

V.M. JONES

The Serpents of Arakesh

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Story Synopsis

Written by award-winning author V M Jones, *The Serpents of Arakesh* is the first book in a new series of four – *The Karazan Quartet*. Karazan was originally an imaginative world created by computer genius Quentin Queded – **Q** – as the base for his interactive computer game series. As technology has improved, **Q** has been able to develop this to the stage where the world of Karazan is no longer fictitious, but actually exists in parallel to our own world, but in another dimension.

Adam Equinox, aged 12, is the main character of the story. Adam lives in an orphanage, has poor self-esteem and does not excel school. Adam stumbles across a competition entry form with the prize of an opportunity to work with **Q** on a top secret breakthrough in computer technology.

Adam and five other children are chosen by **Q** to attempt to enter the world of Karazan and try to return to our world. The poignant twist in the story is that **Q**'s five year-old daughter is dying of cancer and can only be cured by a phial of the balm of healing – invented as part of a game by **Q**, but now existing in the parallel world of Karazan.

The children find Karazan and the city of Arakesh very different to their own and danger is ever present. In attempting to retrieve the phial, they have to solve cryptic clues – just like a real computer game. Imagine their horror when they find that the balm of healing and other potions they are recovering are guarded by fierce serpents.

The story is action-packed and at the same time, has a secondary plot, where Adam begins to develop leadership qualities and a growing self-esteem.

Setting the Scene

- Ask students to brainstorm a list of all the computer games they have played.
 - Which games are the most popular?*
 - Are some games more popular with girls than boys?*
- Share descriptions and objectives of the computer games.
- Debate the pros and cons of computer games. Are they useful in developing skills and imagination? Are there any dangers in playing computer games?

Thinking About Other Worlds

- Students will be familiar with the three dimensions of length, breadth and depth. Introduce the idea of time and space as two other possible dimensions.
- Discuss with students how by using time and space as further dimensions, authors and film makers are able to create other imaginative worlds where the characters are able to visit and have incredible adventures.
- Relate this idea back to computer games – a virtual world that players can explore. Introduce the world of Karazan as such a creation where Adam and his friends have adventures.
- Have students speculate on the existence of such a world. Do they think that this is a legitimate device for authors to use?

After Reading the Story

- Talk about Adam's problems at school. How much do the students think this is related to him being an orphan? Why would Adam have such low self-esteem?
- Have students locate incidents in the story that show Adam is developing in confidence and demonstrating new found self-esteem and leadership skills.
- Do the students think **Q** has the right to place the children in danger by sending them to Karazan?
- Have students list the members of **Q**'s household they meet through the story. Identify and list the particular qualities they all have and how these have helped **Q** become successful.
- Re-read the epilogue of the story. Why do they think the author has included this?
- How successful do the students think the author has been in creating a realistic parallel world?