

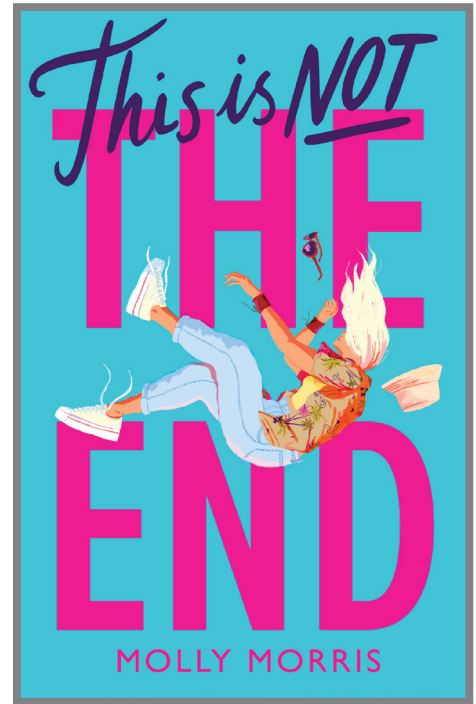
# This is Not the End

AUTHOR  
**MOLLY MORRIS**

SCIS: 5410454

ISBN: 9781913696214

RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid Secondary



## SYNOPSIS

Ever since the sudden deaths of his parents, seventeen-year-old Hugh has developed a serious preoccupation with endings—and things get a little complicated when he meets Olivia Moon, a high-school outcast who can't die.

But if he wants to learn more about her impossible power, he'll have to drive Olivia to New York and help retrieve a stolen crate of her most treasured possessions.

As his feelings for Olivia grow, Hugh embarks on a road trip he'll never forget. Can she help him to accept that unsatisfying, messy endings are just a part of life?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Molly Morris is a California native with a penchant for the bizarre. After living in the Washington, DC area for university, she moved to the UK to study a Creative Writing MA at UEA. It's here where she honed her love for all things magical realism and Young Adult fiction, her writing and reading true love. These days she lives in Norfolk with her husband, daughter and their cat, Lemon.

## THEMES

- Friendship and relationships
- Endings and death
- Change and transformation
- Roadtrips and journeys
- Love and trust
- Acceptance and grief
- Fun and humour

## STUDY NOTES

- Hugh, the hero of *This is Not the End*, is obsessed with endings—particularly bad ones, whether it's the death of Marvin Gaye or the disappointing conclusions of great movies. He even has a blog to justify and explore his selection. But what makes a good or bad ending? Discuss as a class—noting down, as a class, the main characteristics of good and bad endings—before separating into groups, with each group assigned a category inspired by Hugh's blog: books, movies, TV, people, misc (eg. bands and wars, or broader historical events). Then in each group, identify the best and worst ending in their category and create a presentation to justify the selection using clips or extracts, reviews,

commentary, their own analysis and any other evidence they have gathered and present their findings to the class. At the end, vote as a class: Whose presentation was the most persuasive?

- As a class, discuss what Hugh is like at the beginning of the novel—and how he is at the end. What in the novel has he had to grapple with—and how has his relationship with Olivia (and the road trip itself) changed him? Are there any seminal moments in the book (eg. the fake funeral) which represent his character journey? Repeat the exercise with Olivia for contrast and comparison.
  - Create separate character profiles showing Hugh’s and Olivia’s main character traits, hopes and dreams, and the obstacles in their life.
- The author, Molly Morris, has written what we might term a ‘character-led’ novel, in which the characters came to her first, and story was drawn first and foremost from her exploration of their main traits and challenges.
  - Create your own character journey. You can base the character on yourself, as the author did in creating Hugh, or a character from *This is Not the End*—or someone entirely from your imagination.
  - Create a character profile—perhaps including a headshot-style image – with the character’s main personality traits and the challenges they might face at the beginning of the story.
  - Next, you have to decide how you might challenge them in a story to grow as a person. Note down three key story aspects—eg. scenes, other characters or obstacles—your character might have to overcome.
  - Finally, write a short paragraph as if from their perspective at the end of your story describing how their experiences have helped them grow.
- Hugh and Olivia’s roadtrip is accomplished in a 1980s ice cream van with a selection of cassette tapes—and the soundtrack of the novel is pure Motown, music from the 1960s and 70s. What’s more, Olivia doesn’t own a smartphone and Hugh’s is destroyed towards the beginning of the novel. Why do you think the author chose to set her story in the present day, while also including ‘vintage’ vibes and stripping away modern conveniences? What do you think that achieves?
- Separate the class into groups and assign each group a decade of the later twentieth century (starting from the 1950s and ending in the 1990s). Each group should assign its members to research one aspect of the culture of the decade: music, fashion, interior design, architecture, cars, food. Together, they should create a large physical ‘mood board’ on their decade’s aesthetic and present their findings to the class, perhaps even utilising a soundtrack. Create a class display of all the decades, arranged in a timeline.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is the main message of *This is Not the End*? What feeling or sentiment were you left with when you turned the final page?
- Did you like and relate to Hugh as a main character? Why or why not?
- What did you think of Hugh’s relationship with Becky? Why do you think he ultimately breaks up with her?
- Why do you think the author decided to send Hugh and Olivia on a roadtrip? What does this achieve that another type of story couldn’t?
- Hugh’s imagined endings are a huge feature of this novel—particularly the one that opens the story. What did you think of this technique? Did it work for you? Why or why not?
- What do you think happened next for Hugh and Olivia? Do you think there should be a sequel to this story?