

Game Over Girl

AUTHOR

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid to Upper Secondary
(Violence, Language)

SYNOPSIS

Lola's been selected to play a new virtual reality game—Better Than Life. In her game, she's loved. Is beautiful. Can do whatever she wants. But she quickly breaks the one rule: not to recreate people or places from real life.

She recreates her house and a boy she fancies. Soon she's skipping school to play. But Lola has secrets—dark ones that begin to surface inside her game—and the more she tries to fix her problems, the more she overlooks a much bigger threat . . .

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Naomi Gibson was born in 1988 and grew up in Cheshire, UK. Her childhood was spent with her nose in a book and her hands on a sketchpad, constantly in search of adventure and new worlds. Encouraged by her family to be creative, she developed a love for writing at a young age—something that never left her. She studied Art History at the University of Manchester. Whilst there, she met her husband, someone who continues to tell her all about the latest advancements in AI, space, and consumer technology, even when she's not listening. She is the author of two novels for young adults, *Every Line of You* and *Game Over Girl*.

THEMES

- Unreliable narrators
- Family relationships
- Technology
- Control
- Obsession
- Guilt
- Anxiety
- Creativity and the power of imagination

STUDY NOTES

- In *Game Over Girl*, Lola is selected to test out a brand-new VR game, in which she can build her own reality and escape the real world. As a class, discuss the positive and negative aspects of this opportunity—what danger might this cause? Who could benefit from having an alternate world to live in? What risks can you think of? Write these all down on a big spider diagram and add to each point as the discussion develops.

- Then, on your own, design your very own VR game. Think about the type of activities and tasks that might be available to players and how this might benefit them within the game. Who is your game aimed at? What is it called? What incentives does it offer? Once you have decided on these things, create a poster to advertise your game and stick it on the wall, presenting your game to the class.
- Lola uses the game to explore suppressed emotions and the grief she feels at the loss of her mother. On your own, think about why this might have been helpful for Lola when it comes to reflecting about the way she feels. Could it be because she is able to reconnect with her mum/sister? Or maybe because she can reflect on her past at her own pace? Make a list of the possible reasons why Lola may have found this cathartic. Once you have written the list, share your answers with the person sitting next to you, and discuss how you might use these reasons to understand your own emotions going forward. How might you use Lola's experience of recognising and dealing with her grief to find your own coping mechanisms?
- We are first introduced to the VR game Better Than Life when Lola is chosen to take part in its trial. On your own, re-write this as if you were playing your VR game for the first time—what would you be feeling? What could you see? Use as many senses as possible to help describe your surroundings and the way you could be feeling in that moment. Try to be as detailed as possible to make the reader feel as if they are right there with you. Then, read this aloud to the person sitting next to you.

Discussion Questions

- How do you feel about the way Lola ignored the orders to not replicate real life within the game?
- What does the story suggest about privilege—do you think it exists around you? How so?
- In what ways can you tell that our narrator is unreliable?
- VR technology plays a crucial role in this book. Do you think this kind of advanced technology will eventually become a reality? Do you think that's a good or a bad thing?
- Do you think it's fair that Lola is given a place at the school just because her father is the headmaster?
- In what ways do you think this book comments on mental health? Give some examples.
- What comments does the novel make about family relationships and how they differ from family to family?
- What do you think happens next, after the end of the story?