

"A story with a 'wow' factor...
A wonderful, humorous, very human ride."
—Michael Poore, author of *Reincarnation Blues*

HOW TO BE REMEMBERED

a novel

MICHAEL THOMPSON



READING GROUP GUIDE

1. Tommy's parents wake to find a little boy in their home. Unaware he's their son, they call the police. How did you feel when they didn't even know how to hold their own child? What did this tell you about how comprehensively Tommy had been wiped from the minds of his parents?
2. In some ways, the foster system works for Tommy and his strange circumstances. Why is that? What does this say about the system he is forced to grow up in?
3. When he's fourteen, Tommy falls in love with Carey Price, who's also in foster care at the Dairy. How does the love he has for Carey in his youth change the way he feels about the Reset? How does that change impact the way Tommy acts as a teenager?

4. Though Tommy is exceptional at staying positive and optimistic, there are still times when he asks, “Why me?” Reflect on moments in the novel when Tommy let his situation impact him emotionally, especially when he is a teenager living at the Dairy. Would you react in the same ways? Why?
5. When Tommy is in the hospital after his accident, he meets Josh, his future best friend and business partner. As Tommy prepares to go back to the Dairy, Josh tells him to “come and find me.” Why do those words stick with Tommy? How do they change his outlook on life when he returns to foster care?
6. If there is one person in his life that Tommy looks to as a parental figure, it’s Miss Michelle. Describe their relationship over the years, the impact it has on Tommy to always be forgotten by her, and the significance of Tommy’s surname to Miss Michelle. How did this make you feel when reading the story?
7. Tommy’s run-in with his birth father is a pivotal moment in the story, as Tommy is forced to consider what his life could have been like. Think about the idea of “what could have been.” What do you think Tommy yearns for when he sees his father’s life without him? How did this encounter impact you while you were reading?

8. Tommy has never forgotten Carey Price, and when they are finally thrown together one night, they form an instant connection. Do you think fate, or the universe, has anything to do with their relationship? Why or why not?
9. Carey tells Tommy that it's not just his life that is affected by the Reset, but in fact, many people's lives are changed forever when the universe wipes him. When looking at it this way, whose lives have been changed because of Tommy's? Does this shift in perspective change the way you think about the Reset and its consequences?
10. Tommy ends up feeling sympathy for Richie Sharpe because he's been used by the Reset. Do you think this sympathy is deserved?
11. Discuss the themes of remembrance and legacy within the novel. Then, reflect on and discuss the ways that *you* want to be remembered, as well as the legacies you hope to build.
12. Discuss the end of the novel. Do you think Tommy got what he most hoped for in life?
13. If you only had a few items, including people and pets, to bring through with you during a Reset, what would they be and why?

A CONVERSATION WITH THE AUTHOR

The idea of a universal Reset is so unique. What was the inspiration behind this?

It started with social media and our digital lives—this idea that everybody has a digital footprint that will stay with you, even if you'd rather be forgotten. Somehow, that made me think about the opposite scenario: What if you wanted to be remembered and something—some huge, unknowable force—was preventing it? It was a bit of a leap between the two, but I knew immediately that it had the makings of a good story.

The Reset is complicated, and it impacts every aspect of Tommy's life. How did you keep up with all the consequences the Reset would or could have on Tommy while writing?

I just kept thinking about it, turning it over and over. I know that sounds boring, but I just kept examining the story in my head, looking for the consequences of the Reset, as well as the

loopholes and the opportunities within it. Most of this thinking took place in the shower. We ran out of hot water on many occasions.

How to Be Remembered has many emotional touchstones, and Tommy's situation is sure to make readers feel both sadness and joy. Were there any challenges that came with writing such an emotional novel?

I have two young children, so the scenes early in the book were the toughest—when Tommy is only small and doesn't understand why his parents aren't there anymore. I think the biggest challenge though was ensuring that Tommy's situation wasn't too miserable, too horrific: he was already suffering from the unique circumstances of the Reset, so the unending kindness of Miss Michelle, the friendship of Josh, and the ongoing hope of finding love with Carey were important counterpoints.

What is your writing process like? Are there any ways you like to get creative inspiration?

When I'm working on something new, it feels like there's an urgency to get it down. I prefer to write in the morning, but it also has to fit in around our kids and business and a bunch of other things—so this might be at 5 a.m., or it could be at midday. Creative inspiration usually arrives in the shower, though I also had a few good breakthroughs while riding the streets of our suburb on a bike with a child seat mounted on the back.

What do you hope readers take away from this story?

Mostly hope, really. It's a story about resilience, about strength, about kindness, and about the idea that we can all impact other people without even realizing it—so we should do everything we can to make sure it's a positive impact.

If you were to bring anything with you through a Reset, what or who would it be?

It would be my wife and kids. As for physical belongings, I'd probably be okay with the Reset wiping most things—it might be a convenient way of decluttering the house.

What are you reading these days?

My secret shame is that I'm actually a relatively slow and distracted reader, and am eternally envious of people who can race through a book in a day or two. That said, I'm a fan of Liane Moriarty, Matt Haig, Jane Harper, Sally Hepworth, Stephen King, and plenty of others—it just takes me a while to get through them!