

## Ready Player One is chosen as summer reading, well received by students

By MAX SCHLENKER  
Staff Writer

As the school year draws closer, a decent majority of juniors and seniors have finished *Ready Player One* by Ernest Cline, the assigned reading for summer 2014.

Despite a handful of clichés, this reader inevitably found himself completely invested in the story, and was definitely rooting for the main characters by the end.

*Ready Player One* is a young adult science-fiction novel published in 2011 by Random House publishing. The book generally received positive reviews from critics and won the Alex Award from the American Library Association.

*Ready Player One* is about a teenager named Wade Watts, a geek living in a 2044 trailer park called the Stacks. But in actuality, he lives in OASIS, the online world used for almost everything.

It's up to him to find the Easter Egg hidden in OASIS by its founder and save it from the corporate antagonists, IOI, making friends and finding the perfect girl along the way.

The book manages to be predictable but entertaining at the same time, and uses fun and relatable characters to convey a more serious message about our technology-dependent culture.

*Ready Player One*, whose premise of a futuristic virtual reality is all too familiar, fits

perfectly in with the recent trend of dystopian-teenage novels, but proves to be much more well-executed than its predecessors.

The novel is certainly science fiction, but the author manages to weave in a surprisingly heavy dose of 80's culture throughout, referencing classics like *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* to more obscure arcade games like *Joust*. The juxtaposition of futuristic technology and Matthew Broderick is awkward at first, but becomes commonplace quickly.

Unfortunately though, unless you're as immersed in and knowledgeable of 80's culture as the main characters, it's difficult to be enthusiastic about their realizations over negligible details in song lyrics and rulebooks for Dungeons and Dragons.

It's clear from the beginning that *Ready Player One*, despite being set in the future, is meant to address modern issues. Cline tries a little too hard to draw the connections between dystopian 2044 and present day, but the parallels are still uncomfortably accurate.

In the novel, more people vote in the virtual elections than in the US Presidential elections, blatantly using superficial entertainment to drown out the harshness of reality.

Even today, millions of Americans pay more attention to celebrities and reality

TV than the violence in the Middle East or genocide in Sub-Saharan Africa.

On Facebook's "Trending" section, you have to scroll through the Toronto Blue Jays and the Teen Choice Awards before you can read about the war in Iraq. *Ready Player One* is an extreme example, but it certainly gets the point across.

Ernest Cline is an excellent writer, and takes a seemingly unoriginal concept, like virtual reality, and shapes it to be unique and entertaining.

His writing is crisp and intelligent, and he captures the voice of a frustrated and lonely teenager surprisingly well.

However, Cline's writing becomes occasionally self-righteous and sermon-like, and his hyper-liberalism is easy to



Photo courtesy of Random House Publishing

Ernest Cline (above) poses in front of his custom made *Back to the Future* replica DeLorean. The car was awarded to a reader who discovered a series of clues hidden in the novel. Craig Queen won the car by setting the world record in *Joust* on Aug. 9, 2012.

distinguish. He uses a solid two pages to randomly attack Christianity, and then never discusses it again.

Regardless, *Ready Player One* is smart and exciting, a rare combination for summer

reading. The novel can come across a bit hackneyed in some places, and too serious in others, but ultimately the interesting characters, enticing story, and important message are what really shine.

## SG Update

NCSSM's Student Government Association is ready for this upcoming year and we hope that you are too. This is Student Government's 34<sup>th</sup> session and that means this is the 34<sup>th</sup> year Student Government will work its hardest to serve and represent its student body.

Student Government's duties include writing bills and grants, hosting events for students, as well as advocating for students.

Unlike at most high schools in the state, Student Government plays a huge role in life at NCSSM. Together with all students, SGA tackles a wide variety of problems, from academic dishonesty and grade transparency to environmental sustainability and PFM food quality. Examples of events hosted and organized by Student Government include "Lock-Ins" and the Dr. Unicorn Pageant/Talent Show. All in all, SGA is an integral part of the academic and social lifestyles at NCSSM and a great way to give back to the school and other students.

If interested, there are several opportunities to get

involved throughout the year. Here's what's coming up during 1<sup>st</sup> Trimester:

The most direct way to join SG is as a Junior Senator, whose elections are coming quickly. Nominations open August 22 and Primaries will be September 9. Other opportunities will follow, such as Dorm Senator and Senator At Large. More information will be provided as the year progresses.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact any of the current members of SGA. The Executive members include President Abhishek Kulgod, Senate President Daniel Ren, and Treasurer Vinay Kshirsagar.

The Senate is comprised of Senators Erick Aguilar, Thomas Andrews, Ebube Chuba, Christian Joseph, Howard Li, and Peter Ojo, and Parliamentarian Shreyas Kolavennu.

Executive Board members include Senita Portlock, Kristian Gaylord, Lisa Samal, Kali Smith, Chichi Zhu, Bailey Blankenship, Pintoo Deora, Katherine Wang, and Jacob Botros.

## Students attack lawnism

By KALI SMITH  
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While moving into NCSSM, students might have noticed a new addition to the lawn between Hunt and the PEC- yes, the Anti-Lawn Association's vegetable garden. Truly a labor of the people, many helping hands from around the school have contributed to this green masterpiece.

The team worked hard to bring the student population fresh vegetables and to show the proper use of a lawn. Grounds worker Todd Bollinger provided space and compost. Vice Chancellor of Academic Programs Steve Warshaw and former Humanities Instructor Michael Mulvey watched over the garden while students were away this summer. Students from Bridge weeded it. One student donated a potato out of their room to the garden without permission.

As you can see, the garden has grown through the labors of the NCSSM community and that is who the Anti-Lawn Association feels

should reap the benefits. The garden is home to a variety of different vegetables that will be available for student consumption: tomatoes, okra, squash, zucchini, and more.

In the coming weeks they will hold a farmers market of sorts with fresh produce available for any who wants it- and for free as well! So hurry out to indulge in this opportunity while it is here. If you find yourself craving vegetables after the garden has run out, every Saturday morning there is a Durham Farmers Market that holds a wide selection of in-season produce and homemade pastries (the cinnamon rolls are to die for).

The garden is a testament to eating locally and sustainably. While it is small this year, it is hoped that it will expand it over time so it can be used as both a source of food and an educational tool for the community. Growing and consuming local food has huge environmental benefits and health benefits as well.

Large amounts of natural

resources and unhealthy chemicals like pesticides go into transporting food long distances and keeping it in perfect grocery store condition, meaning one store-bought salad can leave a big carbon footprint.

Buying fresh, seasonal foods from a local farmers market, or growing food yourself and sharing with neighbors, can lessen your environmental impact, improve your health, and build strong community bonds.

If you want to see the garden continue to be successful in coming years, the Anti-Lawn Association invites you to join their club. They have exciting ideas for the new year and will be sponsored by humanities instructor Michelle Brenner.

The previous sponsor, Mulvey, leaves with these final words. "I am so proud of the ALA students who diligently worked to achieve the goal of a community garden. My hope is that the garden will grow and bloom for many a generation of future Unicorns." Let's not let him down.