



Buzz Words

The Latest Buzz on Books for Children

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OLDER READERS

Gamers' Quest by George Ivanoff (Ford Street Publishing)

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What began its life as a short story in Ford Street's best-selling anthology, *Trust Me!* has metamorphosed into an action-packed adventure that not unlike *The Matrix* shines light on all the big questions regarding the nature of reality and the meaning of life.

Thieves Tark and Zyra are surviving on their wits in a world of science and sorcery. Their goal is to acquire enough money to buy them access to Designers Paradise, a place where, for a short while at least, they can escape into another world. After stealing a sword o' light from Princeling Galbrath, Tark heads for the nearest dragon intent on liberating the creature from its gold. He succeeds, but little does he know that the dragon's wife Vera, a humanoid robot with appalling dress sense and the tracking ability of a blood hound, is hot on his and Zyra's trail. Zyra, too, has managed to get fellow thief Cracker and The Fat Man off-side and so it is with pursuers aplenty the pair head for Paradise.

When Paradise is at last theirs, Tark and Zyra take on new forms that fit their world of choice—a world that's eerily similar to our own with school, friends, family and everything else that we take for granted. Once there, however, it becomes apparent that something is very wrong. Believing they have killed the Fat Man, our teen team is shocked to learn they have instead helped him meld with the Designers' system and bit by bit he is taking control

determined to destroy all the worlds and create one that bows to his rules alone. When our heroes learn that the Designers are long gone, it's down to them to foil the Fat Man.

It's a well-known fact that electronic games with their never-ending quests and blood pressure raising adventures have lured away many a potential book-loving kid. But now one canny author has found the ideal way to snatch them back with a story that is every bit as riveting as a computer game.

Ivanoff has managed to raise some of the most intriguing and essential questions about what it means to be human while delivering a thrilling adventure story that resonates on many levels. Tark and Zyra's experience in the sewers where they are tempted by the Rat Mage is almost biblical in its connotation. And so, too, the Designers are very much god-like entities hovering on the fringes of existence.

From the outset it seems to be a foregone conclusion that these larger than life characters are nothing more than game constructs. But are they? And if so, with their loves, hates and dreams, are they any less human than us?

Gamers' Quest has all the makings of a cult classic. Highly recommended for its enjoyment value alone, this book would be a powerful tool in a classroom environment, sparking all manner of thought-provoking debates.

Jenny Mounfield has spent the past ten years studying the craft of writing for children and teens. Reviewing for Buzz Words since 2006, she is the author of three published novels for kids: Storm Born (Koala Books), The Black Bandit (Lothian) and, The Ice-cream Man (Ford Street Publishing). In addition she has a number of short stories published both in print and online. Jenny lives in north Brisbane with her husband and three children.