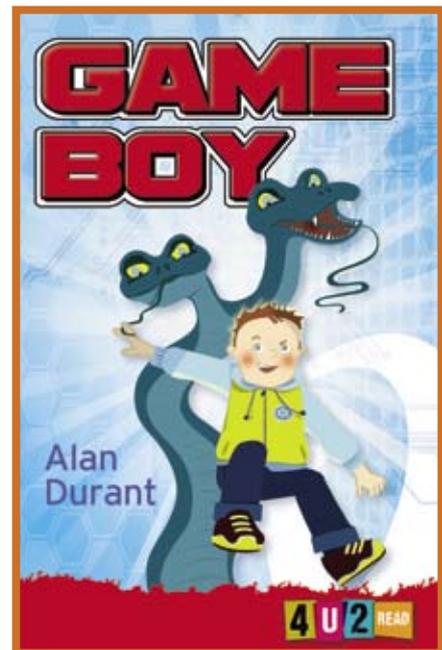




Barrington Stoke

CLASSROOM RESOURCES



ALAN DURANT

Game Boy 4u2read

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PART 1 OVERVIEW AND THEMES

I. OVERVIEW AND THEMES

Game Boy is about a boy named JP (John Paul) who buys an unnamed game from a junk shop that makes the player feel like they are playing the game in real-life. It is up to the reader to decide whether the game is real or not, and clues in the book aid in making this decision. When the story begins, JP thinks that the game has some clever mechanism that makes the player feel like they are really in the game. By the end of the book, however, JP feels that the game is real and a little too intense for his liking!

This question of 'real' versus 'pretend' is a running theme throughout **Game Boy**. For example, JP uses the word 'zap' to refer to killing something in a GameBoy game, but also uses this term when referring to events in real life. When he almost runs over the cat on his bike he says, "You nearly got zapped." The reader is encouraged to think that JP does not have a clear distinction between what is real or not, or the relative gravity of 'real' and 'pretend'.

As the game progresses, JP is faced with a challenge in which he is required to explain that he does know the difference between 'zapping' something in a game and killing something in real life. JP says, 'He knew that killing real tigers and elephants was wrong.' The reader suspects that JP has reached this conclusion through the process of defeating the levels in the game firsthand.

PART 2 CHAPTER SNAPSHOTS

Chapter 1 – Level 1

We meet John Paul (aka JP) – a boy who likes to play video games on his GameBoy, especially ones where he can 'zap' things or fight dangerous creatures. He has just finished 'zapping' some aliens and winning a game in record time when his mother walks in and asks what he is doing. She tells him he should be reading a book, not playing video games. JP lies and says he wasn't and that he'll do some reading tomorrow.

Chapter 2 – Level 2

The next day JP is riding his bike home from school when he almost runs over a cat and zaps it. He gets off his bike to make sure it is ok and sees that it is very frightened. Then he notices a new store on the street that looks like a junk shop. In the window he spots a GameBoy game that he's never seen before. JP gets really excited and runs inside to purchase it. The man behind the counter is very odd and explains that the game is not just a game, it is real life. When JP

asks the name of the game the man responds, “Some call it life, some call it death. It’s all up to how good a player you are.” JP doesn’t understand what the man is talking about, but he buys the game anyway and heads home to play it.

Chapter 3 – Level 3

When JP gets home his mum is making tea, and so he heads straight upstairs to play his new game. The only thing on the game is one line of print that says, “WARNING! THIS GAME MAY BE VERY BAD FOR YOU.” He starts to play and notices that it tells him he cannot go back once he has begun. He starts playing anyway, and enters a hot desert area where there are lots of rocks. He finds a dagger and holds on to it in case he needs it later. Then he comes across a two-headed snake that he must ‘zap’, and realizes that he is not playing his GameBoy in his bedroom anymore –he is actually inside the game! He is frightened and confused about what is happening, but doesn’t have much time to reflect further because the two-headed snake is on the attack. He defeats the snake with his dagger then walks under an arch where everything goes black.

Chapter 4 – Level 4

The lights come on again and JP sees that he is in a new level. In this level he is standing on the edge of a boggy river. JP reflects that the game seems very much like real life but at this point he still thinks of it as a game, with no real danger. He sees that he has to cross the river on either stones or logs. He chooses to jump on a stone and it sinks, taking him into the bog. He grabs onto a log and, after much effort, pulls himself back up. He then leaps along a row of logs but stops at the last one because he notices movement by it. He throws a scrap piece of wood out towards it and a huge crocodile jumps up from the depths of water to catch it in his mouth. He realises he must be careful when trying to cross this last log so the crocodile doesn’t ‘zap’ him. He gets a running start and leaps over the crocodile’s snapping jaws onto the safe point. Everything goes black again as he completes the level.

Chapter 5 – Level 5

In the next level JP finds himself in a jungle. He notices he has a gash in his leg where the crocodile has nicked him. He is impressed that the game has real blood, but his leg hurts and he begins to wonder why his body doesn’t restore itself at this new level like it would in a normal game. This is the tipping-point at which he begins to realise the game is for real. He starts walking through the jungle and has to jump over a few pits full of hissing snakes. Then he sees a parrot sitting next to an odd-looking fruit growing from a tree. He thinks he has to collect the fruit and begins to climb the tree. When he reaches the fruit the bird squawks at him, but he ignores it and reaches for the fruit anyway. A tarantula is hiding on the other side and it bites his finger. JP’s hand turns purple, but he thinks quickly and smashes the spider against a branch and eats the rest of the fruit, which rids his body of the spider’s venom. The level then goes black again.

Chapter 6 – Level 6

JP finds himself in a cave with torches on the walls. The cave is split into two tunnels. He grabs a torch and goes left. He comes to a dead end and sits down, by now very much wishing the game would end. Then he moves back down the tunnel and goes through the right tunnel. The

ground starts to shake and he hears a booming sound in his ears. At the end of the tunnel he finds a giant ant with razor sharp teeth standing in front of a door. JP is paralysed with fear, but he knows he must make it through the door in order to make it to the next level. He thinks about what he would do if he were playing this game on his GameBoy and rolls under the giant ant. Level completed.

Chapter 7 – Level 7

JP is in a huge room with walkways on different levels and ladders to climb, like a giant game of snakes-and-ladders - without the snakes. At the far end of the room on a high platform are three books with the words “The End” above them. JP knows he must make it there to complete the game. There are no dangerous creatures to face, but there are trap doors that JP must watch out for. He makes it to the platform and words appear that tell him he must pick the right book among the three, to be made rich and wise. He has one minute to choose correctly, or he dies. The first book is decorated in jewels, the second in ivory and tigers’ skin, and the third is a plain red cardboard. At first JP thinks that it must be one of the first two books because they are obviously worth more. Then he realizes that these books are too obvious, and picks the plain red one just before his minute is up. The other two books burst into flames and he is transported back to his bedroom.

Chapter 8 – Level 8

JP finds himself back in his bedroom with his hands on the GameBoy controller. On the screen these words are displayed, “Well done! You are still alive. Do you want to play again?” JP wonders if he would be dead had he chosen the wrong book. He thinks the game is too real and decides to take it back to the shop. He goes downstairs to find that no time has passed since he started playing the game. He runs to the shop but finds that the store is empty, with a “For Sale” sign out front. The man in the shop next door tells him that the space has been empty for weeks and there was never a junk shop there. JP doesn’t know what to think and decides that he must get rid of the game so others don’t put their lives at risk. He throws the game into a river so nobody else will find it. That night he decides to read a book instead of playing his GameBoy. JP enjoys the book!

PART 3 SUGGESTED QUESTIONS TO DEVELOP READING STRATEGIES

Title/Cover

Look at the title and cover. What do you predict this story is going to be about?

Chapter 1

When John Paul says ‘zap’, what does he mean? Can you use other information in the book to help work out what ‘zap’ means? Is there another word (or words) you could use in place of ‘zap’?

At the end of this chapter JP lies about playing video games to his mum. Have you ever lied in a similar situation?

Chapter 2

What did the junk shop owner look like? Can you find some examples of effective description of the shop owner?

If you had been in JP's place and the shop owner had said the same things to you, would you have bought the game?

What questions would you ask the shop owner about the unnamed GameBoy game?

Chapter 3

Why does the author use capital letters when describing the warnings on the game? What effect does this have?

Would you play the game even though it says 'WARNING! THIS GAME MAY BE VERY BAD FOR YOU' and 'WARNING! ONCE YOU START, YOU CAN NOT STOP'?

What is the setting of the first level of the game?

How would you feel if you were suddenly inside a game and facing a two-headed snake? Would you try to defeat it, or run and hide?

Chapter 4

What does the setting of this level of the game look like?

Do you think the game is 'real-life' like the junk shop owner said, or just a clever game like JP thinks? Why?

After a moment of panic when he first sees the crocodile, JP is quite calm and decides to jump over it. How would you feel in the same situation?

What do you think might happen next?

If you could design a level in the game, what would it look like? What would the dangers be? How would you win the level?

Chapter 5

What does this new level look like?

Why is JP's leg bleeding?

JP now thinks the game may be 'real-life'. If you thought the game was not 'real-life' before, did you change your mind after JP got bitten by the crocodile? Why?

JP is excited that the game is for real. How would you feel if you were stuck in a GameBoy game?

If you could go 'into' any video game, which one would it be?

What does the odd fruit hanging from the tree look like?

Why do you think the bird was squawking at JP? Do you think it was trying to warn him of the spider or attract his attention to the odd-looking fruit?

What do you think might happen next?

Chapter 6

What does this level look like?

How is JP feeling at the beginning of this chapter? How would you have felt in the same situation as JP – would you want to go home too?

Do you think the description on **P43** of the chapter is effective? Does it make you want to read on?

What does the monster in this level look like? Can you make up your own scary monster?

What do you think might happen next?

Chapter 7

What does this level look like?

What do the pictures tell us?

What do the three books look like?

Which book do you think JP should choose that will make him wise and rich? Why do you think this?

What do you think will happen next?

Chapter 8

Now that JP is out of the game, what does he think of it? Can you find descriptions in the book that tell you this?

What does JP discover about the time while he was in the game? Why do you think the author chose to have time stop?

When JP discovers the junk shop is no longer there, what does he do with the game? What would you have done with the game? Would you keep it or destroy it?

Did the ending surprise you? Is it what you expected? Why/why not?

How do you think the book should have ended?

Why did the author choose 'Game Boy' as the title?

Which level of the game did you like the best? Which was the scariest? Would you like to visit any of these levels?

Overall

Which was your favourite part of the book? Why?

What is the main event of the story? Why do you think this?

What do you think would happen next if the story carried on past the ending of the book?

Could the story be improved or changed for the better? How?

What do you think was the most exciting part of the story?

Do you think the author is trying to give readers a message? If so, what is it?

Would you like to read another book by this author?

PART 4 ABOUT ALAN DURANT

Alan was born in Sutton in Surrey. His biggest wish back then was to have a weird family. This was because he was a big fan of a TV show called *The Munsters* and he thought it would be great to have brothers and sisters with fangs or green skin or more than one head!

The things Alan liked when he was young were football and reading. He had a goldfish called George Best, after the football hero. His favourite book of all was a Manchester United Football Year Book from 1969 signed 'To Alan from George Best'. He also loved *The King of the Castle* by Meriol Trevor. He still owns both of those books today, and says they were an important part of becoming a writer.

Alan's other books for Barrington Stoke:

Game Boy

Game Boy Reloaded

Game Boy Galactic

Stat Man

Stat Man Goes Greek