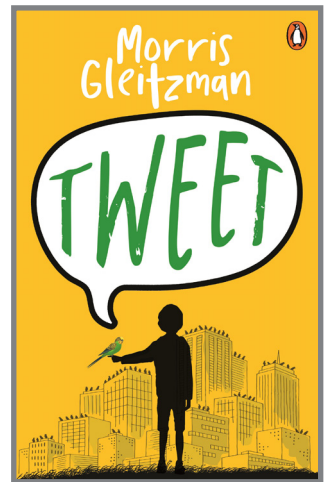


Tweet

AUTHOR

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SYNOPSIS

Jay's mum and dad, famous bird scientists, are missing in Africa, leaving Jay and his Poppa and their budgie Clyde at home. After Poppa's death, Jay is unable to contact his parents. When he receives little help from the government, Jay decides to set off for Africa to find his mum and dad himself. It soon becomes clear that the world's bird population is behaving unusually, trying to send humans a message that humans struggle to understand. The authorities hope that Jay's parents can explain, but they need help from Jay and Clyde to find them. Despite being unexpectedly separated, Jay and Clyde manage to work together by drawing on their human and avian skills and, with the support of their friends, help shine a light on the way forward for humans and the natural world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Morris Gleitzman grew up in England and came to Australia when he was sixteen. After university, he worked for ten years as a screenwriter. Then he had a wonderful experience. He wrote a novel for young people. Now, after 44 books, he's one of Australia's most popular authors. He was appointed the Australian Children's Laureate for 2018–2019.

THEMES

- Our relationship with the natural world
- Family
- Love
- Courage
- Being human
- Teamwork
- Social change

STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- What do you think of when you hear the word 'tweet'? How might our modern use and understanding of the word be different from 50 years ago? How do both humans and birds use 'tweets'? What might this suggest about what this novel might be about?
- Why do humans believe themselves to be the most powerful species on earth? Do you believe that they use their power wisely?
- How can social action (rallies, marches, social media campaigns, etc.) help to change issues in our society?

- Do you think scientists should be allowed to conduct experiments on animals? What information might they learn from doing so? What are the arguments for and against?

WHILE READING

- Humans often believe that they are the most powerful animals because they have superior abilities. How does this story suggest that they are not superior to birds?
- The novel suggests that our ecosystem is under threat because of the way humans have used and damaged the earth. List all the ways mentioned in the novel that humans' use of the land has had a negative impact on birds and other species. What responsibility could humans take order to improve this situation?
- Consider the different types of birds in the story. What assumptions would you make about each one of them based on their size? Were these assumptions supported or challenged in the story? What might this suggest?
- Would you expect an 11-year-old boy and his budgie to be able to help heal the world? What might this suggest about the assumptions we make?
- Throughout the story, we see a lot of different examples of people joining together to support and help each other, eg. Clyde and Dora; Jay and Maxine. List any other examples you find. What does the story suggest about the need for teamwork and cooperation?
- Both Jay and Clyde show incredible courage in finding ways to spread the birds' message. What does it take to have courage? How do these two find courage in the most difficult of circumstances?
- Dora suggests that one of humans' faults is that they are too sensitive and influenced by emotions. In what way are emotions bad? In what ways are they good? Do you think our world would be better off with less human feelings or more?

Writing Style

- The novel is written in third person, but after Jay and Clyde are separated, alternate chapters are devoted to each character's story. What is the impact of this technique? What does it suggest about the two characters? Would it have been possible to tell the story from one perspective only?
- Morris Gleitzman uses a number of different literary techniques in the novel:
 - Literal vs figurative language
 - Foreshadowing
 - Euphemisms
 - Irony.
- In what way are the terms 'put all the pieces [of the puzzle] together' and 'flying into a storm' used literally in the novel and how are they used figuratively?
- List any examples of foreshadowing you find in the novel (eg. jigsaw puzzle, the letter for Poppa, birds not being allowed in the flat and the number of incidents of birds gathering, each time in increasing numbers, etc.). How does this technique add atmosphere and urgency to the novel? Looking back, how do each of these examples of foreshadowing help to connect the key ideas in the story?
- Irony occurs when something happens that is the opposite of what you would expect or is intended. How is it ironic that Clyde is not even allowed to be in the flat, but ends up being the hero? How ironic would it be if the birds were gathering to stop human cruelty, and that could make humans even more cruel? What is the irony in having the big company called Twitter?
- Dora describes Poppa dying as having 'carked it'. This is quite a blunt description. Why do humans use gentler terms or euphemisms eg. 'passed away'? How does this relate to what we learn in the novel about the difference between humans and animals?

Themes

Family

- Consider what is meant by the term 'family'. Does it have to be people to whom you are related? List all the different types of 'family' in the novel.
- What are the benefits of being part of a family?

Love

- Poppa tells Jay that 'Love can travel any distance.' How is this illustrated in this novel? What does love enable Jay and Clyde to do?

Courage

- What does it mean to show courage?
- Consider how Jay and Clyde demonstrate courage.

Being human

- Why do humans consider themselves to be the superior species?
- Clyde says humans sometimes get grumpy because they are so busy. Why do you think the human world is so busy? Do you think this is positive or negative and why?
- What skills do humans have that animals don't? What skills do they appear to lack?
- Consider why Clyde wants to be more human. What characteristics does he think this will give him? Is it Clyde's human skills or his bird skills that lead to his success? Be prepared to support your choice.
- Why does Jay want to be more like a bird? What specific characteristic does he want to learn?
- Why do you think Morris Gleitzman gave his main character the name of a bird (Jay)? What might this suggest about him?
- Consider the way the human authorities decide to solve the problem of the mass bird gatherings. What does this tell us about their attitudes to other species and their way of solving crises?
- Why did the government worry that their enemies were being helped by Jay's parents?
- Why do countries get so competitive about each other? What would be wrong with another country solving the issue first?

Teamwork

- Make a list of all the ways in which the birds help Clyde and Jay.
- Why do you think Morris Gleitzman has Jay and Clyde solve things the way they do? What does this suggest about the need to cooperate and draw on each other's skills?

Social change

- The birds meet in large groups to bring attention to their campaign. What impact do the gatherings of birds have on the humans? How do the humans react?
- Can you think of any social movements that have occurred in our society? Why can a group of people sometimes stand up to and influence a whole army?
- Why might mass gatherings be a successful way to convey a message to a government?
- Is there any other way that the birds could have got their message across to the humans?
- How do Jay and Clyde form a communication bridge between the humans and the birds?

Science and Nature

- Write down some words you associate with nature. Now write down words you associate with science. What are the similarities and differences?
- Why do the authorities carry out experiments on Clyde and Dora?
- How does nature both suffer or benefit from science?
- What characteristics do the various scientists in this story display?
- What can scientists learn from studying birds?
- Consider the description of the compound Jay and Clyde are taken to by the authorities. What does this suggest about the way science is being used here?
- Consider the difference between 'authoritarian' and 'human' approaches to situations. Was there a more human way to get information from Jay?
- Consider the different ways the bunker scientists and Jay's parents go about their work. Why are their methods so different? If you were a scientist, which methods would you prefer?

AFTER READING

- Who are the goodies and the baddies in this story? Is it hard to decide? How can people do both good and bad things

at the same time? Consider how the Batman and The Joker salt and pepper shakers reflect this idea.

- At first, Dora thinks that ‘the birds are making a big nuisance of themselves to punish humans for being so cruel. And they don’t have a clue how much more cruel that’ll make humans be towards them’ (p 122). It turns out she’s right about some humans’ reaction. Why does the birds’ behaviour make some humans so angry? What does that suggest about people?
- Why do you think the birds are so calm about the idea of being eaten? Why is it not the way that humans think?
- ““Leaders have two basic things,” he says, seeing, in his mind, Poppa saying it. “Ideas and armies. And the armies are usually bigger than the ideas”” (p 208). What does this suggest about the way humans take care of problems? Is this a satisfactory solution?
- Trace Clyde and Jay’s journey and find all the specified locations on a map.
- Make a poster or a short video explaining to humans why they need to accept birds as equals.
- Complete the task set by Jay’s mum for his classmates—choose an animal and write down all the things making their life worse that humans are responsible for and can fix.
- In the story, we meet two domesticated birds, one who wishes he had more human qualities, and one who wishes she could be a wild bird. The main human character sometimes wishes he had some wild bird abilities too. Consider the differences between wild birds, domesticated birds and humans by completing a Venn diagram.
- Consider the four different types of birds we meet in the story—a budgie, a galah, a kea and an eagle. What assumptions might you make about each one? Do their characters reflect or challenge these assumptions?
- The novel makes the point that the human world would be in a lot of trouble if we destroyed all the other species in the natural world. Research the following ways we benefit or learn from other species:
 - Ecological (environmental)
 - Social
 - Economical
 - Scientific.

AUTHOR OF NOTES
JEAN YATES