



Lifted by Mandy Hager

About the author:

Mandy Hager is a distinguished author, gaining recent acclaim for her non-fiction titles 'Hindsight: Pivotal Moments in New Zealand's History' and 'Protest! Shaping Aotearoa.' However, her true prominence lies in her compelling writing for young adults, delving into thought-provoking social themes such as her title *Gracehopper,* released in 2022.

In addition to her literary achievements, Mandy has significantly contributed to the education sector, teaching creative writing, and leveraging the expertise gained from her previous work with the Global Education Centre and the DARE Foundation.

Mandy's literary prowess is widely celebrated, marked by an impressive array of awards, residencies, and recognition. Notable among these are the Beatson Fellowship (2012), the Katherine Mansfield Menton Fellowship (2014), and the Waikato University Writer in Residence (2015). Her profound impact on the literary world was recognised with the prestigious Margaret Mahy Medal and Lecture Award in 2019.

Currently residing on the Kāpiti Coast, nestled in the scenic North Island of New Zealand, Mandy Hager remains a prominent figure in literature, captivating readers with her insightful storytelling.

Synopsis of Novel:

Set several centuries after a catastrophic global climate collapse, the novel centres around a young girl raised in The Sanctuary, a library created in the last days of civilisation to conserve as many published works as possible. Secure in her self-sustaining haven, Elora has little understanding of how the rest of humanity lives. A communication from her father, assumed dead since he was "lifted" by the alien Avians, who have been hunting humans for sport for over 70 years, catapults Elora into engaging with the real world. She has to negotiate living and travelling with someone who has totally different values from her, before risking her life in an attempt to save humanity from total annihilation by the Avians. In the process, she learns to value differences and comes to understand what is good about humanity, whilst accepting that even those she loves most are not perfect.

Themes / Issues

The novel introduces young readers to themes of **acceptance of difference and questions of cultural integration**. At the same time, it challenges us to consider **the ethics of eating meat,** as well as exploring **concepts of human superiority in the animal kingdom.** By positioning humanity as "game animals", Hager leads us to question **the relationship between humans and animals** in a new and startling way.

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TEACHERS NOTES

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Writing style

Hager's lively story-telling and exquisite world building keeps the reader fully immersed in the narrative. Characters are fully rounded and engaging, with back stories and flaws integrated naturally into the plot development.

Year level suitability and application

This is a novel that could be studied at a range of levels. Both the age of the protagonists, and the confronting nature of humanity being presented as game animals, make it less suitable for a younger audience. While the accessible nature of the writing makes this appropriate for Years 10 - 11, the complexity of ideas would allow sufficient depth of analysis that it could be considered at Year 12. The learning activities are primarily aimed at covering the new Year 10 curriculum.

Learning opportunities

Before reading:

Prior knowledge discussion / activities:

- Previous "preservation" libraries
- Big game hunting (both legal and illegal)
- Ethical and conservationist reasons for veganism
- Impacts of colonisation on Māori

During reading: Understanding the content

These tasks and questions are intended to be prompts for classroom discussion during reading. Some of them could also be used as individual written reflections. They are a mixture of comprehension questions (finding information and drawing inferences) and prompts or activities to stimulate deeper reflection. The latter are repeated in the final section on themes.

There are a range of debate tasks that could be used to stimulate oral skills OR used as written tasks for discursive writing or persuasive writing.

Chapter 1

1. What do we learn about the history and present functioning of The Sanctuary?
2. Create a relationship web for the characters we meet in the first chapter.
3. Illustrate Chapter One by drawing pictures of three significant objects or symbols.

Chapter 2

4. What evidence would you provide to prove that humanity is capable of creativity and compassion?
    a. Create an exhibition of your selection
5. "It's ordinary people like us that change the world"
    b. Find an example of someone ordinary who brought about significant change. Share this with the class.

Chapter 3

6. Kristos raises questions about perspective in this chapter, which challenge Elora's world view. Explain why it matters who decides what is "good" literature and who curates any collection.
7. Hold a debate about whether hoarding the items in the sanctuary for possible future need is ethical in the face of the deprivation faced by those living outside.

Chapter 4

8. Make Elora's list of pros and cons regarding
    a. Leaving the Sanctuary with Kristos
    b. Allowing herself to be Lifted
9. In what ways is being loved a burden we have to carry?

Chapter 5

10. Research the Golden Voyager Record
    a. Why were those particular items chosen?
    b. Do you think we would put the same things on a record now, 50 years later?
    c. What would you put on such a record?
11. Dimsie makes an argument for keeping "bad" books as well as good ones, so we have a standard to measure by. When it comes to evaluating creative work, do you agree that you can only know what is good, if you have something to compare it to? Discuss in groups and present your responses to the class.

Chapter 6

12. Why does Kristos instinctively get cross when his grammar is corrected?
    a. What do we learn about human nature from this?
    b. Why do we consider some dialects or ways of speaking better than others?
13. How does poetry (or song lyrics) communicate the essence of what it means to be human?
    a. What poem or song would you choose to show the Avians?

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Chapter 7

14. Is the Avians hunting humans different from humans eating animals? Why or why not?
15. "If there's a gun, at some point it kills." What does that statement tell us about human beings?

Chapter 8

16. Name your favourite head book, heart book and soul book and explain why you have chosen each one.
17. Why does evidence of the Avian's intelligence make them more frightening?

Chapter 9

18. What does the impromptu funeral suggest about the importance of ritual in human life?
19. Debate whether idealism can bring about meaningful change.

Chapter 10

20. Where would you draw the line between your own survival and harming others (or allowing them to be harmed?) Create a class visual presentation with your reflections.
21. Have different groups take the perspectives of Elora and Kristos on killing animals. EITHER present them in a table OR stage a debate.

Chapter 11

22. Can you be friends with someone who has totally different values?

Chapter 12

23. What reasons can you think of that there is no record of the attempted genocide of Māori from the 2030s in the library records? Think beyond the ones mentioned in the book.
24. What questions arise for Elora, regarding her mother possibly being Māori?

Chapter 13

25. Write a "prequel" story explaining how Elora learnt to shoot, bearing in mind her horror of killing any living thing.
26. Write Elora's internal debate before she suggests that Kristos eats the boar meat.
27. Stage a debate about EITHER
    a. Planet earth would be better off without humans
    OR
    b. Academic learning is irrelevant in a subsistence world

Chapter 14

28. Describe Elora from Josef's perspective after the first afternoon together.
29. Describe Elora from Vera's perspective at the end of the first day in Freetown.

Chapter 15

30. Research the significance of pounamu and of the fish hook design.
31. Why does Mika give Elora his pounamu?
32. Why does Kristos apologise?

Chapter 16

33. Draw a picture of the space they see when they can first see outside the cage.
34. What do you think the first test was?

Chapter 17

35. Did the means of using human pineal glands justify the ends of communicating with Elora and Kristos? Explain answers both for and against Ethan's decision.
    a. What about the breach of privacy?
36. Describe the experience of being in a zoo from the perspective of an animal, imagining they have the intelligence and sensitivity of a human being.
    a. Is keeping an animal in captivity for the entertainment of humans any more ethical if they do not have a human level of intelligence and awareness?

Chapter 18

37. If you discovered someone you loved had done something you consider totally unethical, how would you respond? Create a scenario and explore your reactions in either a story or essay format.
38. Why is Elora surprised by Kwa's question: "Is anything [guaranteed], except the inevitability of death?"
    a. What does this question tell us about Kwa's personality, and about the Avian civilisation?

Chapter 19

39. Does knowing that Avians have a very different concept of privacy make their observation of Elora and Kristos less invasive? Why or why not?
40. Elora wonders if wearing the cloak is respect, assimilation or colonisation. Explain the ways in which this action could be interpreted in each of these ways.

Chapter 20

41. Write your own speech in defense of humanity.

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42. Create a play, communicating the key interactions between Elora and the judges, showing an interpretation of how the different judges are responding to her words.

Chapter 21

43. Write a job description for Kwa and Quididi as emissaries to Earth.
44. What lesson can we learn from Elora being willing to compromise on her vegan beliefs?
    a. Debate: If your beliefs are right and ethical, you have a duty to impose them on others?
45. If you gain something by helping others, does that make the help less virtuous?
    a. Think of parallel situations in the world around us and answer the question in relation to those situations.

Chapter 22

46. Make a list of other situations in the world, where people judge a whole group by the actions of a few.
    a. Choose ONE and write a paragraph explaining how understanding and harmony could be achieved by engaging with people as individuals, rather than assuming everyone in a group is the same.
47. Do you agree with Dimsie that there are some things we need to discover for ourselves, rather than being told them?
    a. Give some examples of such knowledge in your own life that you might not have accepted as true without personal experience.
    b. What does this tell us about human nature?

Post reading: Taking it further

Activities and discussion points

This novel raises major questions about the relationship between humanity and other species, as well as the way colonisation has impacted indigenous groups. Choose one of the following topics, research it further and then create a presentation exploring the message of the novel in relation to that topic.

- Big game hunting (both legal and illegal)
- Ethical and conservationist reasons for veganism
- Impacts of colonisation on Māori

Another question raised by the novel is the bias inherent in storing and protecting any form of knowledge. Research the ways in which the knowledge of the past is currently curated and preserved, with a focus on the following questions:

- Who make decisions about what is kept?
- How does the way knowledge is stored impact on what future generations learn?
- Knowing this, how does it change the way we might study history?
- What might the role (positive or negative) of AI be in shaping future knowledby Denis Wright

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