

Ready Player One Study Guide

Ready Player One by Ernest Cline

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Contents

Ready Player One Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Prologue and Level One: Chapters 1-5.....	5
Level One: Chapters 6-11.....	8
Level One: Chapters 12-16.....	10
Level Two: Chapters 17-27.....	12
Level Three: Chapters 28-33.....	16
Level Three: Chapters 34-39.....	18
Characters.....	21
Objects/Places.....	25
Themes.....	27
Style.....	29
Quotes.....	31
Topics for Discussion.....	32



Plot Summary

Ready Player One is the first novel by writer Ernest Cline. This novel is about a young, poor teenager living in a future world where chaos reigns and most people forget their miserable existence by spending most of their time inside the virtual world of OASIS. This teenager, Wade, is one of millions of gunters, people hunting for the hidden Easter egg within the OASIS that was left by its creator, James Halliday, upon his death. The successful gunter will inherit Halliday's entire estate as well as controlling power over his company, Gregarious Simulation Systems. The task seems daunting, especially to a poor kid like Wade who has to access the OASIS on a cheap console issued by the school. However, sometimes intelligence is a much more powerful weapon than expensive equipment. Ready Player One is a fun and exciting adventure novel that not only takes the reader into a future world where anything is possible in the virtual worlds inside the OASIS, but also on a nostalgic trip back to the era of big hair, heavy metal bands, and Atari.

Wade Watts was just thirteen years old when the creator of OASIS, James Halliday, died. Upon his passing, Halliday released an invitation to everyone using his virtual universe program, OASIS, to search for his Easter Egg, a hidden program code within the OASIS. To find the egg, hunters must first find three keys and pass through the three gates these keys open. The invitation began a world wide obsession with finding the elusive keys, but after five years, no one has been successful. Wade has done extensive research on Halliday in his own search for the key, but like everyone else he has no clue as to where the first clue is pointing hunters.

Wade lives with his aunt in an overcrowded trailer in an equally overcrowded trailer park dubbed the stacks because of the way in which the trailers are stacked to make more room. Within the stacks are piles of antique cars that were piled out of the way when the trailer park first began to grow. Wade has a hideout under one of these stacks of cars where he often hides from his thieving aunt and other bullies and criminals. It is here that Wade hides his school issued OASIS console, where he attends a virtual high school within OASIS's programming and continues his private hunt for Halliday's Easter egg. It is also here that Wade finally decodes the first clue and finds the first key.

After clearing the first key and gate, Wade's avatar, Parzeval, in OASIS becomes world famous. Wade begins earning money with endorsement deals that use his avatar's appearance and name. Wade also gets all kinds of email, including emails from the global communications conglomerate, Innovative Online Industries, or IOI. IOI is also hunting for the Easter egg and they send Wade an email offering him a job. Wade decides to meet with the CEO of IOI just out of curiosity. The CEO, Sorrento, offers Wade a job with IOI helping to find the Easter Egg. When Wade refuses, Sorrento then offers him five million dollars to tell him where the first key and gate can be found. When Wade refuses that as well, Sorrento tells him that they know who Wade is in the real world and they will kill him if he refuses to help. Wade refuses still. A short time later, the trailer where Wade lives with his aunt is destroyed by a bomb, causing its stack and several others to fall to the ground.



Wade takes the money that he has made with endorsement deals to move to another city and hide under an assumed identity. For six months Wade works trying to decipher the clue that is meant to lead to the second key and gate. However, Wade is distracted by an affection for a fellow gunter, Art3mis. When Art3mis breaks off the relationship and then finds the second key, Wade renews his efforts. Unfortunately, IOI finds the second key at the same time as Wade, then the third before anyone else. Wade has fallen behind on the scoreboard and it looks increasingly like IOI is going to win. This would be a disaster, however, because IOI will change OASIS, removing its free access to all users. Wade then doubles his efforts to find the key.

With clues from IOI's actions and his extensive knowledge of Halliday's appreciation of 1980s pop culture, Wade finds the second gate and the third key. Wade also knows where the third gate is hidden, but IOI found it first and have blocked it off. For this reason, Wade allows himself to be made an indentured servant for IOI and he uses his access to their internal computer systems to hack into their records. Wade then escapes and uses this information to rally the other gunters against IOI and find a way to break through IOI's defenses. A huge battle takes place ending with IOI setting off a bomb that kills every avatar within the sector where the third gate is located. However, Wade has in his possession a coin that gives him a second life. Wade is alone at the gate and is able to access it before anyone else. Despite the fact that IOI is right behind him, Wade successfully completes the third gate and finds Halliday's Easter egg.



Prologue and Level One: Chapters 1-5

Prologue and Level One: Chapters 1-5 Summary

In the 1980s when Atari began selling games for their home gaming consoles, they did not allow game programmers to have credit for their creations. Hence, the game programmer who created the Atari game, Adventure, created a hidden key within the game that revealed his name when it was discovered and taken to a special secret room. This came to be called an Easter Egg. In this novel, the creator of the OASIS virtual universe created his own egg and the first person to find it will inherit his entire estate and control of his company, including OASIS.

In the Prologue, James Halliday, a brilliant game programmer, grew up in the 1980s and grew obsessed with this era as he aged. Halliday, an introvert who often had trouble speaking to people, was a brilliant gamer, but he never married and never had children. For this reason, when he died in 2039 he sent an invitation to the millions of people who use his virtual universe system, OASIS, to search for his own Easter Egg. Halliday hid the Easter Egg within the OASIS program. The hunter first is to find three keys and pass the tests behind three gates that these keys open. The first to find the egg will inherit Halliday's vast estate, worth several billion dollars, as well as control of his company, Gregarious Simulation Systems or GSS, and OASIS. Immediately, millions of people began searching for the egg, but in the five years that have passed since his death, no one has been able to find the first key.

In Chapter 1, Wade Watts is a seventeen-year-old kid who lives in the stacks, mobile home parks where trailers are stacked one on top of another to make more room. Wade lives with his aunt because both his parents are dead, but his aunt only took him in for the food vouchers that the state gives her for his care. Wade is an avid gunter, someone who is hunting for Halliday's egg, so he spends a great deal of time playing old video games and watching movies and television from the 80s, the era with which Halliday had a fascination and many think will help them find the egg. On this morning, Wade is watching Family Ties on his laptop when his aunt finds him and insists on taking the laptop to sell it for rent. Wade escapes the trailer and goes to his hideout, a van stuck under a pile of other such cars at the edge of the trailer park.

Wade keeps his most valuable possessions in his hideout, including his school issued OASIS console, his visor, and his haptic gloves. Wade uses the console to log into the OASIS. In the OASIS Wade attends school, reads emails, and visits the many message boards dealing with the hunt for the egg.

In Chapter 2, Wade wakes his avatar and sits it in the appropriate class for school and then begins searching the gunter boards to see if anything new happened in the hunt for the egg overnight. There are several different types of gunters. There are people like Wade who prefer to hunt alone. Then there are the gunter clans in which individual gunters join together to help one another in the search. Then there are the Sixers. The



Sixers, the professional hunters employed by Innovative Online Industries, are overwhelmingly hated by most gunters because if IOI gets the egg, they will have control of the OASIS and they will make it a pay service, rather than leaving it free as it has been since its creation. This would make it impossible for people like Wade to access it.

After reading the boards, Wade reads a blog by a gunter named Art3mis. Wade does not know if Art3mis is anything like her avatar, a beautiful young woman approximately his own age, but he has a crush on her just the same. Wade finds Art3mis articulate, intelligent, and her avatar beautiful. After reading Art3mis's blog, Wade gets a message from his best friend, Aech, to meet in Aech's chatroom, called the Basement. Wade has never met Aech, either, but they have been friends in OASIS for several years.

In Chapter 3, Wade uses his avatar, Parzival, to go to the Basement. There Wade and Aech talk about several things, but mostly the egg hunt and 80s pop culture. Another avatar comes into the Basement called I-r0k. I-r0k dislikes Wade and makes fun of his avatar because of his lack of money. Money is required to buy things in the OASIS universe and to pay for transportation of an avatar. Wade has no money to spend, therefore he cannot travel to other planets to build experience points for his avatar or collect items and artifacts. In fact, Wade's avatar is stuck on the planet where his school is located unless he can bum a ride for free from his few friends and acquaintances. This gives I-r0k a lot of material to use against Wade, but no one really takes him seriously.

In Chapter 4, the school bell rings and Wade returns to class. As the school day passes, Wade thinks about how boring it is to be stuck on Ludus and wonders how he will ever find the egg when he cannot even move his avatar's experience level above a one.

In Chapter 5, after lunch, Wade takes Advanced OASIS Studies, a class about the OASIS creator, James Halliday. Wade already knows almost all there is to know about Halliday. Halliday was born in 1972 to an alcoholic machine operator and a bipolar waitress. Halliday's home life was not a happy one, therefore he often lost himself in video games, fantasy novels, and movies. In high school, Halliday met Ogden Morrow who invited him to join his Dungeons and Dragons game. When Halliday wrote a game for the computer, Morrow encouraged him to sell it and even helped him to copy the game and sell it in local stores. Halliday and Morrow would have so much success with that first game that they went on to start their own game company, Gregarious Games. This company became one of the most successful of their generation with Morrow as the public face of the company and Halliday as the game designer. In 2012, Gregarious released OASIS, a free virtual universe game that changed the whole face of gaming and changed the name of their company to Gregarious Simulation Systems. The company made money not from the use of OASIS, but from selling virtual real estate within the program and charging for clothing the avatars can wear and transportation. Now millions of people around the world work and socialize within the OASIS.



Prologue and Level One: Chapters 1-5 Analysis

The conflict that will propel the plot is presented in the prologue of this novel. The inventor of an amazing virtual universe, the OASIS, has died and left a huge fortune as well as control of the OASIS behind. This man, Halliday, has hidden what is known as an Easter Egg inside the OASIS. The person who finds the egg will inherit everything, including control over OASIS. This sets up a very tempting situation for the many of people and businesses in the world who could really benefit from the large amount of money and control of OASIS, which has become the number one place where people work and socialize the world over.

Wade, the hero of the novel, is a poor kid living in the future version of a trailer park in Oklahoma City. Finding the egg would drastically change Wade's life. For this reason, Wade is among many, many others who is studying everything there is to know about Halliday and 80s pop culture. However, Wade is poor and cannot afford to travel around OASIS as many of his fellow gunters. Hence, it seems doubtful that Wade will be able to participate in the hunt beyond puzzling over the clues.

There are many people hunting for the egg, including clans or groups of individual gunters who have joined together to find the egg. These clans require their members to sign an agreement that states that if one member finds the egg, they must all share it with the others. These clans are large, and this can make them powerful, but the struggle with money and information just like individual gunters like Wade.

The Sixers are a powerful foe to gunters like Wade. The Sixers are paid hunters who work for IOI. IOI is a huge conglomeration that, among its many businesses, is the largest internet provided in the world. If the IOI gets control of OASIS, they will turn it into a pay per use system and change many of the things that take place in the universe of the program, making it a playground for the rich only. It would cause people like Wade to not be able to access it at all. None of the gunters like this idea and are fighting to keep IOI from finding the egg, but with IOI's unlimited resources it seems that they have the upper hand.

These chapters also introduce the most important people in Wade's life. His aunt is his caretaker and only family, but she is cruel and selfish, someone Wade is not terribly close to. Then there is Art3mis, a girl Wade has never met, either in the real world or in OASIS, but she is someone he greatly admires and has a crush on. Then there is Aech. Aech is Wade's best friend and a fellow gunter. Wade has no friends in his real world and his avatar is limited to one world, therefore he has few friends in OASIS either. For this reason, Aech is very important to Wade. However, all three are individual gunters and the reader must know that in the end, only one can win. This leaves the reader wondering where the future of these relationships might lie.



Level One: Chapters 6-11

Level One: Chapters 6-11 Summary

In Chapter 6, Wade grows bored while sitting in Latin class and his mind begins to wonder. Wade spends the time thinking about the riddle that contains the first clue of Halliday's egg hunt.

In Chapter 7, the teacher conjugates the verb for 'to learn.' When Wade hears it, it makes him think of a line in the Halliday clue that mentions learning. Then Wade looks up the meaning of Ludus. When he sees that it means both school and game, he realizes the first key must be hidden on Ludus. Wade already knows that the first key has something to do with the Dungeons and Dragon game, Tomb of Horrors. For this reason, Wade begins searching Ludus for a place that resembles the opening in the game to the tomb. When Wade finds something similar, he procures a teleportation ticket for a football game that will take him within an hour's run to the area. When Wade arrives in the area, he finds it looks exactly as described in Tomb of Horrors. Wade finds a place where he believes the entrance is and begins to dig. In moments Wade is in the tomb.

In Chapter 8, Wade knows Tomb of Horrors well and he makes it through the dangerous tomb quickly. On the way down, Wade finds some coins and other items that he can add to his inventory. When he finally reaches the bottom he comes into a chamber where he is surprised to find the demi-lich Acererak sitting on a dais. When Wade approaches Acererak with his avatar, he expects to have to fight, but instead the Acererak challenges him to the video game Joust. The winner will win two out of three games. Wade loses the first game, but successfully wins the last two when he changes positions with Acererak. When it is over, Acererak morphs into Halliday's avatar, Anorak. Anorak gives Wade's avatar the copper key. On the key is written a clue to the location of the gate. Wade figures out where it is immediately, but before he can leave the cavern he runs into another avatar.

In Chapter 9, Wade's avatar is confronted by the avatar of a young woman. As they begin to speak, Wade realizes that this is Art3mis. Art3mis found the chamber weeks ago, but has failed to win Joust against the Acererak. Wade convinces Art3mis that he lost to the Acererak as well, but in the course of their conversation she figures out the truth. When Wade attempts to leave, Art3mis traps him in the cavern until the server resets at midnight. Before he finally leaves, Wade tells Art3mis to trade sides with the Acererak to help her win.

In Chapter 10, when Wade reaches the surface, he finds he has multiple messages from Aech, but he does not answer them. Wade quickly makes his way back to the teleportation station and uses the coins he found in the tomb to transport himself to Middletown, a planet Halliday created that has over two hundred replicas of his hometown of Middleton, Ohio. Once there, Wade makes his way to one of Halliday's



replicated childhood homes where he begins to play Dungeons of Daggorath on Halliday's TRS-80 computer. When Wade successfully completes the game, the first gate opens in the wall.

In Chapter 11, when Wade enters the gate with his avatar, he finds himself transported into the movie, War Games, playing the Matthew Broderick character. Wade quickly understands that the object is to play the part as closely to the original as possible. When he is done, Wade is given the riddle for the next key before he is allowed to step out of the gate. After checking the scoreboard and seeing that Artemis finally won the copper key, Wade logs out of OASIS and goes to sleep.

Level One: Chapters 6-11 Analysis

Wade spends his day in OASIS attending classes. While bored in class, as most teenagers tend to become, Wade allows his mind to wander over the clue given for the first key in the Halliday egg hunt as he has done multiple times before. Wade has already made the connection between the clue and the old Dungeons and Dragons pen and ink role playing game, Tomb of Horrors. While he is in Latin class, Wade makes the final connection that shows him that the key is hidden on Ludus. This is an ironic turn of events because Wade himself has been essentially imprisoned on Ludus for six years because of his inability to leave without some money to pay the transportation cost. To find that the key has been hiding right under his nose for all those years is insulting and exciting all at the same time.

Wade successfully wins the first key before anyone else, but also discovers that his crush, Art3mis, found it before him but she could not win against the lich to win it. This adds challenge and a sense of losing time to the plot. Wade might be the first to find and successfully pass the first key and gate, but Art3mis is quickly behind him and soon others will be too. There are still two more keys and gates to find. However, now Wade has a sense of how Halliday's mind was working when he created this game and he might have a slight edge in the fact that he knows Halliday as well as he does through his extensive research and his own fascination with everything 80s.

Now the world knows that Wade has found the first key and passed the first gate because of the scoreboard that has been on Halliday's website since his death. The reader must wonder how this new notoriety might change Wade's life. However, the reader must remember that Wade has kept his identity secret in OASIS, only allowing people to know him as Parzival, the name of his avatar, or his school identity, Wade3.



Level One: Chapters 12-16

Level One: Chapters 12-16 Summary

In Chapter 12, when Wade wakes the next morning, he discovers that he has thousands of emails and all the newsfeeds are talking about him. Even Ogden Morrow has come temporarily out of hiding to discuss the discovery of the first key. Wade then speaks to Aech and learns that he has also found the first key and passed the gate. Two others have done so as well. Wade also finds a message from Art3mis in his inbox and he quickly responds.

In Chapter 13, over the next week, Wade returns to school and trying to figure out the next clue. He also deals with the loads of fan and hate mail he has received. Among the emails, Wade finds offers from multiple companies asking for his avatar to endorse their products. Wade signs contracts with several of them with the understanding that no one ever learn his true identity. Then Wade finds multiple emails from IOI's CEO Nolan Sorrento. IOI wants to offer Wade a job. Wade decides to attend a chatlink with Sorrento out of curiosity.

In Chapter 14, Wade's avatar goes to IOI's offices in the OASIS and visits with Sorrento. Sorrento shows off their facilities and then takes Wade to a private office. Sorrento then offers Wade an insane amount of money to become head of their Oology department, the department that spends all its time searching for Halliday's egg. Wade plays with Sorrento by suggesting that he will take the job if he can have Sorrento's job. Then Wade declines and begins to leave. Sorrento then offers Wade five million dollars to tell him where the first key and gate are located. Wade declines again. Sorrento then tells Wade that he knows who he is in real life and where he lives. Sorrento then says they have wired the trailer with explosives and will blow it if Wade does not cooperate. Again Wade declines. Wade waits for the explosion Sorrento promised, but it does not come. Just as he relaxes and begins to think it was a bluff, Wade hears the explosion. Wade runs outside and sees that his aunt's stack has fallen and taken several other stacks with it as well. Wade cannot do anything, so he returns to the safety of his hideout.

In Chapter 15, when Wade goes back into OASIS, he calls Aech. Aech tells him that the Sixers have arrived on Ludus and are blocking off the tomb to keep other gunters out. Wade tells Aech what just happened to his aunt. Wade then suggests they have a chat with the other members of the top five on the scoreboard to warn them about the IOI as well. They meet in the Basement. Wade tells Aech, Art3mis, Daito and Shoto what happened to him and what Sorrento said in the meeting. They discuss the IOI and how they are blocking off the tomb. Then it is suggested they all work together to protect themselves, but that idea is quickly vetoed.

In Chapter 16, over the next few hours, dozens of Sixers clear the first key and gate. Battles begin between Sixers and gunter clans in an attempt to get to the tomb. Eventually the clans are able to gain access, but by this time the top ten is filled out with



Sixers. Wade quietly leaves his hideout in Oklahoma City and makes the trip to Columbus, Ohio, where the headquarters of both GSS and IOI are located. Wade uses his endorsement money to rent an apartment and settle in for the long process of finding the egg.

Level One: Chapters 12-16 Analysis

Wade is the first person to find the first key and clear the first gate, making him temporarily the most famous person in the world. Everyone wants to be close to or kill Wade. Wade manages to make some money off of this in endorsements without revealing his true identity. However, this does not protect Wade from IOI who has used illegal means to figure out who he is in real life and make an attempt to kill him.

The reader suddenly realizes just how important finding Halliday's egg has become. At first it seems like just a game, a riddle to solve and a game to play. However, when IOI approaches Wade and begins making threats against him, it clearly becomes much more serious. Wade watches his aunt and his good friend die because he chose not to cheat at Halliday's game. This shows the reader that Wade is a naïve, but strong and noble young man. Wade is clearly the kind of person who makes a good hero, the kind of guy who is flawed, but always manages to do the right thing when it matters.

Wade flees his home now that he has no family and nothing that really ties him down. At the same time, Wade warns his friends about IOI's actions. At the same time, they discover that IOI is doing all it can to win the game, including trying to keep everyone else from obtaining the first key and clearing the first gate. This is frustrating for Wade and the other gunters, but a fact of life. Life has become unruly and dangerous in their world and IOI's actions are nothing new. However, it inspires them to find the egg as quickly as they can to stop IOI from ruining one small piece of happiness in the lives of this ruined society.



Level Two: Chapters 17-27

Level Two: Chapters 17-27 Summary

In Chapter 17, Wade begins speaking to Art3mis a lot despite her reluctance to begin a relationship with someone she has never met. At the same time, as weeks pass, they both continue to work on deciphering the clue to the second key. Wade makes a small breakthrough, coming to the conclusion that the clue references John Draper, a man who in the 70s discovered that if you blew the whistle given away for free in Cap'n Crunch cereal boxes you could make long distance calls for free. However, this does not reveal to Wade where the key might be hidden.

In Chapter 18, Wade's avatar, Parzival, and Art3mis are invited to Ogden Morrow's birthday party, an event that is always a special event. Even though the party is to take place on a planet that allows fighting between avatars, they both decide to attend. While dancing, Wade tells Art3mis that he loves her. Seconds later, the party is invaded by Sixer soldiers who are trying to kill Wade and Art3mis's avatars. Ogden Morrow's avatar kills them all, but Art3mis is gone.

In Chapter 19, Art3mis refuses to see or speak to Wade again after the party, leaving Wade in something of a funk. However, he manages to get up each day and work at an OASIS call center to help pay his bills. Wade has used most of his money building up his collection of OASIS related equipment. Wade has also begun to exercise and eat better in order to prevent illness.

In Chapter 20, Wade has recently bought real estate in OASIS to create a stronghold for Parzival. Wade also has his own television station, as all OASIS users now have, and he uses it to broadcast his favorite 80s shows and movies. Wade has fallen out with Art3mis and does not speak to Aech anymore, either. However, he has built a tenuous friendship with Daito and Shoto. That day when Wade gets off work, during which he cannot cruise OASIS, he discovers that Art3mis has found the second key.

In Chapter 21, Wade knows it will be only a short time before IOI finds the second key because they have an artifact in OASIS that allows them to find any avatar anywhere in OASIS once a day. Therefore, Wade knows that they at least know which sector Art3mis was in when she found the second key. This is confirmed when Sixer ships begin arriving in mass in Sector Seven. This also gives Wade a hint as to the location of the key. Wade decides to go to the planet Archaide because of a reference in the clue to trophies. Wade knows that replicas of Hallidays five game programmer of the year trophies are kept in a museum on Archaide.

In Chapter 22, Wade arrives on Archaide and is happy to see no one else there. Wade goes to where the trophies are kept, but quickly realizes this is not where the key is hidden. As he leaves, Wade takes a path that he has never taken before and discovers a small arcade that should not have been there. Wade goes into the arcade and finds a



Pac-Man game that has an out of order sign on it. However, when Wade plugs is in, he finds it works fine. Wade thinks that this game might have something to do with the egg hunt, so he decides to play. Wade must play a perfect game. It takes him several hours, but he does it. When Wade makes a perfect score, a quarter stuck to the top of the machine comes loose and lands in his hand. Wade has no clue what the quarter might do, but puts it in his inventory anyway. When Wade returns to his ship, he finds he has a message from Aech. The message gives Wade a clue to the location of the second key.

In Chapter 23, Wade quickly makes his way to Frobozz, a planet devoted to the text adventure game Zork. The planet has more than five hundred white houses that are the location of the game. Wade picks one and quickly plays the game. When he is done, he blows the Cap'n Crunch whistle he found in the kitchen and it turns into the jade key wrapped in a silver wrapper. When Wade leaves, he finds the Sixers beginning to land around him. Wade barely gets out of the area unscathed. As Wade waits for his ship to be repaired from damage done by the Sixers, he watches the scoreboard. Shoto appears to have gotten the key, but his brother, Daito, has disappeared, suggesting his avatar was killed.

In Chapter 24, battles rage all over Frobozz until IOI calls their Sixers back and have them defend just ten of the more than five hundred houses. Hundreds of gunters and Sixers win the jade key over the next few hours. During the night, Sorrento personally clears the second gate and moves into first place. Wade tries calling both Aech and Art3mis, but neither answers. A short time later, Sorrento gets the third key. Wade spends the next day in something of a panic, worried Sorrento will clear the third gate at any moment. Then Wade gets a message from Shoto asking to see him.

In Chapter 25, Shoto comes to Parzival's stronghold and tells Wade that his brother, Daito, was killed. Shoto explains that he and Daito were not really brothers, but friends who met in a support group several years ago. They chose to become brothers in OASIS when word of Halliday's egg became public. While Shoto was getting the jade key, Daito remained outside to watch for Sixers. The Sixers arrived and Daito used an artifact to transform his avatar into an old television character called Ultraman. The Sixers were battling him and losing when suddenly Daito logged out of OASIS. Shoto believes IOI employees broke into Daito's apartment and threw him over his balcony. Shoto shows Wade both newspaper reports of Daito's death and the video of the fight on Frobozz. Shoto then vows to keep fighting in order to get revenge for Daito.

In Chapter 26, later that night, Wade is still struggling to figure out where the next gate is when he makes a connection between the wrapper on the key to the movie Blade Runner. Wade quickly goes to the planet Axrenox in OASIS where there are multiple renditions of the Tyrell building that appeared in the movie and was the manufacturer of the Voight-Kampff machine Wade now knows he needs to find. Wade breaks into the building and fights several security avatars before reaching an office where the machine waits. When Wade's avatar holds the jade key, the machine creates a keyhole. When the key is inserted, a gate appears. Wade enters the gate and finds himself in an old bowling alley's game room. Wade's avatar is pulled into the video game, Black Tiger. Wade is proficient at this game, but playing inside it is different. However, he manages



to win the game. At the end, Wade's avatar is offered a gift for succeeding, a robot from one of multiple old television shows and movies. Wade chooses Leopardon from the show Supaidaman.

In Chapter 27, a star on the next clue tips Wade immediately to its location. The star is from a Rush album entitled 2112. Wade rushes to the planet Syrinx where there were over a thousand recreations of the city mentioned in one of 2112's songs, Megadon. From there, Wade's avatar goes to the Temple of Syrinx where he is to make an offering. Referencing lyrics from the album, Wade knows he needs to look behind a waterfall to find a guitar he can use as the offering. When Wade finds the guitar, he plays a few notes of the song and a message appears on the wall telling him the last gate cannot be opened by a single player. Wade then makes the offering and receives the clue to the last gate. Wade knows immediately where the gate is located. However, as he rushes away from Syrinx, he hears that IOI and the Sixers have converged on Chthonia where Castle Anorak is, the place where Wade believes the last gate is located. The Sixers have placed a magic spell over the castle that barricades it. Wade, however, comes up with a plan to get to the gate.

Level Two: Chapters 17-27 Analysis

Wade is in love with Art3mis and quickly becomes devoted to her when they begin spending time together. However, this ends when Wade tells Art3mis that he loves her and she panics. Art3mis and Wade have never met in real life. Wade does not even know what Art3mis looks like or if she is even a girl. However, he knows he loves her and is devastated when Art3mis cuts him out of her life.

Wade has lost track of the egg hunt, but when Art3mis and Aech find the second key, he re-devotes himself to the search. Wade has fallen far behind in the search for the egg, but he is determined to make up time and begins searching with earnest. Instead of finding the key, however, Wade finds a Pac-Man game that presents an interesting challenge that he thinks might have something to do with the egg hunt. The game does not award him anything having to do with the hunt, however, just a strange quarter he cannot remove from his inventory and inspect. It seems like a waste of time, but this should alert the reader to tricks that Halliday might have put into his hunt to help or hurt players.

Wade finds the second key with help from Aech. Although they have drifted apart, Aech is clearly an honorable person who knows that he would not have found the first key if not for inside knowledge about Parzival, therefore he paid Wade back by helping him find the second key. This seems to regenerate their waning friendship. However, after finding the key, Wade is waylaid by a difficult clue. Adding to his frustration, Sorrento, representing IOI, finds the gate and the third key. Sorrento is just seconds from finding the third gate and the egg, ratcheting up the tension of the novel. Time is quickly running out for Wade and his friends.



Wade is very intelligent and he knows Halliday maybe better than any other person out there except his good friend Ogden Morrow. For this reason, it is no surprise when Wade finally figures out how to find the second gate and makes his way through that challenge to find the third key. Wade figures out where the third gate is immediately, but it seems Sorrento did, too. IOI has blocked off access to the third gate, but have not accessed it yet. Again the tension is ratcheted up, making it appear as though the game is over for Wade and the other gunters. Wade claims to have a plan, but the reader can see that this is an almost impossible situation and is hopeful, but not overly so, of his chances.



Level Three: Chapters 28-33

Level Three: Chapters 28-33 Summary

In Chapter 28, Wade is arrested under his aliases name for an unpaid IOI credit card. IOI has an indentured servant program for people who fail to pay their debts. Wade is taken forcefully from his apartment, stripped of his haptic suit, and loaded into a van to be transported to IOI headquarters.

In Chapter 29, Wade goes through the indentured servant initiation process at IOI, including having an anklet placed on his ankle that can sedate him if he tries to run, and a tiny camera placed on his ear so that IOI can watch everything he does. Wade is given a job as a technical support operator. After having lunch, Wade is directed to his living quarters, a coffin like cubical with a small entertainment unit on which he can watch training videos.

In Chapter 30, Wade works in the technical support department unhappily, often chastised for rude comments and for falling asleep. In truth, Wade is staying awake most nights. Wade has hacked into the entertainment unit and is using it to access IOI's corporate files. Wade finds a great deal of information about Halliday in the Sixers' files, as well as video of Sorrento's multiple attempts to access the third gate and video of the IOI employees killing Daito. Wade also finds a memo from Sorrento to his bosses suggesting they kidnap Art3mis and Shoto to force them to help access the third gate. This causes Wade to move up his escape plan. Wade uses the entertainment console to make copies of these files.

In Chapter 31, Wade uses the entertainment console to access his own files to release both the anklet and the ear cam. Wade also works setting up his plan to access the third gate. Finally, Wade puts everything back as it was and dresses in a maintenance worker's uniform. Wade leaves his habitat and makes his way to the elevator and easily escapes the building. Wade goes to a mailbox he rented before his arrested and where he has had an OASIS console shipped to. Wade plugs in and quickly contacts Art3mis, Aech, and Shoto to arrange a meeting. Wade then changes his identity from the one he assumed after Sorrento tried to kill him to his own. Wade then buys himself some new clothes and goes to a vending store where he buys a gun and other means of protection. Finally Wade goes to a public OASIS access store where he buys time in a rig. Back in OASIS, Wade composes an email to all the major newsfeeds that includes the video of Daito's murder and the video of his chatlink with Sorrento.

In Chapter 32, Wade meets with Shoto, Aech, and Art3mis in the Basement and tells them all he has done and learned. Wade knows that one person cannot access the third gate, but that it requires three avatars with crystal keys. Wade then explains that he wants to send an email asking all the gunters to rally together to fight IOI and the Sixers at Castle Anorak. Wade claims to be able to bring down their defenses the following day at noon. Shoto, Aech and Art3mis agree to the plan, but Art3mis is upset about her



situation. She cannot go home and she has nowhere else to go. Suddenly Og, Ogden Morrow's avatar, appears in the Basement.

In Chapter 33, Og explains that when Halliday created OASIS, he made his and Og's avatars so that they have exceptional powers, including the ability to enter restricted places and moving around without anyone knowing they are there. Og then tells them that Halliday made him promise to watch over the game and keep it fair. Og says he cannot interfere, but he is willing to give Parzival, Aech, Art3mis, and Shoto safe harbor while they fight the good fight. They all quickly agree. Parzival and the others quickly send out their email calling the other gunters to arms. Then Wade takes a nap while he waits for Aech to come pick him up in his RV for the trip to the airport. When Aech arrives, Wade is somewhat surprised to find he is a black girl his own age, but feels it changes nothing about their friendship. They soon arrive at Og's home. Og quickly takes them to the immersion chambers he has devoted to OASIS. Art3mis and Shoto are already logged in, so Wade and Aech cannot meet them. Before logging in himself, Wade asks Og why he and Halliday had their falling out. Og says it was because they were both in love with Og's wife, Kira.

Level Three: Chapters 28-33 Analysis

Wade has himself arrested under his assumed name so that he might access the IOIs internal computer system. IOI has locked off the final gate, making it impossible for anyone but them to access the gate. However, the Sixers do not know how to access the gate, but Wade does. Wade must outsmart the Sixers and IOI in order to get access to the gate to try his hand at the final game. For this reason, he allows himself to be arrested for a false debt and then he accesses their computer systems through an entertainment console provided for indentured servants. Wade not only finds the files he needs, but he finds incriminating evidence against Sorrento and IOI as well as a memo that threatens Art3mis and Shoto's lives.

Wade knows that he cannot enter the third gate without the help of friends. For this reason, as well as the fact that he has grown fond of all three of them, Wade contacts Art3mis, Aech, and Shoto to arrange to meet and discuss a plan to get to the gate together. Wade has suggested they work together before, but this time his plan is not met with as much resistance. In fact, they are surprised to find Og, Ogden Morrow's avatar, in their chat room and willing to help them. He cannot help them in their quest to find the egg, but he can provide them with a safe place to hide until the egg is found, either by one of them or by Sorrento.

The hunt for the egg has become a very dangerous, very exciting adventure. Wade has risked making himself a servant for life and sure death by breaking into the IOI. Art3mis and Shoto are quickly headed for death if they remain at home since the IOI know where they live. A game has become a real life or death struggle and no one seems to be the favorite to win at this point.



Level Three: Chapters 34-39

Level Three: Chapters 34-39 Summary

In Chapter 34, as soon as Wade is logged in to OASIS he powers up Leopardon. The robot doubles as a spaceship and Wade finds himself quickly in orbit around Chthonia along with thousands of other gunters. Aech, Art3mis, and Shoto are waiting for him. Sorrento comes out of the castle and tells everyone to leave, that they cannot penetrate their defenses. When they do not, Sorrento pulls out his own robot, Mechagodzilla, and climbs inside. Seconds later, a bomb goes off in the back of the castle that kills the magician who is creating the force field dome around the castle.

In Chapter 35, the dome fails and a battle begins. Wade and his friends begin to battle with Sorrento in their own robots, but most of their weapons seem to fail against the massive robot. After a few minutes of fruitless fighting, Wade suggests that Aech, Art3mis, and Shoto make their way inside the castle to the gate while he creates a distraction. They agree, but Shoto decides to become the distraction. Shoto and Sorrento fight while Aech and Art3mis leave their robots and make their way inside. Wade, however, sticks around to watch and is shocked when Sorrento manages to kill Shoto's avatar. Angry and determined to serve Sorrento some justice, Wade attacks Sorrento. Sorrento quickly cuts Leopardon in half. Wade leaves the robot and uses the artifact Daito left to him to turn himself into Ultraman. Ultraman is larger and faster than Mechagodzilla. Wade is able to disable Mechagodzilla and kill Sorrento's avatar. Wade then quickly returns his avatar to normal size and joins Aech and Art3mis at the gate. Wade says a line from the School House Rock song that is referenced in a quote above the gate and the keyhole becomes three. They open the gate and then they all die.

In Chapter 36, Wade expects his avatar to disappear and to see his screen fade to black. Instead a message tells him he has an extra life. Wade realizes that the Sixers must have set off a bomb that destroyed everything but the gate and a few artifacts and that the quarter he won at Pac-Man was an extra life. Now Wade is alone with the third gate. With the help of his friends over a communication link, Wade finds some artifacts to help him, including shoes that allow him to fly up to the gate. Before he enters the gate, Wade makes a promise on his television broadcast that he will share the winnings, if he wins, with Aech, Art3mis, and Shoto.

In Chapter 37, when Wade enters the gate, he discovers that he must play a high score on a game called Tempest. Wade is worried because he is not proficient at this game and does not think he can make the high score required on one credit. Art3mis tells him that if he dies with a score over one hundred and eighty thousand and it ends in six, eleven or twelve he will get forty extra credits due to some glitch in the software. Due to this, Wade purposely kills his final life on the proper score and gets the forty credits. Wade continues to play for several hours, using several more credits. The others tell Wade that the Sixers have arrived and made it into the gate with eighteen avatars. This puts pressure on Wade, but he manages to make the high score before anyone else



and is immediately transported into the movie Monty Python and the Holy Grail. Wade plays the movie well and is quickly transported to the final test. Wade finds himself in a recreation of Halliday's home office. In it are dozens of computers and video game systems dating from the late seventies to modern times.

In Chapters 38, unsure what to do in Halliday's office, Wade recalls the original clue and begins turning on computers and systems all over the room. Finally Wade finds a IMSAI 8080 that turns on. When it boots, Wade begins trying different possible passwords. Finally Wade remembers Og's description of Halliday's love for Kira. Wade types in Kira's name. When that does not work, he uses the name Kira used in Dungeons and Dragons. It works. The other systems turn on. Wade goes to the Atari and boots up Adventure. Wade finds the key to the secret room and takes it there. Instead of showing the original programmer's name, it reveals a beautiful egg.

Wade's avatar is then transported to Castle Anorak. Wade goes upstairs and places the egg in a special holder. Anarak appears and tells Wade he has won. Anarak then gives Wade's avatar all his special powers and turns into a middle aged Halliday. Halliday tells Wade everything he has won and then shows him a switch he can flip that will destroy OASIS if he feels it is necessary. Then Halliday disappears. Wade takes his avatar to the front of the castle where the Sixers who were attempting to get the egg had been ejected. Wade kills all their avatars. Wade then wishes for his friends' avatars to come back to life and they do. Then Wade learns that Sorrento has been arrested for murder.

In Chapter 39, Wade logs out of OASIS and goes in search of Art3mis. Wade finds her out in a maze in the garden. When Wade finds her, Art3mis refuses to look at him because of a birthmark on her face. However, Wade tells her she is beautiful and he loves her. Art3mis accepts his declaration this time.

Level Three: Chapters 34-39 Analysis

Wade and his friends managed to marshal an army to fight against Sorrento. However, Sorrento knew the attack was coming and he manages to meet them well prepared. When Sorrento kills Shoto's avatar, Wade cannot walk away and leave Sorrento to kill any more avatars. Wade is angry and wants revenge as much as Shoto did for the deaths of his family and neighbors as well as Daito. For this reason, Wade fights Sorrento and wins. Now that Wade and his friends are physically in a safe place, they can fight Sorrento without the fear of repercussion. It is a good change that gives Wade the power and strength he needs to do what must be done to protect the spirit of Halliday's game and the integrity of OASIS.

Wade and his friends open the gate, but then IOI sets off a bomb that destroys and kills everything in the sector. It seems that they have won again. However, Wade has an extra life from the Pac-Man game he played. It is a blessing that Halliday must have left behind for some such situation as this. Wade's avatar is alone with the gate and he manages to get in, giving him a headstart over IOI, the Sixers, and Sorrento.



Wade makes good time of the tests inside the gate thanks to the help of his friends. In the end, Wade finds the egg and wins the game. Now Wade has inherited all of Halliday's money, assets, his company, and control of OASIS. With this comes a great deal of responsibility as the reader sees when Halliday shows Wade the emergency shut off switch that will destroy OASIS if it is ever necessary. Wade is a strong personality, however, and the reader can imagine that despite his antisocial habits, he will live up to the responsibility. At the same time, Wade is not alone in this responsibility, but has his friends to help him. Wade also has Og. Not only this, but it seems that Wade's romance with Art3mis is about to blossom.



Characters

Parzival/Wade Watts/Bryce Lynch

Parzival is the name of Wade Watts avatar in OASIS. Wade is a seventeen-year-old teenager who lives in a poor area of Oklahoma City in the year 2045. Wade is a gunter, someone who is actively searching for the egg James Halliday hid in the OASIS programming. For this reason, Wade is a huge fan of old videogames, movies, and television shows, especially those that Halliday has mentioned in his diaries, the Anorak Almanac, as his favorites.

Wade's parents are both dead and Wade lives in a world in the grip of an energy crisis, making life difficult for everyone, but especially the very poor. Wade's aunt is not much of a caretaker. She only took Wade in because of the food vouchers she can get for him. In fact, at the beginning of the novel the aunt takes Wade's laptop to sell so she can pay the rent.

Wade is essentially self-sufficient, paying his way by fixing up old computers and computer equipment and selling them. Wade spends most of his time in OASIS anyway, so he needs very little beyond a safe place to hide and food. However, his lack of funds leaves Wade without the money to move around in the OASIS as he would prefer. Therefore, Wade is pretty sure he will never be much of a player in the search for Halliday's egg. That is until he discovers that the first key is on Ludus, the planet where Wade attends school. Thanks to this turn of fate, Parzival becomes known as the first avatar to find the first key.

Wade becomes better off after finding the first key and he is able to move away from Oklahoma City to Columbus where the company that controls OASIS is located. Wade spends the next six months having a relationship with another avatar in OASIS, allowing himself to become distracted from the hunt for Halliday's egg. However, when the next key is found Wade becomes an important part of the end of the hunt.

Art3mis/Samantha Cook

Art3mis is the name of Samantha Cook's avatar. Wade only knows Art3mis by her avatar's name because he does not meet her in person until the end of the novel. Art3mis is another gunter who runs a blog on which she writes intelligently and humorously about the hunt for Halliday's egg. Art3mis is a twenty year old girl, but Wade has no way of knowing this. However, when Wade meets Art3mis on the day he finds the first key, he falls instantly in love with her.

Wade and Art3mis date for a while in OASIS, but never meet in person. When Wade tells Art3mis that he loves her, she breaks off the relationship and insists that Wade go back to the hunt for the egg. Wade does, but only after Art3mis and Aech find the second key.



As the end game approaches, Wade turns to his friends for help in OASIS. Art3mis is reluctant to involve herself in Wade's game because she has fears about what will happen when the hunt is over and how Wade will react when he meets her. It turns out that Samantha Cook has a significant birthmark on the side of her face that she has more than likely suffered a great deal of teasing because of. She is clearly afraid Wade will turn from her when he sees it, but instead Wade tells her that he loves her and thinks she is beautiful.

Aech/Helen Harris

Aech is a white male avatar that Wade meets in the early days of the hunt for Halliday's egg. Wade and Aech hit it off immediately and become close friends. As the hunt heats up after Wade's discovery of the first key, their friendship becomes a little more distant because both are distracted by the hunt. However, when Aech finds the second key before Wade, she gives him a clue that allows him to find it as well as payback. When Wade found the first key, Aech knew that it had to be on Ludus because she knew from their friendship that Wade could not leave Ludus without help because of a lack of funds.

Aech is a kind, honorable person who is always in Wade's camp whenever he needs the help. When Wade suggests that he, Art3mis, and Shoto work together to access the third gate, Aech is the first to agree. Aech is also the first to volunteer to help when Wade enters the third gate and finds himself facing a game he is unsure he can beat. Aech is a good friend to Wade. However, it turns out that Aech is really a teenage girl, a black girl whose mother encouraged her to hide her race and gender in OASIS to help her avoid the basic prejudices that often haunt young black women. This does nothing to change Wade's feelings for Aech.

Shoto/Akihide

Shoto is the name of the avatar for a young Japanese man named Akihide. Shoto is the last avatar to round out the top five after the first key is found. Shoto works with Daito, another Japanese teenager he met in a support group years ago and teamed up with inside OASIS. Daito and Shoto are not biological brothers, nor have they ever met in person, but they are brothers inside OASIS.

Shoto is with Daito when Daito is killed. Shoto knows that Daito was killed by IOI operatives because Daito told him someone had broken into his apartment in the seconds before his death both in OASIS and in the real world. Shoto is overwhelmed with grief and wants nothing more than to get revenge for Daito's death. For this reason, Shoto gives up his chance to go through the third gate and instead make an attempt to kill Sorrento's avatar. Instead, Shoto's avatar is killed, but is later revived by Wade's avatar, Parzival.



Daito/Toshiro Yoshiaki

Daito is a young Japanese man named Toshiro Yoshiaki. Daito is the other half of the team Daisho with Shoto. Daito is a young man who has become locked in his apartment, suffering from a self-imprisonment referred to as hikikomori in Japan. However, on OASIS, Daito is an outgoing, intelligent young man who is among the top five who found the first key. While attempting to get the second key, however, Daito is killed while fighting the Sixer groups who fly in to steal access to the second key. Toshiro is also killed, thrown off his balcony while still logged in to OASIS.

IOI-655321/Nolan Sorrento

IOI-655321 is the avatar number Nolan Sorrento uses in the hunt for Halliday's egg. Sorrento is Head of Operations at IOI. Sorrento desperately wants to be the first to find Halliday's egg because it would mean that his company would have complete control over OASIS and could charge a monthly service fee as well as change the way things work inside OASIS to make more money. Sorrento and IOI would change the whole intention of OASIS and take it away from teenagers like Wade Watts who has no money to access such a pay service.

Wade meets with Sorrento once in the beginning of the novel to speak about a job offer. Wade goes into the meeting knowing he will not accept the job, but he is curious about Sorrento and IOI's egg hunt department. Sorrento reveals how they have rigged their OASIS gear so that they can talk to one another, making it possible for someone to feed the avatars information during tests within the gates. Sorrento also makes it clear how determined IOI is to find the egg by threatening and then killed Wade's family and many of his neighbors.

Sorrento is the third fourth to find the second key and first to find the second gate and the third key. This makes the hunt seem over, especially when Sorrento's company barricade access to the third gate even though he cannot find a way to access it. In the end Wade gets revenge on Sorrento twice, first by killing his avatar and then by releasing proof of Sorrento's part in his family's deaths as well as Daito's death.

James Donovan Halliday

James Donovan Halliday was born in 1972 and spent his teenage years in the 1980s. For this reason, Halliday became somewhat obsessed with everything about 80s pop culture, including the movies, music, and, especially, the videogames. Halliday was a videogame creator who spent his entire life making videogames that were new, original, and best sellers. Then in 2012, Halliday came out with a new system that set the world on its ear. Halliday created OASIS, a system that allows users to fully immerse themselves in a simulation of an entire universe, a place where they can work, play, and socialize, a place that is more real to some people than the real world. It is here that Halliday hides his Easter Egg before his death, promising the person who finds the egg



will inherit his substantial estate as well as control of his company, GSS, and OASIS. It is this promise that sets off the hunt for Halliday's egg.

Og/Ogden Morrow

Ogden Morrow was Halliday's friend in high school and his business partner nearly his entire career. Og was the closest friend the socially inept Halliday ever had until a falling out between them ten years before Halliday's death. For this reason, Og knows more about Halliday than anyone else, but as a former employee of GSS, he cannot hunt for the egg. However, Halliday asked Og to watch over the game, to watch to make sure it is played in the spirit in which it was intended. To this end, Og spies on Parzival, Art3mis, Aech, and Shoto, finally revealing himself at the end of the novel and offering them safe harbor during the final test, the third gate.

Kira Morrow

Kira Morrow was Og's wife. Kira was an exchange student who went to the same high school as Og and Halliday. Both men had a crush on Kira from the beginning, but Kira chose Og. This fact is the source of the tension between Og and Halliday that caused them not to speak for ten years. Kira was killed in a car accident several years before the opening of the novel.

Mrs. Gilmore

Mrs. Gilmore is a neighbor of Wade's aunt and the only friend Wade has in the real world. Mrs. Gilmore is elderly, but she is kind and often makes meals for Wade, whom she knows is not being well cared for by his aunt. Mrs. Gilmore is an unfortunate victim of IOI's attempt to kill Wade.



Objects/Places

Keys

In order to find Halliday's keys, gunters must first find three keys. They are the copper key, the jade key, and the crystal key. Each key opens a specific gate.

Gates

In order to find Halliday's keys, gunters must pass a test hidden behind a special gate. Each gate has its own test. The first gate forces the holder of the copper key to play the Matthew Broderick role in the movie War Games. In the second gate, the holder of the jade key must play the videogame Black Tiger. In the third gate, the holder of the crystal key must play the videogame Tempest.

Gunter

A gunter is a person who hunts for Halliday's egg. Gunter is a truncated nickname of egg hunter.

Sixers

Sixers is the nickname given to employees of IOI whose job is to hunt for Halliday's egg. They are called Sixers because their employee numbers, which they use as their avatar names, all start with six.

Easter Egg

An Easter Egg is a hidden piece of programming in a game that, when discovered and used properly, reveals something hidden and not intended by the original purpose of the program. For example, the discovery of the creator's name in the Atari game, Adventure.

Anorak's Almanac

Anorak's Almanac is a diary or journal that Halliday kept in which he wrote random thoughts. The gunters use this as something like a Bible in the search for Halliday's Easter Egg.



Halliday's Easter Egg

James Halliday, creator of OASIS, left an Easter Egg, a hidden bit of code, inside OASIS upon his death. The user who finds the egg will inherit all of Halliday's estate, including control over OASIS.

OASIS Visor

A visor is required to use with an OASIS console in order for the user to see what is happening inside the program and for easy scanning of the user's retinas to access the program.

Haptic Gloves

All OASIS consoles require the use of haptic gloves so the program can sense the movement of the user's hands and replicate the movement in the user's avatar.

Haptic Suit

A haptic suit is a suit used with an OASIS console that allows the program to pick up all the movements of the user's body in order to replicate the movements in the user's avatar.

International Online Industries

International Online Industries, or IOI, is a communications conglomerate that controls most of the internet access around the world. IOI would like to find Halliday's egg in order to gain control of OASIS.

Gregarious Simulation System

Gregarious Simulations System, or GSS, is the name of the company owned by Halliday and Morrow that created and controls OASIS.

OASIS

OASIS, or Ontologically Anthropocentric Sensory Immersive Simulation, is a huge interactive universe in which users can create an avatar and move him through this universe as though it were a real, interactive place. Avatars can be human or alien and they can purchase clothing, travel from planet to planet in ships or by teleportation, and can work, play, and socialize.



Themes

Big Business versus the Little Man

International Online Industries is a huge conglomeration that controls almost everything dealing with the internet. They are the largest internet service provider in the world and they control almost everything connected to the internet and modern communications in the world in which this novel takes place. Everything, that is, except OASIS. If IOI were to get control of OASIS, they would turn it into a pay service and would change everything inside of the program so that only people with money could play. This would take OASIS out of the hands of the poor, of the hands of young teenagers like Wade Watts who rely on OASIS for everything from socializing to attending school.

Wade Watts is only one of millions of young OASIS users who rely on the fact that OASIS use is free. If IOI were to get ahold of OASIS it would change the world for ever for these young people. For this reason, most of the gunters, Wade included, do not want to see IOI win the hunt for Halliday's egg. Unfortunately, IOI has more resources than these poor kids. IOI can cheat.

As the hunt for Halliday's egg continues, IOI uses many cheats to get ahead of the game. Wade knows that he and the other gunters must fight this huge corporation in order to keep OASIS in the spirit in which it was intended. Due to the growing dislike of IOI and their methods in trying to find the egg, Wade is able to rally all the gunters and put up a fight against IOI. This battle is a symbolic incidence of the idea of big business versus the little man. In this instance, the little man prevails.

Modern Socializing

The majority of this novel takes place within the virtual world of OASIS. OASIS is a computer program that allows people to move around in a virtual world, buy clothing for their avatars, attend school, go to work, and socialize. Inside OASIS a user can be anyone they want to be. They can erase disfiguring birthmarks from their faces, hide their gender or age, and remove inhibitions that make interaction in the real world close to impossible.

Wade Watts, the hero of the story, openly admits that he has not friends in the real world. In fact, Wade can only lay claim to one friend as the novel opens and that is Aech, a white male avatar inside OASIS controlled by a user Wade has never met in real life. As the novel develops, Wade develops friendships with fellow gunters Art3mis, Shoto, and Daito. Again, Wade never really meets these people in real life before developing these friendships. However, this does not change the fact that Wade falls in love with Art3mis and grieves the real life death of Daito.

The internet has changed the way people socialize. In modern times, people often socialize over a computer, uploading fake pictures and lying about their age, gender, or



race. The author of this book takes those lies one step further and has his characters create fully animated avatars that can talk, walk, run, and touch other avatars. Wade is able to give and take hugs from Art3mis in OASIS without actually meeting the real person behind the disguise. In the end, Wade does meet his friends in the real world. Imagine his surprise when Aech, his best friend, turns out to be a girl.

80s Pop Culture

There is a great deal of 80s pop culture in this novel. Halliday, the author of the egg that the gunters are trying so hard to find, was a teenager in the 80s and the era remained an important part of his life until his death. For this reason, Halliday has developed the tests in his egg hunt to include a great deal of 80s pop trivia, including forcing the players to reenact whole movies from the 80s and play games that were popular in the 80s.

As the novel's plot develops, the reader is taken through a lot of 80s trivia, maybe learning things about the decade that they might never have learned before. This novel is almost a history lesson in the development of videogames, not to mention teen adventure movies. The novel itself is written like a 80s teen flick, taking the underdog and pitting him up against big business. There are hints of all kinds of Matthew Broderick-like characters in the novel, bringing to mind Ferris Bueller quips. However, the 80s references all have a purpose in this novel and it gives it both a sense of nostalgia for readers and a feel of adventure that makes the theme of 80s pop culture both important to the overall plot and simply a lot of fun.

Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the first-person point of view. The novel's main character, Wade Watts, is the narrator. The book is written almost as if an autobiography written after the fact to show the world what really happened during Wade's hunt for Halliday's egg. This allows the writer to insert important information in an authorial voice without stepping back from his main character.

The point of view of the novel is a good one for this plot because it allows the reader to gain certain knowledge without having to read very far into the novel. First, it allows the reader to know that Wade survives his fight for the egg despite the fact that several attempts are made on his life throughout the hunt. Second, it allows the reader to know that the hunt ended successfully for someone, giving hope in moments of high tension in the plot. Finally, the point of view allows the reader to develop a close relationship with the main character, to care what happens to him. This is exceedingly important in this type of adventure novel in which the main character is placed in danger multiple times.

Setting

The novel is set in 2045. In this future time period the world has suffered a massive energy crisis, leaving many without the means to make a living or a place to live. People from the rural areas have moved into the cities to find work, but this only leads to overcrowding and a reduction in the number of available jobs. The practice of indentured servants has been reinstated and many businesses, IOI being one, take in indentured servants to pay off bad debt owed to the company.

The setting of this novel is very important to the overall plot of the novel. In this future world, poverty is even more of a problem than it is in the modern world. People are desperate to find a way to survive in a world that no longer has order or the security of a strong government. Therefore, the hunt for Halliday's egg takes on significance to most of the hunters that is more than just greed. It is about survival for many of the searchers. Not only that, but the future setting also makes it more plausible that a program like OASIS could and does exist. For these reasons, the setting works well with the plot of the novel.

Language and Meaning

The novel is written in simple English. The language of the novel, due to its genre, uses some made up language. This language is limited to the names of computer programs and the equipment used in or with this program. The rest of the language is educated language that might not fit the character at his current age and economic status at the

beginning of the novel, but might fit if the character has since matured and had the opportunity of more education.

The language of this novel works well with the plot. The made up language in the novel is simple and most of the words make enough sense in its use that it does not serve to confuse the reader. The educated sound of the language could be explained by the fact that Wade wins the hunt for Halliday's egg and has many opportunities that he might not have had before. For these reasons, the language of this novel works well with the plot.

Structure

The novel is divided into three parts, each one named a level rather than a part, reflecting the plot's primary theme of videogames. The novel includes a prologue and thirty-nine chapters. Each chapter is given a number in the form of computer programming source code, again reflecting the main themes of the novel. The novel is told in both narration and dialogue, though much of the novel takes place in the mind of the main character, reflecting the theme of modern socializing in which most of the people in this advanced society spend their time alone and playing inside a virtual world.

The novel contains one main plot and multiple subplots. The main plot focuses on Wade Watts' hunt for Halliday's egg. One subplot focuses on Wade's relationship with Art3mis, a young lady he has only met inside OASIS, but has fallen in love with. Another subplot follows Wade's relationship with best friend, Aech. Finally, there is a plot that follows the life history of James Halliday and his relationship with best friend, Ogden Morrow. All the plots come to a satisfying conclusion at the end of the novel.



Quotes

"Everyone my age remembers where they were and what they were doing when they first heard about the contest" (Prologue, p. 8).

"Dozens of books, cartoons, movies, and miniseries have attempted to tell the story of everything that happened next, but every single one of them got it wrong. So I want to set the record straight, one and for all" (Prologue, p. 15).

"Ok, on second thought, maybe honesty isn't the best policy after all. Maybe it isn't a good idea to tell a newly arrived human being that he's been born into a world of chaos, pain, and poverty just in time to watch everything fall to pieces" (Chapter 1, pg. 23).

"I knew the crush I had on Art3mis was both silly and ill-advised. What did I really know about her? She'd never revealed her true identity, of course. Or her age or location in the real world" (Chapter 2, p. 42).

"I was the dawn of a new era, one where most of the human race now spent all of their free time inside a videogame" (Chapter 5, pg. 68).

"But I fell forward instead of down, and the stars seemed to fall with me" (Chapter 10, p. 118).

"Capitalism would inch forward, without my actually having to interact face-to-face with another human being. Which was exactly how I preferred it, thank you" (Chapter 19, p. 200).

"Instead, a few minute after Shoto obtained his copy of the key, Daito's name disappeared from the Scoreboard entirely. There was only one possible explanation: Daito had just been killed" (Chapter 23, p. 245).

"I felt a rush of adrenaline, because I recognized the red star symbol, and I knew where it was meant to lead me" (Chapter 26, p. 270).

"When I logged out of the database a few minutes later, Bryce Lynch no longer existed. I was wade Watts once again" (Chapter 31, p. 314).

"And then we all died" (Chapter 35, p. 357).

"It occurred to me then that for the first time in as long as I could remember, I had absolutely no desire to log back into the OASIS" (Chapter 39, p. 386).



Topics for Discussion

Who is James Halliday? Why is his death significant? What invitation does Halliday send out upon his death? To whom? What does this invitation invite people to do? How does this cause an internet sensation? Has anything of this scale ever been tried before? How long does it take before the event begins in full scale? Why does it take so long?

What is OASIS? Who invented it? What is its main purpose? How does it reflect the personality, thoughts and feelings, of its creator? How does it change people's lives upon its release? How does it impact the life of the main character? For what reason? Who wants control of OASIS? For what purpose? What will this corporation change about OASIS? How will that impact people like the main character?

Who is Wade Watts? Who is Parzival? Why does Wade hide out in an old van? Why does he not live in a normal home? What are the stacks? What do the stacks reflect about the time in which the novel is set? How does Wade provide for himself? Where does he go to school?

Who is Aech? What do Aech and Parzival frequently fight about? What is the significance of these arguments? How do they often end? What is the relationship like between Aech and Parzival? Have they ever met in real life? Why or why not? How is this friendship altered by the hunt for Halliday's egg? Is this a good thing or a bad one? How does Wade react when he finally meets Aech in person?

What are the Sixers? Why are they hated by most gunthers? Who employs the Sixers? For what purpose? What do the Sixers use to hunt for Halliday's egg? How is this different from the way other gunthers hunt the egg? Why do most people not want the Sixers to win the hunt for Halliday's egg? What do the Sixers plan to do with the egg and all they will gain with it when they find successfully finish the hunt? Why does the Sixers' Head of Operations offer Parzival a job?

Who is Art3mis? How does Wade become aware of her at first? When do they first meet? How does Art3mis react to finding Parzival in the Tomb of Horrors? Why is she not happy to see him there? What does Art3mis tell Parzival she plans to do when she finds the egg? What does this say about Art3mis's character? Why does Art3mis refuse to meet Wade in the real world? Why does she end their brief romance? How does Wade respond to this rejection?

Who is Sorrento? Why does Sorrento attempt to kill Wade? Why does Sorrento suggest the kidnapping and killing of Art3mis and Shoto? Why does Wade put himself in danger in an attempt to kill Sorrento's avatar? What does this prove? Why is Sorrento arrested at the end of the novel? Who orchestrated this arrest? How does Wade respond to the arrest? Is Sorrento successful in his bid for the egg? Explain.