

LITTLE TIGER CHILDREN'S BOOKS PRESENTS

CONTROL ALTER DELETE

BY K.L. KETTLE

KS4 DISCUSSION GUIDE

A speculative thriller · English Lang & Lit (AO5 / AO6) · PSHE · Computing · KS4 · Ages 14–16 · GCSE-ready

For the teacher or librarian

This guide suits a KS4 reading group, a GCSE class using the book alongside skills work, or a sixth-form transition group. As with the KS3 version, prompts are grouped by theme rather than chapter, so you can dip in as students read. Pick two or three per session.

The questions get more analytical as they go, moving from response to evaluation and the writer's methods, so they double as speaking-and-listening practice and a way into viewpoint writing.

"A beautiful untrue life, or a broken true one — which would you choose?"

Book club or GCSE

20–40 minutes

No prep required

Links to AO5 & AO6

WHAT THE BOOK IS ABOUT

And the themes to read for

THE STORY

Hal is a gamer. In her near-future world, almost everything happens inside **World 2.0** — an entire digital world built by the tech genius Francis Knox, where people don't just play but live. Her favourite game, **Altercation**, reshapes itself around whoever is playing. It all feels perfect. The deeper Hal goes, the more she sees what that perfection is built on, and what it quietly asks of her in return.

Comparable to *Black Mirror*, *The Hunger Games* and *Ready Player One*, and written for readers who have grown up with a screen in their hand.

THEMES AT A GLANCE

Use these as lenses. Ask which one the book cares about most, and how you know.

- **The perfect world is a lie** — how the seduction works, and what it hides.
- **Hope as rebellion** — hope here is active, heavy and inconvenient, not a soft ending.
- **Grief and going on** — surviving by continuing, not by becoming fearless.
- **The on-demand life** — what we trade, daily, for convenience and comfort.
- **Memory as power** — the components that quietly hold a whole reality together.
- **Who profits** — power, platforms, and the people who own the world we live in.

BEFORE & AS YOU READ

Warm-ups, then prompts to dip into

BEFORE YOU READ

- 1 Answer the book's question in one sentence now, before you know the story: *a beautiful untrue life, or a broken true one?* Keep your answer. You will be asked again at the end.
- 2 "Who'd be a CEO when you can be a god?" Who talks like this, and what does it tell you about the world they have built?
- 3 Where in your own life do you already trade attention, data or privacy for something that feels worth it? Is it a fair deal?
- 4 What would it take for you to switch off for good — and what stops you?

AS YOU READ

THE PERFECT WORLD IS A LIE

- How does the writer make World 2.0 feel desirable before showing its cost? Mark the first moment you stop trusting it.
- What is the gap between what World 2.0 promises Hal and what it actually gives her?

HOPE, GRIEF AND GO

- Hal survives by keeping going while everything falls apart, not by becoming fearless. Where do you see that, and is it a kind of strength you recognise?

AS YOU READ & AFTER

Deeper prompts, then reflection

AS YOU READ (continued)

POWER AND PROFIT

- Who holds power in this world, and how do they keep it? What real people or companies does that bring to mind?
- The story suggests the systems we build quietly ask something of us in return. What does World 2.0 ask of the people living inside it?

IDENTITY AND THE SELF

- Hal can be anyone in the Alter. What does the freedom to be anyone do to a person's sense of who they actually are?
- When have you shown an edited version of yourself online? What did it cost you, and what did it gain you?

AFTER YOU READ

- 1 Return to your one-sentence answer from the start. Has it changed? Name what in the book moved you, or refused to.
- 2 Is this an anti-technology book, or something more careful than that? Argue your case with evidence.
- 3 The author has said she wanted to write hope as heavy, inconvenient and sometimes painful. Did the ending earn its hope, or hand it over too easily?
- 4 If you rewrote the final choice, what would be lost and what would be gained?
- 5 By the end, we learn Hal's friend Go is also Elpis — the hope left behind in Pandora's jar. Why might the author make hope a character who argues back, rather than just a feeling?

TAKE IT FURTHER

Activities, curriculum links & a note on content

Argue It

Plan and write a discursive response to "*A beautiful untrue life is worth more than a broken true one.*" Include a counter-argument you genuinely answer, not just mention.

Analyse It

Take a single page and annotate how the writer builds desire or tension — language, structure, what is withheld. Present your findings to the group.

Make It

Script a 60-second "Welcome to World 2.0" advert, then a 15-second disclaimer that tells the truth the advert hides.

English Language

Writing to present a viewpoint (AO5/AO6), analysing language and structure, and reasoned spoken discussion.

English Literature

Themes and writers' methods, and relating a modern text to its social and ethical context.

PSHE / Computing

Digital wellbeing and media literacy; the ethics of data, attention and AI in everyday life.

A note on content. *Control Alter Delete* is a fast, immersive near-future thriller — *Ready Player One* with real stakes, and less violent than *The Hunger Games*. It deals with grief and a parent's young-onset dementia (and an AI version of that parent), moments of peril, a major character's death, and online unkindness and misogyny — handled with care. Well suited to KS4 and sixth form (and fine from KS3 up); a quick skim lets you choose what suits your group.

If they loved it. Try *The Boy I Am*, also by K.L. Kettle (Carnegie-nominated); *The Mirror World* by Femi Fadugba (K.L. Kettle's own recommendation); and Malorie Blackman and Louise O'Neill.

Bring the author to your school

K.L. Kettle offers sixth-form and secondary sessions on technology, creativity and hope — the questions behind this book.

Book a visit • klkettle.com