



## Discussion Questions for Ready Player One by Ernest Cline

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These discussion questions were prepared by the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) for the Reader with a Cause group on Goodreads.

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### 1. The Ending

Did you think this was a “happily ever after” ending? Why or why not? Did you expect anything different to happen?

### 2. Environmentalism + Inequality

In Ready Player One, the OASIS is much like an escape. People spend time in this virtual world to avoid a polluted, impoverished reality. [The effects of climate disruption can worsen existing conditions and inequalities, such as poverty, lack of affordable housing, education inequality, and gender inequality.](#)

In the United States, lack of affordable housing is already a problem nationwide, so the stacks don't seem too far-fetched. Around the world, some communities already resemble Cline's imagining of the stacks. What impact would it have if all communities looked like the stacks by the year 2044? How might this change further exacerbate existing inequalities?

### 3. 80's References

Much like the Hunters after Halliday's Easter egg, reading Ready Player One was like engaging in an Easter egg hunt of our own. The book was filled with throwback pop culture references galore - from Joust to Super Friends to Bryan Adams and more.

Which pop culture reference did you enjoy the most? Were you surprised by any?

If the pop culture references went over your head, did this impact your overall enjoyment of the book? How?

#### 4. Art3mis and the (Virtual) Male Gaze

Despite her power and experience in the OASIS, a significant emphasis is still placed on Art3mis' body and appearance.

“She occasionally posted screenshots of her raven-haired avatar, and I sometimes (always) saved them to a folder on my hard drive....I found her unbearably attractive.” (35)

Do you think this fixation on Art3mis' physique diminishes her accomplishments? Why or why not?

Were you surprised that a significant emphasis was placed on the physical characteristics of one of the only female characters in the book, in a story that is set nearly 30 years in the future? Why or why not?

Is this an accurate depiction of what women experience in online spaces – why or why not?

#### 5. Aech & Blending In

Aech and Wade become best friends in the OASIS, bonding over shared interests - pop culture and otherwise.

“Aech's avatar was a tall, broad shouldered Caucasian male with dark hair and brown eyes. I asked him once if he looked anything like his avatar in real life, and he'd jokingly replied, ‘Yes. But in real life, I'm even more handsome.’” (38)

Upon discovering Aech is actually a Black lesbian, Wade is initially taken aback and isn't quite sure why someone might choose to hide certain aspects about themselves. However, he quickly realizes that Aech is still Aech and accepts her for who she is.

Do you think that Aech's true identity reveal is explored with enough depth in the novel? Why or why not? Do you think that Wade's relatively quick acceptance of Aech's true identity is realistic? Why or why not?

How does Aech's decision reflect the grim reality that both online and offline spaces present for many women, people of color, and the LGBTQ community?

## 6. Safety in the OASIS

There is a sense of safety that Wade is able to gain while existing inside the OASIS. What aspects of the OASIS make Wade, Aech, Art3mis, and other characters in the book, feel more safe - both in the physical sense and emotionally as they explored themselves and their identities?

Are there spaces on the internet today that people use to achieve this kind of security? Or to escape the sometimes harsh reality of the real world? What do you think are some consequences of existing solely in these types of spaces? Do you think Ready Player One overlooked any of the negative aspects of online spaces, or idealized online existence? Why or why not?