

Discussion Guide for Heir Apparent by Vivian Vande Velde

Summary

When Giannine turns 14, her father, via his secretary, gives her a ½ hour of total immersion virtual reality gaming at Rasmussem Enterprises. She chooses Heir Apparent where she becomes a sheepgirl who finds out that her true father, the king has chosen her to be his heir. Unfortunately her three half brothers and their mother the queen are not pleased. All she has to do is last three days to be crowned, prevent a war with barbarians, deal with dragons, magicians and treacherous advisors. Unfortunately, while she is playing, the group Citizens to Protect Our Children has damaged the equipment and the only way out of the game is to successfully complete it--and quickly, or she risks "fatal overload" and possible death.

Booktalk

For her 14th birthday Giannine goes to Rasmussem Enterprises Gaming to play a total immersion game. That's one where the game is directly wired into your brain so that you actually feel like you're inside the game. In the game Heir Apparent there are as many ways to win as there are ways to die. She is a shepherd who finds out that she is the illegitimate daughter of the recently dead king who left the kingdom to her rather than the three sons he has with the queen. All she has to do is get the magic ring, find the stolen treasure, save the kingdom from the barbarian invasion, make up a poem for the head-chopping statue, cope with an army of ghosts and outmaneuver her jealous half-brothers and defeat the man-eating dragon. Oh, and did I mention stay alive for 3 days so she can be crowned? Sounds easy enough, right? Every time she dies in the game she has to start over. To make matters worse, the group Citizens to Protect our Children has broken into the computer and damaged the system. Not only will her character die but she will--unless she can finish the game, and quickly.

315 pages, 6th grade and up

Discussion questions

1. If you could have just one of her magic objects--the magic ring, the timestream hat, seven league boots, or the crown of the barbarians--which would you choose and why?
2. When Giannine arrives and the protestors are outside, they claim they are protecting children from evil. Do they have a point? Should children be protected from violent games? If so, by whom?
3. Every time Jannine dies she makes better choices. How do you think your life would be different if you could see the results of your choices before you make them?
4. Would you want to play this game? Why or why not?
5. Do you think she was better off as a shepherd with a loving family or as a princess? Why?
6. Vivian Vande Velde said: "One of the reasons I became a writer was because I enjoyed mentally writing sequels to books I didn't want to end. (Or I made up new endings for stories I felt ended the wrong way.)" What do you think of the end of this story?

Created in part with funds granted by the [Oregon State Library](#) under the Library Services and Technology Act, administered by the Oregon State Library. Send feedback to [Katie O'Dell](#), Reading Promotions Coordinator