

# Ready Player One (2018)

Rated PG-13. Running Time: 2 hours 20 min.

Our content ratings (1-10): Violence 4; Language 1; Sex Nudity 1.

Our star rating (1-5): 4

*Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due,  
when it is in your power to do it.*

*Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come again,  
tomorrow I will give it"—when you have it with you.*

*Do not plan harm against your neighbor  
who lives trustingly beside you.*

*Do not quarrel with anyone without cause,  
when no harm has been done to you.*

*Proverbs 3:27-30*

*Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but  
associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you  
are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for  
what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far  
as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.*

*Romans 12:16-18*



*In search of the ultimate Easter  
Egg. (c) Warner Brothers*

Director Steven Spielberg seems to be reverting to his youthful days in his new film that is the equivalent of a cinematic roller coaster ride. Eschewing the gravitas of *The Post* or *The Bridge of Spies*, he proves that he can make as an exciting CGI movie as any other director. So, as they say, "Fasten your seat belt and enjoy the ride."

The setting is the year 2045 in "the fastest-growing city in the world: Columbus, Ohio." Societal problems have become so severe that, we are told, "people have stopped trying to fix them." The story is of the 99%, most of whom live in trailer courts called "the stacks" because dilapidated trailers are stacked vertically atop platforms that tower as tall as skyscrapers. One of these is occupied by our hero Wade Watts (Tye Sheridan), an orphaned teenager now living apart from his aunt and her drunken boyfriend. Like most other denizens of his dystopian world, Wade spends most of his time in the online virtual universe called the OASIS, where through his avatar he calls Parzival he runs, dodges and shoots at hordes of enemies, often teamed up with others. For hours at a time you can forget your troubles and hellish living conditions. OASIS is far better than drugs, though its effect of banishing reality temporarily is the same.

In OASIS one can don garish costumes and drive fantastic cars, even a Batmobile, and dance with a gorgeous partner in zero gravity. With a name like Parzival we know immediately that Wade's will soon become a quest story. And so it does when the genius creator of OASIS James Halliday (Mark Rylance) dies. Even in death he will dominate the world because he has taped an announcement describing his last game—a contest the winner of which will inherit his huge fortune and gain control over OASIS. He has hidden an Easter Egg so well that only the one who finds three keys will have enough clues to find the prize. Parzival and his best friend Aech, a mechanical expert whose avatar is a giant black man with a midsection consisting of machine parts, of course set out to find the keys. They and

the other egg hunters are called "gunters."

The first part of the contest is a high-speed race through city streets, with Wade on a virtual racetrack in a DeLorean time machine (Robert Zemeckis is but one of many action film directors the film pays tribute to). His chief competition turns out to be a daredevil woman atop a motorcycle Art3mis (Olivia Cooke) and a pair of Japanese players, Daito (Win Morisaki) and Shoto (Philip Zhao). The urban track is constantly changing, with giant wrecking balls and a mechanical T-Rex attacking the racers. King Kong leaves his perch atop the Empire State Building to stand at the end of the track where he blocks all comers. Guess who eventually figures out how to get around the huge beast. You're right, the guy driving the DeLorean time machine.

By winning the first key Parzival/Wade becomes a superstar, lauded wherever he goes. Well, *almost* wherever. Scheming to find the Egg is Halliday's former intern Nolan Sorrento (Ben Mendelsohn) who now leads IOI, a company set up for the sole purpose of finding Halliday's keys. He sends out employees into every game in the hope of grabbing the keys. Of course, he will do anything to thwart the young man whom he realizes is his main obstacle to achieving untold wealth and power.

It is the coming together of friends and foes in the real world that we see that winning Halliday's Easter Egg will have great consequences. Sorrento is an exploiter who will add to the misery of both the real world and the virtual reality world. Although not developed as much as it could have been, the film does become concerned with class warfare. And once Wade meets Samantha, the alternate ego of Art3mis, romance blossoms.

This might not be a great film, but it is an engrossing one, and viewers hipper than I will have a field day spotting all the references to once popular video games, comic book characters, and action and horror films. The best of the

latter is an extended sequence based on Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*—though I loved more the inclusion of *The Iron Giant* (one of my favorite animated movies). Spielberg handles the CGI effects effectively so that they do not completely overwhelm the depiction of the human characters—though they come close. Wade does choose “reality” over the artificial world of virtual reality. His choosing reality, of course, means that he will interact with real people and not electronic images, the only way that the advice of the author of Proverbs and the Letter to the Romans can be of use. He has chosen to engage the world and its troublesome people rather than flee from it into an imaginary world of his own making. However, the exciting way that VR is depicted makes me doubt that he will convince video game addicts to lay aside their goggles and controls and shorten their immersion time. Regardless, this is a film young and old can enjoy just for the ride, although it will be the young, and those who joined the video game revolution of the Eighties, who will appreciate it the most.

*This review with a set of questions will be in the April 2018 issue of Visual Parables.*