

Ready Player Two by Ernest Cline

Picking up right after the events of *Ready Player One*, Ernest Cline's sequel looks at how the lives of Wade Watts (a.k.a. Parzival) and the High Five change after winning James Halliday's contest. When a new technology Halliday had invented before his death comes to light, it triggers a new Easter Egg Hunt in the OASIS to find the Seven Shards of the Siren's Soul. Wade completing this quest might be a matter of life and death, not just for him, but for everyone on Earth.

Ready Player One is one of my favorite novels, so I had been looking forward to this book *for years*. I hate to say that I was disappointed after finishing the sequel. I definitely still enjoyed it, but in a lot of ways it really just felt like a rehash of the first book. (I will say that the audiobook narrated by the phenomenal Wil Wheaton is a treat! He always does a fantastic job, and is hands down my favorite audiobook narrator of all time.) Earth is still an overcrowded dystopia where everyone uses the OASIS as a virtual escape. Money, fame, and power have unfortunately not changed Wade for the better, and the fact that he has pretty much become a villain in his own story was tough to read. I truly rooted for Wade in the first book. He came from nothing, took on a mega corporation and won, and could have used his newfound money and power for good. Instead he becomes a cyberbully and when involved in the new quest for the shards, I often found myself wanting to read the book from the perspective of literally *anyone else*. When the title of the book was announced, I had hoped that this one would be told from the perspective of Wade's girlfriend Samantha Cook (a.k.a. Art3mis) or that of his best friend Aech. And after the introduction of the new character L0hengrin, I would have loved to read a book about her adventures.

While I felt let down by the book as a whole, I did enjoy reading about the quests. As a child of the 1980's, the nostalgia these books highlight is a nice walk down memory lane. My favorite part of the entire book would probably be the hunt for the Third Shard. It's clever and fun and makes you forget about the doom and gloom surrounding the overall quest for the Shards. I get that Cline wanted to raise the stakes, while still offering up a plethora of '80s pop culture references, but he missed the mark a bit. And I hope that he takes the rightful criticism of this book to make the next planned sequel *Ready Player Three* into something where Wade and his compatriots do something to make the world a better place.

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