



**“ASTOUNDING.”**

—ANDREW JOSEPH WHITE,  
*New York Times* bestselling author

# THAT WHICH FEEDS US

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

**KEALA KENDALL**

**DISCUSSION GUIDE**

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## ABOUT THE BOOK

For the world's wealthiest, Kōpa'a Island Resort is more than a destination. It's the ultimate escape. With no cell service or Wi-Fi, the Hawaiian island is a coveted wellness retreat renowned for its persimmon orchard and promises of rejuvenation.

But their dream vacation is Lehua's nightmare. When her twin sister, Ohia, goes missing, Lehua follows her trail to Kōpa'a to find her. Instead, Lehua is cut off from civilization—and help—after the island's boat leaves without her, stranding her with the resort's lavish guests and enigmatic staff.

As Lehua investigates Ohia's disappearance, she discovers her missing sister isn't the island's only mystery. Kōpa'a's rich exterior and sweet persimmons hide its dark plantation past. And Lehua can't ignore the dreams haunting her each night—nor the warning telling her to leave the island at once. To uncover what happened to Ohia, Lehua will have to unearth the island's bloody history and face the horrors that lurk within its sugarcane fields—or risk being consumed by them.

Sharply observed and gorgeously written, *That Which Feeds Us* explores the true cost of paradise as Lehua fights to reclaim the land, the stories, and the very souls of her people.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Franky Guzman

Keala Kendall is the *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author of *How Far I'll Go* and *Nobody Gets Left Behind* in Disney's *A Twisted Tales* series, and *That Which Feeds Us: A Hawaiian Gothic*. Hapa Native Hawaiian, she is a cofounder of Pacific Islanders in Publishing and a past organizer of the Books for Maui charity auction. Born in Honolulu, raised on Moloka'i, she now lives as part of the Native Hawaiian diaspora in Los Angeles. Visit her online at [kealakendall.com](http://kealakendall.com) or [@kealakendall](https://www.instagram.com/kealakendall).



# PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. When you think of Hawai‘i, what specific images or ideas come to mind? How might these ideas or images differ from the lived experiences of Native Hawaiian people?
2. More Native Hawaiians now live outside Hawai‘i than in it. What are some unique challenges a person might face when they are disconnected from their ancestral homeland?
3. The title *That Which Feeds Us* refers to the word ‘āina (land). Beyond physical food, what are some ways a land or culture can “feed” a person’s spirit or sense of self? In your response, give an example from your personal experience.
4. In Native Hawaiian culture, the word na‘au refers to one’s guts, intestines, or spiritual center. Have you ever relied on a “gut feeling” to get out of a dangerous situation? How does trusting intuition differ from using logic?
5. In the Letter from the Author, Keala Kendall contrasts two perspectives of Hawai‘i: the tourist “paradise” and her own experience. Identify two specific phrases or sentences the author uses to depict the tourist myth of Hawai‘i and two phrases or sentences she employs to describe her personal experience. How do these pairs of details work together to establish the author’s purpose for writing this novel?

## PRE-READING ACTIVITY

### Further Reading Sources and Writing Prompts

#### **Read Aloha ‘Āina; What is it?** by Joseph Nawahī

#### Writing Prompts:

1. Explain how Nawahī uses the compass and magnetism analogy to define the concept of aloha ‘āina. In your response, cite two specific phrases or sentences from the passage and analyze how each supports the comparison between a compass needle and a Hawaiian’s loyalty to the land.
2. Nawahī contrasts persons with aloha (love) for their land and those who “lack the feelings and characteristics of aloha ‘āina.” Using evidence from the text, describe the consequences Nawahī attributes to lacking aloha ‘āina, and explain how these consequences reinforce the author’s overall argument about loyalty and community standing.



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the mortuary scene (pages 29–31) tell the reader about Lehua’s relationship to death and her cultural background? Cite two specific details from the text and explain how each develops Lehua’s character.
2. Cite two moments in chapter 3 that show Lehua is ashamed of her lack of cultural knowledge. How are her physical or emotional reactions described in those moments, and what do those reactions reveal about the gap between Lehua and her heritage?
3. When arriving in Kōpa‘a, Lehua discovers that Ohia used the alias “Alana Marie Holt” and claimed to be an orphan with no family. What does this drastic action tell us about Ohia’s mindset and emotional state when she left?
4. How does the author use sensory details (sight, smell, sound, touch) to create an uneasy atmosphere on Kōpa‘a? Identify three different sensory descriptions in chapter 5 and explain how each one contributes to the mood.
5. Several characters’ reactions to Lehua’s presence at Kōpa‘a reveal social divisions and power dynamics (planters, workers, manager). Choose an interaction in chapter 8 that reveals these dynamics. Quote the exchange and explain what it shows about class, history, or authority on the island.
6. Compare and contrast Chiyo’s behavior and Ira Jacobs’s behavior in the scenes where Lehua meets them. What do their actions and speech reveal about their roles on the island and their attitudes toward guests and workers?
7. Chiyo repeatedly emphasizes guest privacy and the rules against accessing guest information. How does the text show a conflict between “privacy” and surveillance? Use specific examples to explain how that conflict shapes the resort’s power dynamics.
8. In chapter 20, Melia gave a corrected version of what happened to Captain Cook (why he was attacked and how his body was treated). Cite two specific details from Melia’s speech that challenge Ira and Horace’s version and explain how those details change the reader’s understanding of the event.
9. The word *kaikamahine* (daughter, niece) is used several times by the worker to address Lehua. Choose two places in chapter 31 and the epilogue where it appears or is referenced. How does the word’s meaning shape those moments? What might the use of the word tell us about how Native Hawaiians view kinship?
10. The epilogue ends with a scene of renewal—the ‘*alae* ‘*ula* dropping the lehua flower into the pond—and Lehua and Ohia planning a respite. Using two lines or short passages from the epilogue that describe reclaimed land, burial, or ‘*aumakua*, explain how the conclusion reclaims cultural agency, and how it contrasts with the exploitation described earlier in the novel.

# POST-READING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

1. The novel repeatedly returns to ideas of home, ancestry, and cultural loss. Write a personal reflection about a time you felt disconnected from a cultural practice, language, or family memory. What possible actions could you take to feel more connected?
2. Compare Horace Jacobs's view of the land with the philosophy of mālama ka 'āina (to take care of the land). How does this conflict define the central struggle between Lehua and the Jacobs family?
3. How does Lehua's connection to her Native Hawaiian heritage evolve from the beginning of her journey in Arizona to the conclusion of the novel in Kōpa'a? Cite two people or experiences that you think played an important role in her evolution.
4. Rewrite a pivotal scene from the novel from the perspective of Ohia. What was she experiencing when Lehua was looking for her? Make sure your narrative voice reflects Ohia's state of mind and maintains the eerie, gothic tone used throughout the text.
5. Throughout the novel, Lehua must learn to trust her na'au. Do you think this shift from Western logic to ancestral instinct is the key to her survival? Why or why not?
6. How does Melia function as a guide for Lehua? What does her character reveal about the realities of Native Hawaiians working in the tourism industry?
7. Write a letter from Lehua to the ancestor spirits, whose land the resort was built on. Reflect on what she has learned and her hopes for the future of the 'āina.
8. Is the primary source of horror in the novel the 'e'epa (supernatural, unexplainable) elements or the legacy of colonialism and corporate greed?
9. How does Lehua's traumatic upbringing in the Arizona foster care system shape her internal conflicts, worldview, and desperation to find Ohia?
10. Write an epilogue set ten years in the future. Narrate a scene showing how Lehua and Ohia's relationship to each other, and to their Hawaiian heritage, has evolved.

*This guide was prepared by Lili'u Eckart Tomasello, a kānaka 'ōiwi writer and educator from Waimānalo, Hawai'i. Tomasello currently teaches eleventh- and twelfth-grade English and English Honors at Kailua High School.*



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