

Armada

Ernest Cline

Reviewed by: Anika 16

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Just like his father, Zack Lightman has lived his life playing video games. Armada, a game battling aliens in space, is one of his favorites. Games give Zack a reprieve from bullies at school and the fact that his father is dead. Zack soon questions his sanity and his father's when he sees a stray saucer at school. But what he didn't realize that this was a sign of an opportunity to be a part of something bigger than himself, to be a hero. Zack will encounter many surprises and sacrifices along the way, but as a gamer, he'll save the world.

Armada is packed with humor and action. Zack gets himself into a lot of space battles with aliens. Some of which I enjoyed, but they did get a little old after a while. Ernest Cline sets up a conspiracy in his book that I found very interesting and wordy, but I'm sure many people will enjoy the speculation. Zack is an engaging protagonist with his own flaws. It was enjoyable following his perspective throughout the story. The author also puts forth a good message in his story, that anyone, even a hopeless gamer, can shape up to something big.

Despite this, I found a bit of an issue with the non-stop references and the ending. Ernest Cline uses a barrage of 80s references to games and movies. These references kind of ruined the reading experience for me. I didn't understand most of them and I felt that the constant use of references took away from the story's originality and message. And as for the ending, as sweet as it was, wasn't necessarily the best. Along with that, readers should watch out for the bad language, violence, and intimate implications present during certain parts of the book. I would suggest Armada to anyone 14 years or older, especially to all the gamers out there. It would certainly be a great gift for them and Sci-fi fans.

Recommended Titles:

Contact by Carl Sagan

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy by Douglas Adams

Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card

2001: A Space Odyssey by Arthur C. Clarke