

LITTLE TIGER CHILDREN'S BOOKS PRESENTS

# CONTROL ALTER DELETE

BY K.L. KETTLE

## KS3 READING-GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

A speculative thriller · English · PSHE / RSHE · Computing · KS3 (Year 9) & KS4 · Ages 13+

### For the teacher or librarian

This guide is built for a KS3 reading group, form-time book club, or library reading circle. You do not need to have finished the book to use it — the prompts are grouped by theme, not by chapter, so you can dip in as your group reads. Pick two or three questions per session rather than working through everything; the aim is talk, not a worksheet.

None of the prompts have a single right answer. If a session ends with students still arguing, that's the book doing its job, not a problem to fix.

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

Group size 4–30

20–40 minutes

No prep required

Dip in as you read

# 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. When Hal is entered into the fiercely competitive Knox Cup, she thinks she has found a way to fix what is broken in her life. But the deeper she goes, the more she sees what the perfect digital surface is hiding.

Think *Black Mirror* meets *The Hunger Games*, written for readers who have grown up with a screen in their hand.

## THEMES AT A GLANCE

Use these as lenses. Ask students which one they think matters most, and why.

- **Real vs. simulated** — what counts as a "real" experience, memory, or friendship?
- **Power & control** — when one person owns the world everyone lives in.
- **Identity** — who you are versus the avatar you present.
- **Attention & overload** — what constant stimulation does to imagination and boredom.
- **Loneliness in connection** — surrounded by people online and still alone.
- **Choice** — whether the comfortable lie is ever worth the hard truth.

# BEFORE & AS YOU READ

Warm-ups, then prompts to dip into

## BEFORE YOU READ

- 1 The title is **Control • Alter • Delete** — three keys on a keyboard. Before opening the book, what do you think each word might mean for a *person*, not just a computer?
- 2 If someone offered you a version of your life that felt perfect but wasn't real, what would you need to know before saying yes?
- 3 Describe the last time you were truly bored, with no screen. How did it feel — and when did you last let it happen?
- 4 Predict: when one company runs the entire digital world everyone lives in, who has the power — and who doesn't?

## AS YOU READ

### REAL VS. SIMULATED

- When does the story make you forget whether Hal is "in" World 2.0 or outside it? Is that blurring comfortable or unsettling?
- Are the friendships Hal makes online any less real than ones made in person? Defend your answer with something from your own life.

### ATTENTION, BOREDOM & IMAGINATION

- The book suggests non-stop stimulation can flatten imagination. Do you recognise that in the world around you? Where?
- What is one thing you can only do, notice, or invent when you are *not* being entertained?

# AS YOU READ & AFTER

Deeper prompts, then reflection

## AS YOU READ (continued)

### POWER & CONTROL

- Francis Knox built the world everyone lives in. Should any single person be allowed that much control? What real companies or people does that remind you of?
- The Knox Cup rewards some players and not others. Who decides who "wins" — and who benefits from those rules?

### IDENTITY & BELONGING

- Hal is desperate to prove herself. Where does that pressure come from — inside her, or the world she's in?
- How is who Hal *appears* to be different from who she *is*? When have you shown a different version of yourself online?

## AFTER YOU READ

- 1 Return to the central question: *a beautiful untrue life, or a broken true one*? Where does Hal land — and where do you? Has your answer changed since before you read?
- 2 What does the book want you to do differently on Monday morning? Is it anti-technology, or something more careful than that?
- 3 If you could keep one true memory or trade it for a perfect false one, which would you pick — and what does your choice say about you?
- 4 Rewrite the ending in one paragraph if a different choice had been made. What is lost, and what is gained?

# TAKE IT FURTHER

Activities, curriculum links & a note on content

## Debate It

Split the room: "*A perfect virtual life is worth more than an imperfect real one.*" One side argues for, one against — then swap sides and argue the opposite. Which was harder?

## Make It

Design the loading screen, slogan, or terms-and-conditions for World 2.0. What does the platform promise — and what does it quietly take?

## Write It

One diary entry from Hal on her best day inside World 2.0, and one on her worst day outside it. What changes in her voice?

## English

Speculative fiction and dystopia, unreliable surfaces, narrative voice, persuasive and discursive speaking and listening.

## PSHE / RSHE

Digital wellbeing, screen time, online identity, healthy relationships with technology, consent and data.

## Computing

Ethics of technology, who controls platforms and algorithms, immersive digital worlds and AI, data and privacy.

**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 real care. Suitable for KS3 and KS4 (ages 13+); a quick skim lets you choose what suits your group, with grief and the online themes worth a light heads-up.

**If they loved it.** Point readers towards *The Boy I Am*, also by K.L. Kettle (Carnegie-nominated), and to Malorie Blackman, Louise O'Neill and Alex Wheatle.

## Bring the author to your school

K.L. Kettle offers school visits, assemblies and workshops built around these exact themes.

Book a visit • [klkettle.com](https://klkettle.com)