



# The Ones We're Meant to Find

## JOAN HE

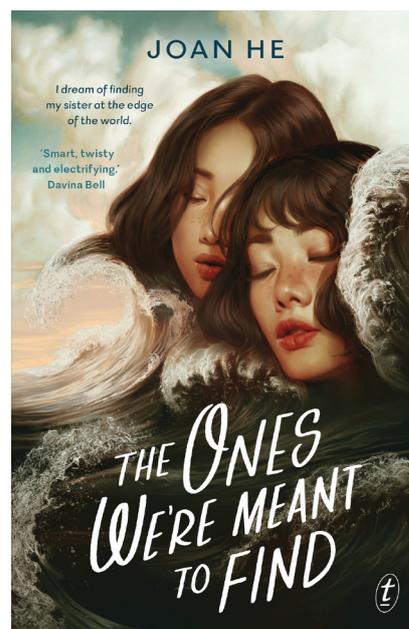
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Fiction

RECOMMENDED READING AGE: 14+

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### CURRICULUM GUIDE

*The following teaching guide has been designed to embrace shared curriculum values. Students are encouraged to communicate their understanding of a text through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing.*

*The learning activities aim to encourage students to think critically, creatively and independently, to reflect on their learning and connect it to an audience, purpose and context. They encompass a range of forms with a focus on language, literature and literacy. Where appropriate, they promote the integration of ICT and life skills.*

### SYNOPSIS

Cee is drawn to the ocean, waking every morning to find that she has crept from the house to stand in the waves. The compulsion scares her, although she has no idea why. Cee has only patchy memories of life before the island, where she lives alone with nothing but the android U-me for company. All Cee knows is that somewhere, beyond the waves, is her sister, and she'll do anything to find her.

Kasey is the opposite of Cee in every way. A privileged and intelligent rank 2, she lives with her father in one of the eco-cities in the sky, consumed by thoughts of her dead sister. But when the precarious eco-cities that float above a decimated Earth are threatened, and the future of all humanity is at stake, Kasey knows that she can help, and Cee is the key to their survival.

*The Ones We're Meant to Find* is a complex story of science and humanity. Set against the backdrop of a dying planet, Kasey and Cee's desperate search for each other brings out themes of technology, privilege, climate change and, ultimately, what it means to be human.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joan He is a Chinese-American writer. *Descendant of the Crane* was her debut young-adult fantasy novel. She is donating some of the proceeds of her second novel, *The Ones We're Meant to Find*, to Ocean Conservancy. Joan lives in Philadelphia and writes from a desk overlooking the Delaware River.

### BEFORE READING

1. Read the opening poem by E. E. Cummings. What does it mean to you? What themes do you think the novel might cover, based on the poem?
2. *The Ones We're Meant to Find* is set in the future, when the Earth has been decimated by climate change, and humanity struggles to survive the onslaught of bushfires, earthquakes and tidal waves. Have a conversation about what you think the world will look like in the future. What threats might humanity have to overcome?
3. Make a list of the ways you rely on technology in your life. Is it dangerous to rely on technology as much as we do? Why?

### WHILE READING

1. Why does Kasey have a moving-on party? How do people talk about her reactions to Cee's disappearance?
2. Why do you think Cee is only able to see in black and white? What happens to allow her to see the world in colour?
3. How do you respond to Kasey? Do you think she is too unfeeling? Or is it something else that makes her see things in such a rational way?
4. When Kasey finds Celia's Intraface, how does it make her feel? What does she think has happened to her sister?



5. If humans are only allowed to leave their houses via holo, and have technology embedded into their flesh, are they becoming robotic?
6. Why did Celia choose to have her Intraface removed? Do you agree with her choice?
7. Kasey keeps referring to other people as 'normal people', and it is obvious that she doesn't consider herself to be like them. Do you agree? Is it a good thing or a bad thing to be 'normal'?
8. Why is Celia so angry at Kasey when she restores her falling neurotransmitter levels (p. 34)?
9. Who does Actinium feel is to blame for the death of his parents? Is he right? What does he want?
10. Actinium says to Kasey 'most choices are made before you reach the edge.' (p. 166) Do you agree? What choices have each of them made that have brought them to this moment?
11. 'There are other ways to sway a person from their course' (p. 366). What does Actinium mean by this?

## AFTER READING

### CHARACTER

1. How does Kasey describe Celia? Is this different from the picture you have built up of her from the first chapter of the book?
2. Kasey fears seeing herself through her sister's eyes (p. 248). Why do you think this is? In Celia's voice, write a description of Kasey. Write another description from Cee's perspective, after she discovers the truth of who she is.
3. Cee talks to U-me as if she is human, even though U-me is unable to offer anything beyond the most basic responses. Do you see U-me as 'just' a robot, or do you see her as something more sentient? What makes you think this?

### STYLE AND STRUCTURE

1. Identify the words and phrases in the book that tell you what kind of story it is. What elements of the writing tell you something (or make you curious about) about who the character is and what she's doing? How does the writer show that the story takes place in the future?
2. The novel is divided into alternating chapters, with the narrative unfolding from the perspectives of Cee and Kasey. But while Cee's chapters are written in first person, Kasey's chapters are written in third person. Why do you think the writer has made this choice? How does it impact the way you feel about each of the two characters? Based on the revelations at the end of the novel, what do you think the author is trying to say with her POV choices?

3. You'll notice, at the beginning of the book, as the characters are being introduced, that the chapters are quite long, but when the book reaches moments of climax or tension, they are much shorter, even cut off at times. How does the writer use this to build the suspense of the story? Do you enjoy it?

## THEMES

### Survival

1. Is the survival of one as important (or more) than the survival of many? How do we decide whose life holds more value? How do the characters make these decisions in the novel?
2. Cee is surviving—she has food, shelter and at least a form of company. Is that enough? What do you think she's missing? In the floating eco-cities, people are only allowed to leave for the 'essentials'—what are the three essentials outlined? Make a list of what you think is necessary for survival.
3. Cee is willing to kill to survive, as we see when she fights Hero on the mattress-raft. But then she has to choose between her own survival and Kasey's—what motivates her to make the choice she does?

### Ethics of technology

1. 'People, Kasey noted, overreacted to signal their care' (p. 74). What makes us human? How does the contrast between Kasey and Cee's personalities make you reflect on humanity? Consider their choices, their actions, and their desires—who do you think is more human and why?
2. Should everyone have access to life-saving technology? In He's future world, people are given access to the eco-cities based on their rank. What decides a person's rank? Is this fair?
3. Kasey explains that the fail-safe part of her plan is to create bots with a concept of self and someone to care about (p. 227). Is this ethical? Is Cee able to feel pain?

### The future

1. How different is the future He describes in her book from the one you imagine? Make a list of three elements of the future outlined in the book that are clearly the outcome of current events or choices.
2. The Earth described in the novel is pretty bleak—Kasey observes the wildfires, hurricanes, monsoons and earthquakes that plague the land, devastated by 'decades of deep-crust mining' (p. 19). Factories and plants are compromised, and the land, sea and air are contaminated by nanoparticles and pollutants. Despite this, many people still choose to live on Earth, and fight for the freedom to do so. Why do you think this is? What would you be willing to give up in order to secure the future of Earth?



3. 'Rank was calculated from the planetary impact of an individual's Intraface-tracked behaviours—and the behaviours of their ancestors' (p. 31). Do you think people should be punished for the behaviours of their ancestors? How would your behaviour now affect the lives of your ancestors?

## RESPONDING

1. Cee has several 'touchstone' memories that help her to hold onto her sense of self. Are these enough to make her human? What would your touchstone memories be? Write them in as much detail as possible—how would you bring them to life for someone who had never met you before?
2. Meridian is furious that rest of her family isn't able to immigrate to the eco-cities because of their 'great-great-grandfather's legacy in the pesticide industry' (p. 72). Write a letter from Meridian to the government, trying to persuade them to let her family immigrate. What arguments would you use? Would they be personal or political? Try to be as convincing as you can.
3. Imagine you are one of the characters in the novel. Write a description of a typical day in your life. What do you eat? Where do you live? What is your rank? What is important to you? Write a short paragraph reflecting on the differences and similarities between this and your own life.
4. In groups, debate the following ideas in class (one group should argue for and one against).
  - a. 'The difference between *asylum* and *prison* was membrane-thin' (p. 115). Are the eco-cities an asylum or a prison?
  - b. 'Before *they* became *I*, no one cared when *they* died' (p. 116).
  - c. 'The end of their road was not an *if*, but a *when*. The world would end' (p. 143).
  - d. 'Freedom is a privilege. Life is a right' (p. 338).