

# It Looks Like Us

AUTHOR

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**RECOMMENDED FOR:** Mid to Upper Secondary  
(violence, sexual references)



## SYNOPSIS

Riley Kowalski is desperate to escape her life. So when she sees an advertisement seeking student volunteers for a research trip to Antarctica sponsored by eccentric tech billionaire Anton Rusk, she jumps at the opportunity. She joins five teens, a company-approved chaperone, and an impartial scientist to prove that environmental plastic pollution has reached all the way to Antarctica. It all sounds legit, but Riley soon has more questions than answers. Why is the station so big, and why is half of it closed off? Why are they testing the ice in an area already known to be polluted? Where does their chaperone keep disappearing to?

Riley dismisses her suspicions as a symptom of her anxiety—even when she starts to see things out on the ice. Even when she has a terrifying encounter with Greta, their scientist. It’s not like a person’s body can actually change like that. Riley has to be seeing things. Right?

And then Greta tries to kill her. Only...it isn’t Greta anymore. With no help, no way to call home and a blizzard rolling in, Riley and the other teens have to work together if they want to survive. But how do you trust anyone when the thing you’re trying to escape could be one of them?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alison Ames lives in Colorado with a lot of animals and her almost-wife. She loves birds, comics and the rule of three.

## STUDY NOTES

### BEFORE READING

- The title of this book is *It Looks Like Us*. Does this give us any foreshadowing as to what this book will be about? Does the cover give you any hints?
- What are some common tropes of horror? Are there any archetypal characters and themes that you think will be in this book?

## THEMES

### Power and Corruption

- The group figures out that Anton Rusk is using this Antarctic climate change expedition as a cover for more sinister plans. Are any group members ever suspicious of Rusk before this plan is revealed, and what are their reasons for suspicion if so?

- What are Anton Rusk's motives for trapping the monster?
- How are some characters complicit in Anton Rusk's sinister plan? How are these characters rewarded/how do you think they will be rewarded?
- What does this book tell us about the power of surveillance? How does Anton Rusk's use of surveillance help or hinder the teen characters?
- Why has Anton Rusk picked this group of teens to take part in this experiment? What does this say about Rusk?
- Describe some parallels between the demonstration of power and corruption in this book and in the real world.

### Courage and Perseverance

- Despite initial fears that she has nothing to offer to the team, Riley steps up as a leader and a fighter in times of strife. What role do each of the five students take in the group? How is this different from when they first joined the expedition?
- The characters may not have described themselves as brave, but each of them shows courage in their own way. Compare and contrast the different ways that courage is demonstrated by the characters.
- There are times when the characters doubt they will leave Antarctica alive, and yet they persevere in running from, hiding from and even fighting the monster. What does this say about the human will to survive? Describe a moment in the book where one of the characters' will to survive outweighed their fear.

### Fear

- The characters spend a lot of time running, hiding and barricading themselves from the monster. Describe some of the literary devices used to intensify our feeling of fear in those times.
- Body horror is a sub-genre used within this book. Describe how the monster changes over the course of the book. How does the knowledge that the monster can change affect your reading experience?
- Which scenes felt scarier/more thrilling for you: those when the characters could see the monster or those when the monster couldn't be seen?
- Do you think Riley's panic attacks and catastrophic thoughts serve to intensify the feeling of fear? Did you interpret her reaction to the events as justified? If the main character did not experience these thoughts, how might it change your reading experience?
- What does the monster actually want? Is this a being of pure evil, or is there something deeper behind its surface hunger?

### AFTER READING

- Each of the characters had something dark in their past that led them to be on the expedition. Do these characters redeem themselves on the trip? Do they need redemption at all?
- Describe how the scenes with Good Cop and Bad Cop affected your reading experience. Did your thoughts about these scenes change as you progressed through the book?
- Have you come across the archetypes of Good Cop and Bad Cop before? Were your expectations for these characters met? Were there any surprises in these characters for you?
- Share your thoughts on the ending. Is this how you expected the book to end? Is this how you'd have liked the book to end? Why/why not?

### ACTIVITIES

- Write a journal entry from Riley's perspective outlining how she's feeling before joining the expedition.
- This book is told from Riley's point of view. How does Riley's voice affect our interpretation of the story? Choose a key point in the novel and rewrite the scene from another character's point of view.
- Luke's reappearance at the end of the novel is a surprise to Riley because she presumed he was dead or taken by the monster. Prepare a timeline that describes Luke's journey from the moment Riley falls asleep next to him in the tent until the ending, where he's taken away. This information isn't described in the book, so be as creative as you like! You could add illustrations or media clippings to accompany your timeline, too.
- Near the end of the interrogation, Riley successfully sends Dae's footage to his older brother, who is the editor-in-

chief of one of South Korea's most prominent newspapers. Write the breaking news story exposing Anton Rusk's ploy to weaponise the Antarctic monster.

- *It Looks Like Us* ends with a chilling description of Riley being infected by the monster. Write a creative piece continuing from this point.