

The Impossible Story of Hannah Kemp

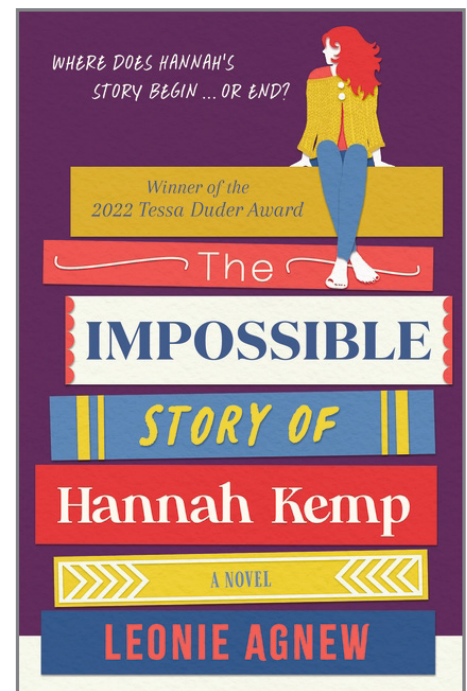
AUTHOR

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower to Mid Secondary



SYNOPSIS

Hannah Kemp is dealing with a traumatic accident for which she was responsible. Struggling to come to terms with her guilt, she is ostracised in a community that condemns her. She deals with this by rebelling and pushing away anyone that offers kindness or seeks to understand her. Crippled by her own guilt and anger, she comes across a mobile library bus where every book is the true story of someone's life, and realises that judgement of others is almost always shallow and uninformed. When she finds her own book . . . she also finds that her past can reshape her present.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leonie Agnew is an award-winning children's author, a former advertising copywriter, and currently moonlighting as a primary school teacher. Witnesses claim her defining characteristic is a tendency to make things up. This is called lying, unless you write it down. Then it is pleasantly referred to as being an author.

In 2022, Leonie won the junior fiction prize at the New Zealand Book Awards for the second time. She also won the Storylines 2022 Tessa Duder Award for her manuscript *The Impossible Story of Hannah Kemp*. Leonie has previously won the British David Fickling Master of the Inkpot prize, multiple Esther Glen awards, a national children's choice award and more. All this must be true because somebody else wrote it on her Wikipedia page, not Leonie.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the novel, view the cover and title of the book. Identify the following:
 - The title of the book
 - The author
 - The publisher
 - The blurb.
- Based on the cover, what do you think this story is about? How do you think it will begin/end? Revisit your answer after reading the story to see if your predictions were correct.
- Find other covers of books in this genre online that look similar to the cover in this story. Why do you think the publisher has chosen this cover?
- Discuss the title of the book. Do you think this is a good title? Why or why not? If you were asked to choose an alternate title for the book, what would it be? Remember, a good title should capture the audience's attention and give them an idea of what the book is about.
- The orientation sets the scene, mood and introduces the characters. Answer the following questions after reading

the opening scene of the novel:

- Which character/s are we introduced to?
- What mood is the author setting?
- Write what you think could happen in the story based on how the writer has set the story up.
- It is the author's job to create trouble for their characters. They need to make it difficult for the characters to achieve their goals. What trouble (complications) does the author create to make it difficult for the main character to achieve their goal/s?
 - Can you identify the climax of the story, the moment of highest tension?
- Characterisation is how the characters in a novel are described physically, their point of view, their personalities, their private thoughts and their actions. Draw a picture of a character from the book and then describe their personality in five words. Compare your ideas of that character with other people in your class. Did you imagine the same person?
- Consider the world the author has created in this novel and answer the following questions:
 - Can you describe it?
 - How is it different to the world you live in?
 - Which elements of the world seem realistic, and which seems fantastical?
- Is there any language used in this text that makes the novel more appropriate for an older reader? What is the purpose of this language?
- How does the story conclude (resolution)? Compare the ending of the story with how you imagined it ending at the end of the first chapter. Were you surprised by where the story went?
- Design your own cover for the book with new imagery and a new tagline that will persuade and interest people in reading the book.
- Choose a scene in the novel and rewrite it from the perspective of another character. Focus particularly on the character's attitudes and feelings, rather than simply recounting events. How might another character see and experience events differently to the character in the novel?
- Imagine that a movie was being made of the novel. In small groups, create a soundtrack to accompany some of the key scenes, thinking particularly about the mood you want to convey. You could either make a compilation of existing songs or compose your own musical pieces. Present your soundtrack to the class, explaining why you have chosen the pieces you have. Also choose your ideal cast for the movie and create a movie poster.