

# EREBOS

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**Genre:** Science Fiction

**Themes:** Computer games  
Mystery  
Teens  
Right vs wrong  
Fantasy  
Fitting in

**Suitable for:** Grades 7+

## Erebos

*Erebos* is a thought-provoking, enthralling and engrossing story set in present-day London where a computer game blurs the lines between virtual reality and real life.

Nick is secretly given the computer game *Erebos*. It instantly proves addictive, requiring players to carry out increasingly questionable and risky tasks both within the game and in the real world. As *Erebos* players form part of a secret society, uncovering the game's true motive is as difficult as it is dangerous.

*Erebos* is a piece of speculative fiction that is sure to spark classroom discussions about computer games and their impact on the individual and society.

## POTENTIAL IN THE CURRICULUM

Using *Erebos* as a class text in **English**, **Philosophy** or **Psychology** could lead to in-depth discussions relating to the role video games play in our society, the perceived effects of violent games on players, the value of games as learning tools, the blurring between reality and virtual reality, the need for people to escape reality, the power of cults over individuals and groups and historical examples of one person controlling a group for a questionable purpose.

## AS AN ENGLISH TEXT:

It is suggested that *Erebos* be studied as an English text:

- as an example of speculative fiction set in ‘the real world’
- as an example of the use of language to construct an entire video game world
- as an example of the use of language to construct real and game characters
- as an example of the way an author can convey a sense of urgency and danger
- as an example of the way readers can identify with characters
- as a study of the craft of writing

## AS A PHILOSOPHY RESOURCE:

It is suggested that *Erebos* be studied as a Philosophy resource:

- to debate the nature of right and wrong
- to debate how power over others is used for good and evil
- to discuss the nature of forgiveness and the nature of guilt
- to discuss the human desire for revenge
- to debate the effects that video games have on the individual and society
- to discuss the video game as a place of safety to expend normal violent impulses

## AS A PSYCHOLOGY RESOURCE:

It is suggested that *Erebos* be studied as a Psychology resource:

- to discuss the way power over others is developed and used and the techniques used to manipulate others
- to discuss the addictive nature of video games
- to discuss the reported effects of video games on players
- to research cults, how they control people and how people deal with the loss of the group when they leave
- to discuss and research historical examples of how one person can control a large group
- to discuss whether carrying out an order absolves one of guilt
- to research the sub-culture of video gaming
- to debate where acceptable behavior ends and unacceptable behavior begins
- to debate the nature of how being anonymous online changes accepted behaviors
- to discuss how people gain power over others
- to debate the need for people to escape from reality

Teaching tools to support the study of *Erebos* include the Hunger Games trilogy by Suzanne Collins, the Avatar Chronicles trilogy by Conor Kostick, *For the Win* by Cory Doctorow, the Gamers series by George Ivanoff, *Dangerously Placed* by Nansi Kunze, *Ready Player One* by Ernest Cline, *Luka and the Fire of Life* by Salman Rushdie, *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan, *Tron* (DVD), The Matrix trilogy (DVDs), *Virtuosity* (DVD), Tomb Raider (DVD and video game), Sid Meyer’s Civilization (videogames) and World of Warcraft (videogame).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is playing Erebos like being in a cult? Why do you think only high school students were chosen to play Erebos? Find examples to justify your point of view. Can you think of historical events where one person has had so much control over so many people?
2. The “dead man” says to Nick, “... acquaint yourself with the rules. If you don’t like them, you can end the game at any time” (p. 39). Is this true? What prevents Nick from ending the game at any time? Thinking about what happened at the end, was the dead man’s warning enough?
3. “‘You should leave Erebos. Go, and never come back. Pretend you’ve never been here. Forget this world. Will you do that?’ Of course not, Sarius thinks.” (p. 48) and “Can’t you leave me in peace for just one minute, for God’s sake?” (p. 62). What is the allure of the Erebos game? How do video games do this to us? How can they help someone like Helen?
4. In late 2011, there were media reports that the Red Cross wanted gamers who play violent war games charged with war crimes. How do you think gameplay affects real world events?
5. T.S. Eliot said, “Humankind cannot bear very much reality.” Does Erebos provide an escape from reality for the gamers or is it all too real for them? Explain using examples from the book.
6. “... before Sarius can feel suitably surprised ...” and “...Sarius thinks ...” (both p. 215). How does Nick think and feel as Sarius? Are they separate beings when playing Erebos? Does this allow Nick to get away with behavior that would be otherwise unacceptable?
7. How does the author use references to Greek mythology and Christian symbolism to make parallels within *Erebos*? Why does the author employ these techniques?
8. “Create. Sustain. Destroy ... I created what no-one before me has created ... but destruction can also be of some interest” (p. 258). Does the person who creates something have the right to destroy it? List instances where it is acceptable and instances where it is unacceptable.
9. Do you think Nick would have reacted differently to Jamie’s “accident” had he still been playing Erebos? Explain your thoughts.
10. Andrew Ortolan was a liar and a thief. Did that give Mr. McVay the right to try to punish him the way he did? “Those who had scruples were saved. Those who were left I used” (p. 430). Were the players willing accomplices or simply McVay’s puppets? Should the players take responsibility for the results of the “orders” they carried out? Why or why not?