

## READING GUIDE FOR MORE THAN ONE KIND

### ***MORE THAN ONE KIND***

#### *Modern Fiction*

#### *JEAN GILL*

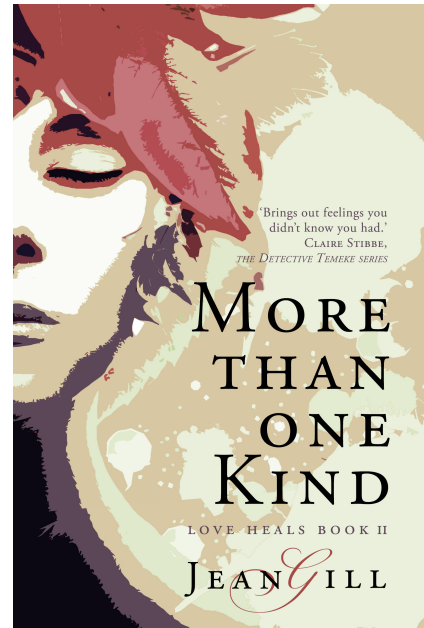
Life swap for a year; change your life forever.

'You're old and cold,' are the words that end Anne Grüber's three-year relationship with a fellow-teacher. A hurtful insult that she fears may be true. What chance does she have now of finding love or even an adventure?

Then she sees an advert that will change her life: a job-swap teaching in a small Welsh town. Is it coincidence or fate that brings her to the very place her half-sister was last known to live? What happened to the child born in war-torn Alsace and ripped from her mother's arms?

In search of lost family, Anne jumps into the unknown. Neil expects professional development when he steps into Anne's shoes to teach in France. What he finds is passion. For one man, Luc, and for Alsace itself. Can he ever go back? And should he? When Neil and Anne swap lives for a year, they both find that there is more than one kind of love.

'More than One Kind of Love' challenges conventional views of family and responsibilities, making us question what risks we would take, and which relationships matter most, when tough choices have to be made.



**Jean Gill** is a Welsh writer and photographer living in the south of France with a big white dog, a scruffy black dog, a Nikon D750 and a man. For many years, she taught English in Wales and was the first woman to be a secondary headteacher in Carmarthenshire. She is mother or stepmother to five children so life was hectic.

Publications are varied, including prize-winning poetry and novels, military history, translated books on dog training, and a cookery book on goat cheese. With Scottish parents, an English birthplace and French residence, she can usually support the winning team on most sporting occasions.

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### *Questions for Discussion*

Warning! There are spoilers in some of the questions so it's recommended that you read the book before peeking!

#### *The title*

1. How would you complete the title *More Than One Kind*? *More Than One Kind of what*? In what ways does the book show more than one kind? The word *kind* can also have different meanings. Do you interpret the title differently now you've finished the book than you did when you first saw the title? Do you think the title suits the book and its genre? If you were putting it on a bookshelf, which genre would you say it was?

#### *Anne*

2. When Anne ends their relationship in Chapter 1, Anton tells her, 'You're old and cold,' and she takes the words to heart, feeling they must be true. Yet Anton wishes to continue their relationship once Anne has come out of what he sees as a passing mood. What do you think brought them together in the first place? Do you think Anne is right to end the relationship?

How much pressure do you think there is to be part of a couple? Should that be a goal, a measure of success in life? Is Anton more practical about what can be expected in a couple?

Is his judgement of Anne sexist? Is 43 old? Is the attitude towards ageing different for men and women? How does the widowed Mair Phillips change in behaviour during the novel and what does this show about community expectations?

During the novel we see Anne in other relationships. What qualities does she show with her mother? With her friends in Wales? With her pupils? With her great-niece?

By the end of the novel, do you think Anne is old and cold?

#### *Vernon, Elsë and WW2 Alsace*

3. Although she was so young, Elsë was part of the French resistance in Alsace. Does the picture of wartime portrayed in the novel fit with your own knowledge of WW2? Is it realistic?

The Alsace concentration camp of Le Struthof is real. How does the author try to convey its horror. Does she succeed? How does Neil's visit to Le Struthof contribute to our understanding of the risks run by Elsë? How do you feel about the choices faced by Elsë and the other villagers?

The school visit to Le Struthof is well-intentioned but the pupils do not understand or respect what happened there. How do Neil and Luc react? Why does the place have such a personal impact on them? In hiding the fact he's gay, is Neil betraying those who died because they were homosexual?

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Elsë lost her first love, Vernon, in World War 2 but her annual pilgrimage to the woods showed that she never forgot him. Do you think her marriage to Anne's father was second best? Was it merely a practical arrangement like Anton wanted with Anne?

Elsë can't forget the baby she was forced to give up. Do you feel sorry for her? Do you think she is unfair to Anne in passing the burden of search onto her? What does family mean to you? Who do you consider to be part of your family? Do you think seeking out birth parents or adopted children should be a right? Can it do more harm than good?

### *A sense of place: Alsace and South Wales*

4. We see both Alsace and South Wales through outsiders' eyes because of the job swap. How well does the author describe the settings? How do the landscapes add colour and character? What cultural differences are there between the places?

Storks are the national emblem of Alsace. How are they interwoven as a motif in the story?

Several characters work with animals and/or birds: storks, monkeys, cows and dogs. How do human-animal relationships fit into the story? What key moments are sparked off by animals? Can love of animals and the environment be as important as love for another human being?

What impact does the Foot and Mouth crisis have on Dai and his family? Do you think town dwellers understand how farmers live and work?

### *Living on the breadline*

5. Helen works out the finances of the Women Empowering Women scheme by knitting the numbers and she decides it cannot work long term, so she decides she won't try to make money from it. Anne declares it to be a rip-off. Mair Phillips joins in and makes money. Mrs Evans needs the money most, joins the scheme too late to profit and loses all her money, which has gone to earlier members like Mair Phillips. How do the organisers make the scheme attractive to women? Do you think this sort of scheme is acceptable morally? Is it a form of theft? Have you joined in one? Would you join in one?

The bank manager treats Mrs Evans rudely because she needs to borrow money and has no assets or income. She then goes to a loan shark. How did you feel as she became deeper in debt? What factors allow loan sharks to lend money at extortionate rates? Do pride, shame and secrecy play a part? What could have stopped Mrs Evans from being caught up in increasing debts?

### *Mixing facts and fiction*

6. Jean Gill included many real events: the relief of Strasbourg in WW2, the foot and mouth crisis, Women Empowering Women financial scheme (or scam), the lethal storm at a Strasbourg concert. Do these add to the realism of the novel or give too many factual details?

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### *Alex*

7 Child abuse, especially incest, is a controversial theme. Would you put all the blame on Jimmy for the abuse? Does the author give him any sympathy in the way she portrays him? Do we understand why he might be acting in such a way? Could you forgive him?

Alex creates a safe place in her imagination. Did you have a safe place as a child, real or imaginary, where you could shut out everyday problems (or bigger ones).

When Jimmy dirties Alex's one safe person with his words, he is destroying her only refuge. Did you think Alex had murdered her father? Would you have felt it justified if she had?

Alex also has one safe person, the San Fairy Anne that she has imagined from words passed down in the family and misunderstood from another language. Have you ever made up your own words and discovered later that you misinterpreted the original? Perhaps words overheard as a child, or words in another language, or the words of a song?

The author likes to play with words in more than one language. As well as Alex imagining San Fairy Anne, Neil writes 'Pob Luc' in the mist on the window, Welsh for 'Good luck' but also 'Everything is Luc'. Did you enjoy the different languages and levels of meaning?

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### *Neil and Luc*

8. Elsë was uncomfortable about Neil being gay. She said, '...perhaps this river is too quick for me, too different from what I know... as if the river is... shocking pink.'

'Against nature, you mean.'

'Perhaps. And perhaps it is the nature of this river to be shocking pink and for me to only watch, not understand.'

Neil has always hidden his homosexuality whereas Luc is open. *Book 1 of Love Heals, No Bed of Roses*, shows Neil as a teacher in school and in the community, and the pressure he would face if he came out. Should anyone have to declare his/her sexual orientation? Should Neil?

In interview, Jean Gill said, 'I want every reader, gay or straight, to be rooting for Neil to have his happy ending with Luc.' Did you want Neil to say yes? Do you understand why he said no? What do you imagine would have been his life if he had said yes? What do you think his mother's reaction would have been? Do you think society split them up or do you think it was a personal decision?

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What difference, if any, did it make to Neil when he found out that his mother was dating? How did you feel, knowing something so important that Neil didn't? Do you enjoy this kind of dramatic irony in a novel?

### *Structure*

9. The novel has many different viewpoints, which all come together after several chapters. Did this add richness or make it too confusing?

### *The End*

10. There are three main endings:

Neil and Luc

Helen and Dai

Elsë, Anne and Alex

Were you satisfied that each ending fitted the characters, relationships and stories? What did you think of the very end?

### *One Book in a Series*

11. This is Book 2 in the series *Love Heals*. Did it stand alone? Did it make you want to read Book 1 *No Bed of Roses*? (which focuses on Helen, Dai and Neil)

If there is a Book 3, what questions would you like to be answered? Which stories would you like to see continue? Contact Jean Gill [jean.gill@wanadoo.fr](mailto:jean.gill@wanadoo.fr) and tell her! What you think matters!

### *What Next?*

Come and say hello to Jean on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/writerjeangill/>  
on twitter <https://twitter.com/writerjeangill>

or visit Jean's website [www.jeangill.com](http://www.jeangill.com) where you can sign up for her newsletter to receive offers and book news.

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