

Teaching notes

Replica, by Jack Heath

August 2014, Oxford University Press

ISBN 9780192737663, pbk, for readers aged 12+

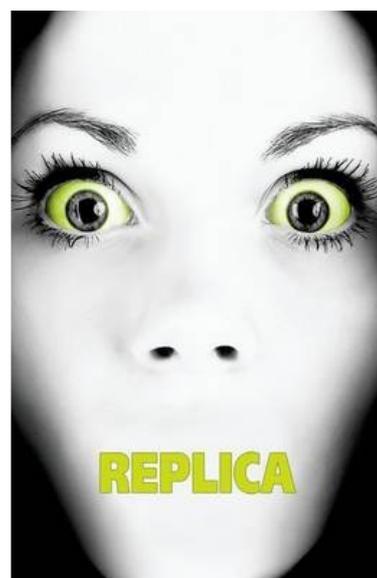
Plot summary

Chloe Zimetski wakes up with all her memories erased, trapped in the basement of someone who looks exactly like her. Even more disturbingly, Chloe's head has been somehow separated from her body. She's alive, but completely helpless.

She soon discovers that she is a machine, and that this other girl is the real Chloe Zimetski. A pseudo-military team is stalking the original Chloe, who built a replica of herself to divert them while she tries to find out who they are and what they want.

Things don't go according to plan. When the real Chloe is murdered, the fake Chloe's only chance for survival is to assume her identity. But can she really fool Chloe's family and friends? And can she evade the killer, who has already chosen his next victim?

Named as one of the UK Telegraph's best young adult books of 2014, *Replica* is the perfect novel to engage reluctant readers and to spark enthusiastic class discussions.



Reviews

“*Replica* raises lots of interesting questions about the nature of consciousness and what makes us human.”

—Steph Bowe, author of *All This Could End*

“A timely novel that raises questions about how technology is evolving, what defines a person or being and anticipates resultant problems of identity.”

—raven-reads.blogspot.co.uk

“It’s so refreshing to read a strong female protagonist, to read an unconventional romance and an ending that’s not neatly tied up with a red ribbon. *Replica* is underpinned by philosophical thinking – it’s a slim book but it’s fat with ideas. Who are we without our memories? How much of our lives is defined by our context, our relationships, other people’s ideas of who we are?”

—Simonne Howell, author of *Girl, Defective*

Discussion questions

- Chloe is made from parts ordered over the internet, as well as a 3D-printed face and open source artificial intelligence software. Should she have the same rights as a human being?

Will we ever reach the point where robots are indistinguishable from people?

- Chloe eventually falls in love with Becky, the original Chloe's girlfriend. How does their relationship compare with other gay relationships in young adult fiction?
- Becky uploads the complete works of Mary Shelley and Philip K. Dick to Chloe's mental library. What does *Replica* have in common with *Frankenstein* or *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?*
- Graeme Zimetski, the real Chloe's father, steals a revolutionary computer chip from the Ares corporation, fearing that they have too much power. This theft indirectly triggers most of the conflicts in the book. Did he do the right thing? Why?
- By hiding the original Chloe's body, the replica deprives her friends and family of the chance to mourn her. Should she have done this? What alternatives did she have?
- If Detective Anders ever figured out that Chloe was a machine, what would she have done?

Project ideas

- Design a replica of yourself. List the parts you would need and how you might obtain them. What would the replica need to know so it could live your life for one day?
- Write a new epilogue to the story. Where would Chloe go? What would happen to the people she left behind?
- Draw one of the characters or scenes based on the descriptions in the novel.
- Write an essay about the history of artificial intelligence, in real life or in fiction. Predict where it might go in the future.
- The main character doesn't move and barely speaks in the first chapter. Analyse the literary techniques which make the scene exciting. (e.g. How many similes are there? Does the text use the active voice?)

Useful links

- An article about some of the ethical problems related to robotics: <http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20131127-would-you-murder-a-robot>
- Jack Heath talks about *Replica* after a teaser trailer on YouTube: <http://youtu.be/6A6q1dZz5g0>
- A review of *Replica* on Books & Enchantment: <http://booksandenchancement.blogspot.co.uk/2014/08/replica.html>
- A reading of the first chapter by the author: <http://jackheath.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Replica-by-Jack-Heath.mp3>

For more information about Jack Heath's work, visit <http://jackheath.com.au>.

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