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# Ready Player One: A Novel

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Cline, Ernest. *Ready Player One: A Novel*. New York: Crown, 2011. Popular Reading, PS3603.L548R43 2011.

“I created the OASIS because I never felt at home in the real world. I didn’t know how to connect with the people there. I was afraid, for all of my life. Right up until I knew it was ending. That was when I realized, as terrifying and painful as reality can be, it’s also the only place where you can find true happiness. Because reality is *real*. Do you understand?”

The year 2044 is a mixed bag: an ongoing global energy crisis, catastrophic climate change, war, and the Great Recession have left many unemployed, hungry, and homeless; but, citizens of the year 2024 do have one refuge: a free virtual utopia known as the Ontologically Anthropomorphic Sensor Immersive Simulation, or the OASIS. The OASIS, a free massively multiplayer online game that has evolved into a globally networked virtual reality over time, is where most human interaction now takes place, and OASIS credit, valued higher than the dollar, euro, or yen, is one of the world’s most stable currencies.

Created by James Halliday, the OASIS contains thousands of simulated realms and is the world’s largest public library, offering access to every book, song, movie, television show, videogame, and piece of artwork ever made. Just before his death Halliday announced a contest: somewhere in the OASIS are three hidden keys which will open three hidden doors. Players must follow clues and use their knowledge of ‘80s pop-culture – an obsession of Halliday’s and a prominent feature of the OASIS – to find the keys, open the doors, and reach the Easter egg at the end. The first player to find the egg will inherit Halliday’s immense fortune. Immediately following this announcement, a worldwide Hunt began.

Teenager Wade Watts lives a grim life with his aunt in the Portland Avenue stacks – a collection of trailers stacked on top of one another to maximize ground space as a result of a national urban housing shortage – just outside of Oklahoma City. Wade is overweight, awkward, and bullied by his peers and consequently, he is most comfortable when jacked into the OASIS. Over the years, Wade has dedicated every second of free time to exploring the OASIS in the form of his avatar, Parzival and studying ‘80s pop-culture. Wade dreams of finding Halliday’s hidden egg, but when he finally stumbles across the first key, Wade learns that many in the OASIS are willing to kill for Halliday’s egg – both in the OASIS and in reality.

*Ready Player One* is a meta-heavy ‘80s pop-culture encyclopedia. The work’s main characters spout ‘80s cinema, music, and arcade game knowledge, while playing one game after another inside the virtual reality of the OASIS. Hundreds of ‘80s references crammed into one book should be completely overwhelming, but in fact, many of the references are integral to the plot of the work and as such are introduced in ways that are relevant and manageable to the

reader. A fast-paced, entertaining, and unpredictable plot with a ringing message at its core, *Ready Player One* is a must-read title for every self-labeled geek, nerd, or gamer.