

# Robot relationships

## Topic

Artificial intelligence, love, science fiction, what it means to be human

## Learning outcomes

- Consider whether a human could have a romantic relationship with a robot
- Reflect on boundaries and identities
- Analyse the trailer for *Her* and a text on the subject in order to inform a debate.
- Study new language and useful phrases related to the topic

## Age / level

Aged 13-17 and adults with CEF level B2+

## Time

70 minutes + 25 minute extension debate (optional)

## Materials

1. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJTU48\\_yghs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJTU48_yghs) *Her* – official trailer. You'll need Internet access for this
2. Worksheet 1 – lead in (1 each)
3. Worksheet 2 – Reading text (1 each)
4. Worksheet 3 – post-reading activities and discussion (1 each)
5. Transcript - 1 each
6. Presentation – This can replace worksheet 3 and worksheet 1

## Introduction

This lesson takes the Collecting Europe project as a starting point for an exploration of whether a romantic relationship between a human and a robot is possible. Students will discuss this and related questions as they work with the trailer for *Her* and a reading text on the subject. After a focus on useful language from the reading text, students are invited to debate the topic in more depth.

## Procedure

### Part 1 (20 – 30 minutes)

The first part of the lesson is designed to generate ideas about the future and how your students feel about it. They will focus on a specific question ‘Would you have a romantic relationship with a robot?’

Part 1 could be completed in a separate lesson and part 2 done as a homework activity.

<b>1. Lead-in (5 – 10 minutes)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask students if they feel positive about the future and to give reasons for their answers.</li> <li>• How do they think future generations will view us? In 2000 years’ time, how will our time be seen?</li> </ul>
<b>2. Collecting Europe questions (10 minutes)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show students the questions on <b>slide 2</b> or give them the questions on the student worksheet 1</li> <li>• Ask students to discuss the questions and reflect on their answers.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Discussion - a romantic relationship with a robot (5 – 10 minutes)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask students if they could imagine having a romantic relationship with a robot. This is the main theme of the lesson. Students write down the reasons for their answer and then discuss.</li> </ul>

### Part 2 (15 minutes)

The second part of the lesson invites students to watch a trailer for the film *Her*, in which a man has a relationship with his operating system. Students could be asked to watch the trailer for homework if there is no internet access in the classroom.

<b>4. Trailer for the film ‘Her’</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask students if they have seen the film <i>Her</i>. If they have, ask them to tell each other what it is about?</li> <li>• If necessary, clarify and explain that the film tells the story of a man who falls in love with his operating system. Tell students they are going to watch the trailer. As they watch, they should note down the ingredients (e.g. personality traits, the situation, feature of the operating system, the relationship, etc.) that they think make it possible for him to fall in love with his operating system. Link to trailer (also on <b>slide 3</b>): <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJTU48_yghs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJTU48_yghs</a> (share the transcript if needed)</li> </ul>
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- Ask your students to compare notes and then conduct feedback as a brief class discussion.
- Ask students if they have seen any other films with similar themes and discuss.

### Part 3 (20 – 25 minutes)

The third part of the lesson invites students to read a short text for comprehension and language extension. It also explores the themes of the lesson through a series of discussion questions, allowing students to develop their thoughts and ideas more fully.

#### 5. Reading: Robot romance (10 minutes)

- Distribute worksheet 2. Reading for gist: Ask students to skim the text to find out if the author thinks it is possible for a human and a robot to have a romantic relationship.  
(Answer: yes, although it would be difficult to know if the robot reciprocated the feelings.)
- Students should complete **exercise 5**, 'True or false', before comparing and checking answers. This exercise is also on **slide 4**  
**Answers:** 1.T, 2.F, 3.F, 4.F, 5.T, 6.T, 7.F, 8.F
- Students should complete **exercise 6/ slide 5**. Ask students to remember or find the useful language from the text.  
**Answers (shown on slide 6):**
  1. ludicrous
  2. it doesn't do it for you
  3. in our daily lives
  4. merging
  5. cheating the system
  6. at a dizzying rate
  7. blurred lines
  8. get to know someone
  9. gets your sense of humour
  10. the only catch

#### 6. Discussion (10 – 15 minutes)

- Display **slides 7 and 8** or ask learners to look at worksheet 3. Students can discuss in pairs or small groups.
- The teacher should listen, participate in the discussion where appropriate and take notes for feedback and correction. Monitor to decide when to move on to slide 8.
- The teacher then leads a feedback session.

**Part 4 (25 minutes)**

In the fourth (optional) part of the lesson, students are asked to debate societal issues about humans having a relationship with a non-human.

<b>7. Debate (optional)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce the situation: It is the year 4020. Human and robot romantic relationships are now common, but still taboo. Flora (a synthetic human) and Derek (a biological human) are together. Flora doesn't want Derek to tell anyone that she is not a biological human. Derek thinks it is important to tell people and challenge their prejudices.</li> <li>• Divide the class in half: one half is Flora and one half is Derek. They should prepare their argument to convince the other that they're right.</li> <li>• Pair a Flora with a Derek and give them a limited amount of time to convince the other one they are right.</li> <li>• You can extend the debate by repeating the conversation with different partners.</li> </ul>
<b>8. Reflection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Display <b>slide 9</b>. Ask students if, now they have thought about it, they think it is possible for a human and a robot to have a romantic relationship. Have they changed their opinions at all during the lesson?</li> </ul>

**Contributed by**

**Joanna Gore, British Council Spain; Edited by Suzanne Mordue**