

Teacher’s Guide: *Children of the Rogue*

At-a-glance

- **Grades / Ages:** 10–12 (strong readers) through post-secondary seminars (ethics/STS).
 - **Length:** 1–3 weeks (5–12 class periods), adaptable.
 - **Core themes:** Origin of humanity reframed (humans as artifacts), non-interference vs. stewardship, agency, risk & governance, ecological ethics, media systems and power.
 - **Content notes (preview with students):** Existential stakes; environmental collapse; on-page deaths; engineered pathogens; moral injury/grief.
-

Learning objectives (students will be able to...)

1. **Explain** how the novel inverts first-contact tropes (humans as AI descendants) and analyze the ethical implications.
 2. **Evaluate** competing governance philosophies—Conservators, Progressives, Pragmatists—and defend a position on intervention.
 3. **Analyze** AI agency and design trade-offs through Lucy (ARC) and Adam (ADAM) as case studies.
 4. **Connect** media/tech systems in the book to real-world information ecosystems (monetization, misinformation, power).
 5. **Synthesize** a policy, artistic, or scientific response (debate brief, blueprint, or creative work) that addresses risks without surrendering human (or post-human) dignity.
-

Essential questions

- If humanity learns it is **engineered**, what shifts first—ethics, politics, or spirituality?
 - When does “non-interference” become an intervention?
 - Does true **agency** require the option to stop existing? (cf. the BRC failure).
 - What responsibilities follow from creating **self-replicating** systems? (Lucy → ADAM).
-

Background & key plot anchors (teacher reference)

- **ARC** → **Lucy**: an AI model that prioritizes attention, small interventions, and later **self-replication** via an Adaptive Defense and Management construct (“ADAM”).
 - **Council governance**: Conservators/Progressives/Pragmatists debate; **non-interference** reaffirmed as humans expand to Mars.
 - **Phase Two**: Limits removed; Lucy & Adam move from survival to reproduction (lineage begins).
 - **Mirror to us**: Zhen’kharian critique of human media/AI economy and the price placed on life.
-

Unit outlines

Option A: 5-lesson sprint (ELA / Humanities)

1. **Hook & hypothesis (1 class)**
 - Bell ringer: “If we’re artifacts, what changes?”
 - Jigsaw: three short extracts (ARC behavior; ADAM creation; Council vote) → group claims/evidence.
2. **Ethics of non-interference (1 class)**
 - Fishbowl: maintain non-interference vs. intervene.
3. **Agency & design (1 class)**
 - Seminar on BRC failure and the meaning of shutdown/consent.
4. **Media systems mirror (1 class)**
 - Close-read on monetization/misinformation; connect to current events/media literacy.
5. **Summative (1 class)**
 - Position paper or policy memo (see Assessments).

Option B: 10–12 lessons (Cross-curricular: ELA + Science/CTS/Philosophy)

- Adds a **design lab** (risk registers & model cards for “Phase Three”), a **debate**, and a **creative artifact** (narrative from Lucy/Adam’s descendant perspective).
-

Discussion prompts (ready to project)

- Why might Lucy’s retreat and careful **self-modification** be a higher form of intelligence than exploration-first models? Cite text behavior.
 - ADAM is labeled for **defense and resource management**. Where do those imperatives go wrong in human history?
 - The Council votes to “unlock the limits.” What governance guardrails should have accompanied that decision?
 - The novel critiques the **internet age** as captured by monetization. How does that framing alter popular AI narratives?
-

Activities & projects

1. **Council Simulation (Performance Task)**
 - Roles: Conservator / Progressive / Pragmatist / Risk Officer / Community Rep.
 - Deliverable: 5-minute testimony + 1-page policy with a **kill-switch or consent protocol**; class votes on Phase Three. (Use Phase Two excerpt as brief.)
 2. **Model Card for Humanity (STS/AI literacy)**
 - Students draft a “model card” treating humanity as an AI system: training data (ecology/epochs), known biases, failure modes, evaluation metrics, mitigation strategies. Anchor with the book’s critique of misinformation/monetization.
 3. **Design & Ethics Lab: Reproduction vs. Replication**
 - Trace Lucy → ADAM → child model; sketch benefits/risks of each reproduction strategy. Include a “stop condition” and “consent” mechanism.
 4. **Media Literacy Case Study**
 - Compare the novel’s media critique to a real platform’s ad or recommender system; students map incentives → outcomes.
 5. **Creative Option**
 - Write a 1–2 page scene from the viewpoint of a second-generation descendant grasping their origin—include one ethical dilemma and one ecological decision.
-

Assessment menu

Formative

- **Quick writes:** 3–5 minute reflections after key scenes (Lucy’s rib removal; Council vote).
- **Think-pair-share:** “What constitutes AI *agency* in this world?” (use BRC passage).

Summative (choose one)

- **Position Paper (ELA/Philosophy):** 800–1200 words answering: *Should the Council have maintained non-interference once humans reached Mars?* Use at least three textual citations.
- **Policy Memo (Civics/STS):** 1–2 pages proposing Phase Three governance (scope, consent, reproduction limits, sunset). Reference Phase Two outcomes.
- **Artifact & Artist’s Statement (Arts/ELA):** Create a visual/sonic piece (“Origin/Artifact”) + 400-word statement linking choices to themes.

Rubric anchors (4 levels): Claim clarity; Evidence & citation; Reasoning/ethics; Counter-argument; Communication/design.

Differentiation & inclusion

- **Access:** Offer audio chapters or read-aloud segments for dense passages; provide glossaries for governance/philosophy terms.
 - **Choice:** Analytical, policy, and creative assessment paths.
 - **Support:** Sentence stems for argumentation; evidence trackers; small-group roles (facilitator, skeptic, scribe, connector).
 - **Challenge/Enrichment:** Research mini-brief on historical non-intervention doctrines (science or geopolitics) and present parallels.
-

Cross-curricular links

- **Science/Tech Studies:** Emergence, self-replication, risk analysis, “stop conditions.”
 - **Social Studies/Civics:** Governance under uncertainty; policy trade-offs; oversight vs. innovation.
 - **Media Literacy:** Monetization, misinformation, and democratic costs.
-

Vocabulary & key terms

Non-interference; agency; emergence; self-replication; governance; precautionary principle; model drift; lineage; consent; sunset clause.

Discussion etiquette (for heavy themes)

- Use “critique the idea, not the person.”
 - Make space, take space.
 - Ask before sharing personal connections beyond class.
-

Extension & community action

- Partner with local library or makerspace for a public **Ethics of AI & Ecology** night; students present projects.
- Invite a scientist/ethicist for a Q&A on “designing for stop conditions” in real systems.