

# GAMERS' QUEST

By George Ivanoff

## Teachers' Notes

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Recommended for age 11+

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### BLURB ON BACK COVER

Tark and Zyra are teenage thieves in a world of magic and science, where dragons and mages exist alongside drones and lasers. In their quest to reach Designers Paradise, they realise their world is not what it appears to be, and their sanctuary is about to face destruction ...

### ENDORSEMENT

'Fast and fun, a thrilling ride with enough blood, slime and toad-flinging to satisfy RL Stine.'  
CAROLE WILKINSON, author of the *Dragonkeeper* novels.

### SYNOPSIS

Tark and Zyra are teenage thieves living in a fantastical world filled with danger, in which magic and technology co-exist. They strive to gain entrance to a place called Designers Paradise. In order to gain entrance, they must steal keys and money to pay for the time they spend there. They face many dangers and challenges along the way, but they finally succeed.

Those who gain entry to Designers Paradise are able to immerse themselves in virtual reality games. Tark and Zyra, whose lives are filled with danger and death, choose to play a game called 'Suburbia' — a game in which they live peaceful, uneventful lives, simply going to school and hanging out at the mall with friends. But they are pursued into 'Suburbia' by the Fat Man, who is intent on controlling Designers Paradise. In order to stop him, Tark and Zyra must seek out the Designers. But when they reach the control centre of Designers Paradise they are faced with a revelation that makes them question the nature of Designers Paradise and their own world.

### Key Points

- Fast-paced plot will keep the interest of its young teenage audience.
- Strong female lead as well as male lead, making it appealing for girls as well as boys.
- Issues of identity and reality are engaged.
- Combines elements of fantasy and science fiction.
- Includes elements of gaming.

## THE AUTHOR

George Ivanoff is an author and stay-at-home dad residing in Melbourne. He has written over 35 books for children and teenagers, including many titles for the education market. Two of his books (*Life, Death and Detention* and *Real Sci-Fi*) have been on the booklist for the Victorian Premier's Reading Challenge since its inception in 2005. George has also had stories published in numerous magazines and anthologies, including *Trust Me!* (Ford Street Publishing, 2008), *Doctor Who, Short Trips: Defining Patterns* (Big Finish, UK, 2008) and *Under the Weather: Stories about climate change* (Frances Lincoln, UK, 2009). More information about George is available on his website: [www.georgeivanoff.com.au](http://www.georgeivanoff.com.au)

## THE WRITING OF GAMERS' QUEST

*Gamers' Quest* began as a short story, 'Game Plan', which was published in *Trust Me!* (Ford Street Publishing, 2008), an anthology edited by Paul Collins.

I was inspired to write the short story by a documentary about online gaming, which showed how people all over the world were immersing themselves in fantasy games to the detriment of their real lives, which they considered boring. I wanted to turn this around and ask: If a person lived in a fantastical world full of exotic dangers, what sort of computer games would s/he play?

In expanding the short story into a novel, I added questions of identity and reality. I extended the plot to follow the two protagonists into their chosen game, pursued by the villains. Finally, I decided to take the characters beyond the games, to meet those who controlled the game environments.

## CHARACTERS

### Tark

Tark is a 16-year-old thief. He's handy with a sword and wears a cloak with magic properties but has still managed to acquire a few scars. With his partner in crime, Zyra, he seeks to steal enough money to gain entry to Designers Paradise. Tark specialises in robbing people travelling through the Forest.



#### Questions:

- Tark's robbing of Princeling Galbrath is not an isolated event. Find passages in the text, which indicate that Tark has robbed other travellers in the Forest.
- What is the piece of clothing that Tark likes best?

### Zyra

Zyra is a 16-year-old thief with a red mohawk and numerous piercings. She likes to dress for the occasion and always carries two knives and a set of throwing stars. With her partner in crime, Tark, she seeks to steal enough money to gain entry to Designers Paradise. Zyra specialises in robbing the homes of the ultra-rich people who live on the Hill.



#### Questions:

- Is Zyra a leader or a follower? Find passages in the text to support your answer.
- What is the piece of clothing that Zyra likes best?

## Princeling Galbrath

Galbrath is a 14-year-old princeling, ruling over a small principality. He is spoiled, vengeful and determined to gain entry to Designers Paradise at any cost. But he is also lonely, and longs for a simple life.



### Questions:

- Is Princeling Galbrath a hero or a villain (or perhaps a little of both)? Find passages in the text to support your answer.
- Why does Princeling Galbrath enter 'Suburbia'?

## The Fat Man

The Fat Man is the person who has a finger in every pie. He has enough money and power to do anything he likes, and yet he wants more. He has a deadly plan to achieve this. But his plan could result in the destruction of Designers Paradise . . . and The World.



### Questions:

- The actions of Tark, Zyra and Princeling Galbrath are motivated by a desire to gain entry to Designers Paradise. What motivates the Fat Man? Find passages in the text to support your answer.
- Why did the Fat Man want the dragon's body?

## The Cracker

The Cracker is a ruthless professional criminal. He'll take on any job, big or small, and he always has the right piece of technology for each job.



### Questions:

- The Cracker has crossed paths with Zyra prior to the events in this novel. Find passages in the text that show this.
- Has the Cracker met Tark prior to the events in this novel?

## Other Characters

*Gamers' Quest* is peopled with a variety of weird and wonderful characters — from Edgar the dragon and his enormous wife Vera; to the ancient mage Windamore the Mighty and his replacement Skurgebroth the Undefeated.



### Questions:

- The dragon appears in only one scene in the novel, before he dies. But you learn more about him later through his wife Vera. What are the things you find out about the dragon?
- Which characters in *Gamers' Quest* use magic rather than technology? Do any of the characters use both?
- Most of the characters in *Gamers' Quest* respect the Designers and obey their rules. Are there any characters who do not?

## LANGUAGE

Not everyone in *Gamers' Quest* speaks in the same way. The speech of some characters (such as Tark and Zyra) is a devolved 'street-speak' in which many words are shortened or changed. Other characters (such as the Fat Man) speak in a more refined way.



### Questions:

- What does the way Tark and Zyra speak, tell you about them?
- The Cracker mostly uses the 'street-speak', but not always. Why do you think this is the case?
- Make a list of the 'street-speak' words that are different from normal words.
- Vera has a very particular way of speaking. What are some of the characteristics of her speech.

## THEMES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

### Genres

*Gamers' Quest* includes elements characteristic of science fiction, such as lasers, robots and other technology; but also includes many fantasy elements, such as dragons and magic.



### Questions:

- Is *Gamers' Quest* science fiction or fantasy? Can it be both?
- Are lasers, robots and other pieces of technology enough to make a story science fiction? What makes a science fiction story, science fiction?

### Identity

When characters in *Gamers' Quest* enter Designers Paradise to play a game, they take on an avatar — a persona with an appearance that may differ from their own.



### Questions:

- When Tark, Zyra and Princeling Galbrath enter the 'Suburbia' game, they become John, Tina and Giles. What are the differences between the original characters and their avatars? What is the same? What does this reveal about each of their characters?
- There is little difference between the Cracker in his world and Mr Cracker in 'Suburbia'. What does this tell you about his character?

### Reality

Tark and Zyra attempt to escape the harsh realities of their world by escaping to Designers Paradise, where they play games by entering a simulated environment. But the reality of their own world is called into question.



### Questions:

- Tark and Zyra's world is a simulated environment, but it is real to them. Does that make it real?
- In our world, many people play computer games. It can be an escape from the pressures of school or work in the real world. Some of these people spend a great deal of their leisure time playing these games. Is it possible for people to spend too much time playing games like this?

## TITLE



### Questions:

- How does the title, *Gamers' Quest*, relate to the story?
- Do you think it is an appropriate title?
- Make a list of possible alternative titles.

## COVER

Look at the cover for *Gamers' Quest*. The artwork was created on a computer and was designed to look like the cover of a computer game.



### Questions:

- What does the cover tell you about the book?
- Do you think it is an appropriate cover?
- Describe a possible alternative cover.

## THE CRAFT OF WRITING

The book's prologue provides some hints as to what is to come. Why do you think the author included this prologue?

The exact nature of Designers Paradise is not revealed immediately. Why do you think the author chose to do this? At what point in the novel did you realise that the world Tark and Zyra are living in is a game?

*Gamers' Quest* is written in the third person. Why do you think the author chose to write in the third person, instead of the first person from the point of view of one of the main characters?

The main characters, Tark and Zyra, are the story's heroes . . . but they are also thieves. Does this make them less appealing as characters? Why do you think an author would give heroic characters some un-heroic traits?

## WRITING

In Chapter 1 you find out that Tark stole his boots from a duke. Write a story about how he stole the boots.

Re-write Chapter 1 in the first person, from the point of view of Princeling Galbrath.

When Zyra and the Cracker meet in Chapter 3, you find out that they already know each other. Write a story about the first time they met.

Write a new chapter set after the end of the book.

## OTHER BOOKS ABOUT COMPUTER GAMES

Read some other novels that involve computer games and compare them to *Gamers' Quest*. What are the differences? What are the similarities? How do the different authors approach their subject matter?

**Other books:** *Space Demons* (and its sequels, *Skymaze* and *Shinkei*) by Gillian Rubinstein

## WEBSITE

Visit the website: <http://www.gamersquestbook.com>

The website contains further stories about the characters in *Gamers' Quest*. How do these stories affect your ideas about *Gamers' Quest*?