's smiling as she wriggles her fingers out of Jake's hand (p. 190)

How does she feel in these situations, and others where she needs to manage her actions to fit the expectations of other people? How do you think they would respond if she didn't do this? Make a list of ways that we can change our spaces and our behaviour to make them more accessible for disabled people.

4. When Zoe talks about the bullying she experienced at high school she says 'it is not as though people at school came out and said they didn't like me because I'm autistic. That would have been way too obvious. I was wrong in a collection of smaller ways, like my voice or how I didn't always catch sarcasm, or didn't like loud noises. I was wrong for liking *The Sims* too much, and for not caring enough about shows everyone else seemed to like to watch. Sometimes I didn't even know they were making fun of me, like when one of them would ask me a question just to have the chance to laugh at my response. I was never saying anything funny. I can see now that my responses were all traits linked to me being autistic, but they would never admit that, or even reflect on it enough to realise that was the case. I was wrong, and that was that.' (p. 19).

Think about a time when you've felt wrong, even in the smallest of ways. Write about how it felt, and how the people around you reacted. Reflect on how this makes you empathise with Zoe's experience at high school.