

# Penguin Random House

## TEACHERS' RESOURCE KIT

### Hello Strange Pamela Morrow

**A vivid, fast-paced novel about artificial *emotional* intelligence.**

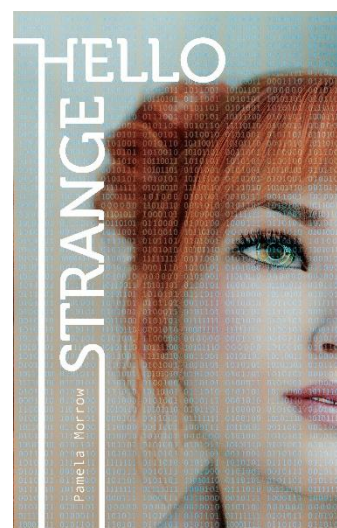
Since the death of their mother, Hunter, Milly and Coel have come unstuck. Their father isn't coping either, even though he's the successful head of BIOlogic and is developing a humanoid to enhance human lives.

He brings home Josie, the latest prototype, hoping she might restore the family's happiness. But Josie took a blast during an epic electrical storm and her system is unstable.

Meanwhile, Professor Bishop and his mysterious student Gwin Tang have their own ominous plans for Josie . . .

#### About the author

Pamela Morrow (Ngati Pu) is a part-time Visual Effects Artist and part-time writer. She began tertiary education in New Zealand in the eighties, starting a degree in Horticultural Science at Massey University, but ended up with a BA in Music and Media Studies from La Trobe University and a Masters in Film, TV and Media Studies from the University of Auckland, where she also took a scriptwriting paper. *Hello Strange* is her first publication.



#### SPECIFICATIONS:

Imprint: Penguin  
Published: 31/03/2020  
ISBN: 9780143773856  
RRP: \$19.99  
Format: Paperback  
Extent: 384 pages  
Readership: 14-18 years

#### RESOURCE KIT CONTAINS:

- Before reading
- Comprehension questions
- Themes and Characters
- Genre, Style and Language
- Graphic Design
- Further research and creative response

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New Zealand

## BEFORE READING

- 1) Look at the cover of the book. What can you see? List three visual and or/verbal features that stand out to you. Share with the class.
- 2) In pairs, read the synopsis on the back of the book together. Who are the characters? Which parts of the description make you want to read the story? Why? After discussing, share with the class.
- 3) The title of this book is 'Hello Strange'. Using the design of the cover and your answers to question 1, write a paragraph explaining why YOU think this is so. Remember, there is no one right answer to this question (you haven't read the book yet!); we are asking you to guess and infer.

## DURING READING

### *A Question per Chapter*

#### Chapter:

- 1) The first chapter, *Upstart*, ends with the word 'no'. Why is this significant?
- 2) Look at the text design on pages 16 - 19. Why are the words 'shortdeepbreath', 'shorter', 'breathes out' and 'amps' presented differently on 16-17?
- 3) In this chapter, Morrow describes people and animals from Josie's perspective. Name two, and why Josie's perspective is unusual.
- 4) Milly is a strong writer. What is she writing about in this chapter? She is also contemplating something else in her life whilst writing - what?
- 5) We meet Coel in this chapter. Describe him.
- 6) How would you describe Miles after reading this chapter? Why do you think it's titled 'The Last to Know'?
- 7) What does Josie's mood suit tell us about her character?
- 8) What are Miles' feelings towards Josie in this chapter?
- 9) What do you think a 'scat' is?
- 10) What do you think a 'crusher' is?
- 11) What do we learn about Miles in this chapter?
- 12) What is your impression of new character Feineas Bishop in this chapter?
- 13) As conveyed in this chapter, how does Miles feel about Hunter?
- 14) What is Josie's first impressions of Coel?
- 15) How does Josie describe Hunter in this chapter?

- 16) How does Hunter describe Josie in this chapter?
- 17) What do Milly and Josie talk about in this chapter?
- 18) What is happening between Hunter and Josie in this chapter? How do you know?
- 19) What do we learn about Bek in this chapter?
- 20) Why is Bek appalled by what she learns about Gwin?
- 21) Why do you think Hunter is so focused on fixing his mechanical heart?
- 22) Why does Josie sing to Hunter?
- 23) What emotion does Hunter feel in this chapter? How do you know?
- 24) What is the name of the 'virus' that Gwin has invented?
- 25) How does Morrow build tension in this chapter?
- 26) Which quote in chapter 26 indicates that Hunter thinks Miles is easily distracted, especially around his children?
- 27) What is the new name for Gwin's virus?
- 28) What important information do we get about Gwin in this chapter?
- 29) Why is this chapter entitled 'Morality crisis'?
- 30) Why does Josie run for home?
- 31) What is one interesting thing you learn about Miles in this chapter?
- 32) What outfit did Milly want to dress Josie in for her launch?
- 33) We meet Evelynne for the first time in this chapter. Describe her.
- 34) Describe Hunter, Milly and Coel's perspectives in this chapter.
- 35) What is Feine asking Milly to do in this chapter?
- 36) Gwin says: 'If deception is a problem, stop deceiving.' What does she mean?
- 37) What makes Hunter bleed? What does Milly do in this chapter?
- 38) What is Josie's view of 'spawn'?
- 39) What is Coel's opinion of Hunter in this chapter?
- 40) What does Miles know about Bek?
- 41) Choose a quote from this last chapter that summarises a theme, or big idea, in this book. Explain why you choose it.

## AFTER READING

### Themes

- 1) In pairs, discuss the following themes and theme-related questions in relation to the novel.
  - a) **What it means to be human.**  
Is Josie humane, in that she displays human qualities? What attributes show us Hunter is human? What is the difference?
  - b) **How we restore family when our family has been broken.** Emilia's death affects all members of her family. How does her family find peace?
  - c) **Home is where the heart is.** Josie describes home as 'a place where something began and flourished' (93) and 'likes this very much indeed.' How does Josie find her home? How many symbolic heart references are there in this text?
  - d) **How individuality is a birthright.** Milly says 'We're all individuals, see? And it's a good idea to figure out what sort of individual you are, see? What your style is. What makes you happy.' (148) Why is this important when thinking of Hunter? Miles? Josie? Bek?
  - e) **Following dreams is important, but use your talent for good.** Miles asks Gwin: '... would you want whatever you're working on to change the world? Like, make a difference? Or is it better to put your energy into giving the world what it wants? Meaning, something it understands.' (258) Does the professor (Feineas) follow his dreams? How could he better use his talent for good? Why hasn't he?
  - f) **'Honesty is best when it comes to feelings.'** (Josie: 282) Hunter finds it difficult to be honest about his feelings as a human. Josie finds it hard as a robot, too. Who is the most honest about their feelings in this novel? How do you know?
  - g) **The greatest thing you'll ever learn is how to love and be loved in return.** At the heart of this book is a love story between Hunter and Josie. What do you think about love transcending difference here? What other 'love' stories are there in this book?
- 2) Together, rank these themes from most important to least important. Use evidence from the book to support your ideas.
- 3) Choose your top theme and write a paragraph telling us why you think it is the most important. Share with the class and discuss.

## **Characters**

Hunter, Josie and Miles are all important major characters in this book. Important minor characters include Feineas, Bek and Gwin.

1) Write down your first impressions of:

- a) Hunter
- b) Josie
- c) Miles
- d) Feineas
- e) Bek
- f) Gwin

2) How do these characters develop throughout the novel? Divide a page into three columns titled 'Beginning', 'Middle' and 'End'. Fill in the columns with your understanding of these characters throughout the text.

3) Find quotes from the book to support your opinion. Add these to your character development page.

### **Major characters:**

**Hunter is a very human character;** he has experiences that we as readers can relate to.

4) Note down some of these experiences in a timeline that fleshes out Hunter's character progression from the start to the end of the novel. You could use your 'Beginning, Middle, End' chart to help with this.

**Josie is a robot.** However, she becomes more 'human' as the book progresses. At the start of the novel we are told 'her job will be to lighten the load, whatever load that may be' (11), but earlier on the same page we learn that 'Josie isn't sure she's interested in a predetermined set of rules.' Later on, she thinks: '*When am I to become useful?*' (68) After interacting with Hunter, her memory shuts down as it cannot cope with the human emotion of love.

5) Find five further examples that show exploration of Josie's character throughout the story.

6) What do you think the author wants you to know about Josie from these descriptions?

**Miles is a pivotal character who has a very important main role in the novel.**

- 7) Make a list of Mile's character traits. These could come from what he says about himself and/or what others say about him. Use examples to support your ideas. Do you think these qualities are appealing in a main character? Why/not?

## ***Genre, Style and Language***

### **Genre:**

This book has a particular genre that means there are certain aspects a reader can expect from a reading experience.

- 1) What is the genre of this book? List the characteristics of the genre. Give examples from the book for each characteristic to support your thinking. Aim to write two paragraphs.

### **Tense and narrative perspective:**

This book has been written in third person, which means we can understand the thinking and feelings of different characters from the perspective of an outsider looking in. It is also written in present tense, which gives an immediacy to the story and the lives of the characters. As readers, we are in the action with them.

- 2) Describe where the story gives us the perspective of the following characters. Use examples from the book to support your ideas:
- Hunter
  - Josie
  - Miles
  - Feineas
  - Bek
- 3) As mentioned above, present tense gives an immediacy to the action of a text, but it can also be fun to play around with this in your own and other people's writing.

Choose three paragraphs from throughout the book that you think are well-written in present tense. Write each paragraph in past tense, then in future tense. For example:

*Present tense: 'Josie picks up speed. She flies through the door and into a stairwell. Vines smother the central pillar of a spiralling stair column, but this doesn't stop her. She flips carefully over the railing and drops free-fall the next two levels, without disturbing a single leaf.'* (22)

*Past tense: 'Josie picked up speed. She flew through the door and into a stairwell. Vines smothered the central pillar of a spiralling stair column, but this didn't stop her. She flipped carefully over the railing and dropped free-fall the next two levels, without disturbing a single leaf.'*

*Future tense: 'Josie will pick up speed. She'll fly through the door and into a stairwell. Vines smother the central pillar of a spiralling stair column, but this won't stop her. She will flip carefully over the railing and drop free-fall the next two levels, without disturbing a single leaf.'*

What are the similarities when you change the tense? What are the differences?  
Which do you prefer? Why?

### **Figurative language:**

An author can use figurative language to describe things in an interesting way. There are many examples of this in the book. Similes and metaphors are enlightening ways of describing things through comparison. A simile is a comparison using like or as; a metaphor compares directly.

Here are some examples from the book:

#### **Similes:**

'Following this conversation **is like falling into a hole and trying to surface by digging deeper.**' (26)

'The sky is dark **like bruised skin ...**' (46)

'On the front of his shirt is a patch of crust, hardened **like a scab.**' (81)

'The human hormone and brain transmitter is **like relationship glue.**' (111)

Metaphors:

'The universe is giving her independent spirit a **thumbs-up**.' (12)

'On **jelly legs**, he staggers into the first pod.' (21)

'Though her lungs must now be overwhelmed by the **delicate web** of her infection ...'  
(31)

'... the air **brooding**.' (46)

'... fine wrinkles **bleed out** from the corners of his eyes.' (64)

- 4) Can you find other similes and metaphors in the book? List as many as you can.

**Sometimes similes and metaphors are extended to continue the imagery for a reader.**

Here are some examples from the book:

Extended simile:

'Miles nods and smiles generously, **as though** they're on the same page. When really he doubts that he, Carla and Hunter are **even in the same book**.' (49)

'**Obsolescence**: it sounds **like an infectious disease** or a cankerous growth, dropping into her consciousness **spreading** dark despair. If only she were **immune**.' (141)

Extended metaphor:

'... Josie is turning out to be a **professional headache** which, if he isn't careful, could become a **debilitating migraine**.' (69)

'This is when Hunter **crash-lands on Planet Invisible**. On **Planet Invisible** he suffers sidelong looks from Milly ... **He would like to punch Earth in the face** ... The temperature **on the planet** hits sub-zero.' (215)

- 5) Practise writing extended metaphors. Choose two metaphors from number four and extend them.



## ***Other language features:***

### Alliteration:

6) What is alliteration?

To help you, here are two examples from the novel:

'It is he who finally breaks, leaning forward and flicking his fingers for her to begin.'  
(104)

'A seismic sensation in his gut ...' (106)

7) Find three other examples in the book.

### Idioms and colloquial language:

'**Nailing** the mechanics should be a priority.' (15)

'If Josie exceeds those limits they'll have Ethics Committees **breathing down their necks**. Even so, there are far better ways to deal with the problem than watching Security **fry** one of his Josephinas.' (59)

'Confusion is the **name of the game**.' (72)

'When it comes to breakfast, Miles does it **old school** ...' (81)

'Maybe we're all a bit **battle weary**.' (116)

8) Find three more examples of these types of informal speech in the novel.

### Vocabulary:

There are some complex and interesting words in this book. Here are some examples.

- Lustrous (7)
- Psychometrics (9)
- Inertia (22)
- Etiquette (27)
- Cliche (34)
- Condensed (43)
- Invigorated (51)
- Amok (57)

- Plaintive (63)
- Extrapolates (64)
- Insipid (79)
- Conundrum (82)
- Debacle (82)
- Pandemonium (87)
- Querulous (100)
- Voluminous (114)
- Decrepit (151)
- Obsolescence (156)
- Sensationalistic (166)
- Innuendos (177)
- Convoluted (186)
- Confabulation (188)
- Terrain (209)
- Camaraderie (216)
- Subterfuge (219)
- Reverentially (221)
- Loitering (229)
- Hypotheticals (231)
- Envisage (251)
- Correlation (263)
- Afflictions (271)
- Lethargy (280)
- Anthropomorphism (289)
- Brandishing (304)
- Salvage (314)
- Squall (318)
- Adaptable (346)
- Detonates (368)
- Intricate (369)
- Infinite (374)

9) Choose ten words you don't know and write the definitions for each word. Use each in a new sentence.

## **Graphic Design**

- 1) In the Acknowledgments section (page 380), Morrow says 'I'm thrilled with Cat Taylor's text graphics of *Hello Strange*, they are so cool.'
  - a) Why do you think the book is designed in this way?
  - b) How does this kind of design enhance the reading experience?
  - c) In what way do these graphics particularly match the story that Morrow has written?

## **Further Research and Creative Responses**

- 1) Return to your answers in the 'Before Reading' section. Compare your answers in 'Before Reading question 3' with what you know now. Make a chart with two columns headed 'Before Reading' and 'After Reading'. Copy your predictions down in note form in the 'Before Reading' column. Now address each point in the 'After Reading' column. What is the same? What is different? Are you surprised by any of your predictions now that you have read the book?
- 2) He has sorrow that needs words' is a line repeated by Josie throughout the text. Using this line, design a static image that represents this theme in the novel. You could refer to the 'Themes' section to flesh out your ideas. Remember to use both visual and verbal features, and that placement on the page is important.
- 3) Love, emotions and related sensations are all important in this novel. 'What if loving someone *was* the task?' asks Milly on page 146. Use your mobile phone, or technology provided by the teacher, to interview your friends and classmates about their views on love. Aim to interview at least five people. Edit their responses together and play for the class. You might wish to do an intro and outro where you introduce and summarise what your film is about.
- 4) An important idea in this novel is that artificial intelligence may have a more significant role in our lives in the future than it presently does. Research where we are at with the development of robots at the moment. Present as a Powerpoint or Prezi for the class. Aim for at least five slides.

- 5) Films such as *Ex Machina* (R13) and *Her* (R16) both address similar concerns regarding the development of artificial intelligence. If you are over age 13 or 16, watch one or both of these films and then write a review of the film. If you can, introduce ideas from *Hello Strange* that you think are relevant to your review and deal with similar issues.