



Invitation to the Game

Monica Hughes , Broeck Steadman (Illustrator)

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A chilling account of life in 2154, when most jobs are done by machines. Lisse and her friends are unemployable after graduation, but the government gives them an abandoned warehouse in a bleak neighborhood to live in. Anxious to escape their dreary lives, the friends embrace The Game, which takes them to paradise. But is this world real or only a computer simulation?

Invitation to the Game Details

Date : Published June 1st 1993 by Simon Pulse (first published February 25th 1991)

ISBN : 9780671866921

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Format : Mass Market Paperback 192 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Young Adult, Dystopia, Fiction

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From Reader Review Invitation to the Game for online ebook

Carlee says

This was one of the first books I can ever remember reading and really loving. This book had a huge impact on both my reading habits and my main areas of interest. I fully believe that this book is the reason I love science fiction novels and have a great love for (read: obsession with) the end of the world and post-apocalyptic fiction.

Invitation to the Game follows a group of characters who have recently graduated with highly specialized degrees but most of whom are unemployable because of the growing number of jobs that are given to robots. These unemployed children are shuttled off to the middle of a ghetto and told society has no use for them. Life is dull and very nearly unbearable until the group receives an invitation.

I haven't read the book in about 12 years but the characters and story still stick with me to this day. This book is hard to find, but hunt it down. I promise you won't be sorry.

Allen Johnson says

The book I read was Invitation to the Game the author is Monica Hughes. I really did like the book because there is robots who take all the jobs and so the kids have to survive with a group. There is many settings like there house, the nightlife Barton oaks, and the virtual reality. The main characters are Karen, Benta, Brad, Lisse, Scylla, Charlie, Alden, Katie, Paul, and Rich. I would recommend this book to anyone who likes science fiction I would recommend this book to them because it is a really good book and it has robots.

Jennifer says

If you were to ask me whether or not I thought Hughes' story, Invitation To The Game, first published back in 1990, was a profound read, I would have to answer that it was for me.

Why, you might ask? Well, simply stated, if and when given the chance of starting over and being able to make a change for the better for not only ourselves but our planet as well, wouldn't anyone of us seize that opportunity? What if we could find another 'place' to start over? Could that ever be a possibility in my lifetime? Hmm...that's something pretty neat to think about. This book may be geared to the young adult readers of the world but it possessed enough whispers of truth for this adult reader to be allowed to relate to it.

Hughes' book explores what each of her 10 characters have found within themselves to be able to help give a new direction and meaning to their young lives, as well as to humanity's overall well being. We all bring something different and purposeful to this world. It simply takes some of us longer than others to figure it all out. Nothing wrong with that though. We all get there in our own time. Sticking and working together winds up having a huge impact on how well we eventually do. It's a great touch on Hughes' part to have incorporated that way of dealing with difficulties and adversity, because it shows the value of a community that thinks before it acts and is ultimately held accountable for their decisions.

Adventure! Survival! A strange/weird world, with rules you don't quite understand at first. I loved the idea of the unemployed group scrounging around the streets to make use of old discarded items and turning them back into something of use for themselves. This book sort of puts a new spin on an old saying of "Home is where the heart is" and puts a huge emphasis on re-using and re-cycling 'stuff'.

It's an enlightening, philosophical read. I liked it!! I might even be tempted to say that I think Richard Branson <https://youtu.be/iQP8OSdD1HM?t=39> might like it too if he's a reader of books!! ;)

Read this book for yourself and then take an inventory of your skills.
You'll probably be surprised at what you don't even know you know.

Anna K says

To say the least I did not enjoy this book. The dialog is forced and cringe worthy, the characters do not develop at all, the plot is predictable and very basic. It takes a lot for me to not like a book but this book definitely did it. The only reason I stuck with it till the end (which, was by all means utterly predictable) was because it was a book read for school and refusing to read school material can do a toll on your grade. The characters are stagnant and don't change over the course of the entire book. You never get attached to the characters they are not established enough for you to do so. And the character you get to know a little are irritating and get on your nerves. Sorry, Lessie but you deserved pneumonia for being such a nuisance. What about Scylla? or Katie? They should be more involved in the story. The book would have been a better read through the eyes of Scylla or Katie. There are ten main characters and I can name about six of them and tell you maybe one or two things about four of the characters. I usually am very invested in the character throughout a story but this book made this incredibly hard to do. And what is the moral? Don't let robots take your jobs? New beginnings are needed to keep from make the human population extinct? If you know please tell me. Although this was a cautionary story they talk about now modern technology like its exotic and foreign and won't be invented for another 150 year but spoiler alert these things are happening now. Don't even get me started on the plot it is predictable in every way shape and form. No, i'm not done yet. I haven't even gotten started, next stop on the pity train is the dialog. The dialog in this so called book is the most forced and awkward conversations you will ever read. No one talks like that and if you do I feel bad for you. Example (no big spoilers):

"No way! Oh, for a little hot chicken soup. My throat-"

"Why don't you just pipe down, Rich, before I make your sore throat worse?"

"What's happened to you all? You just awful!"

"Jogging. I looked for our old place. But I couldn't find it."

(page 124)

Ect.

I would find another better example but if I look at this book again I might throw it out the window. Am I the only one we thinks the characters talk like robots? This has nothing to do with the quality of the book but THE COVER makes me want to barf. I screams. Cool, futuristic, adventure that is if you think an outdated drawing of a cheesy girl wearing a headset is adventurous . This cover was made in the 90's I am begging someone to please give this book a cover update. And um the girl on the cover is wearing an orange jumpsuit it clearly states several times throughout the book that the jumpsuit are plan and gray-green.

Proof (no big spoilers):

"There was every possible size to chose from, but otherwise they were an identical greenish-gray"

(page 61)

The only reason it gave this book two stars instead of one is that I do see the thinking behind this book and can see how this could be an amazing tale. But, instead it is a crappy excuse for a book that seems as if the pages were slapped together and put under and cover that makes me ill.

And if you still want to read this book after reading my rant, you should skim it. It might be a good skim book.

Thanks for reading my rant.

BobRoss'sCooluncle says

Okay

Matthew Campbell says

Based on my memory of reading the book in '92. At the time, it was a fairly 'hard' dystopia starring wayward and dead end kids that captured a very particular version early late gen-x/early gen-y zeitgeist of economic fatalism.

Bridget says

This was *almost* really good. It felt like a mash-up of 1984, The Running Man, and The Hunger Games, but not quite as good as any of them. Definitely an interesting concept though - and a new one that I wasn't really expecting. But in the end, I felt the book was lacking depth. And where it was lacking depth, I felt that Hughes had made the ending too clean for my taste.

Reuben H. says

Review originally written on 7/4/11.

For me, Invitation to the Game by Monica Hughes is a classic. I absolutely loved it the first time I read it several years ago, and this time I loved it as well. I actually reviewed this book on a past blog when I read it the first time.

I was first introduced to Invitation to the Game by my librarian. I instantly knew it wouldn't be a "regular" teen science fiction novel, because, well, my librarian introduced it to me! This is the librarian that doesn't really want any books about fishing in the library but has an entire section on quilting. She is definitely not a science fiction fan.

But, alas, she actually recommended the book. I believe she said it was the only science fiction book that she ever liked. I was a little unsure when I started reading it, but after a short time I realized that it really was . . . you know, cool!

In the future, 2154 to be exact, the world is practically run by machines. (Sound familiar? At first it seems like a typical science fiction story setting.) Thousands of occupations that were once filled by human beings are now filled by robots. This leaves thousands, probably millions across the world, of people unemployed, and they're pretty much dumped in a designated area (DA for short) and told to stay there.

A sixteen-year-old girl named Lisse, fresh out of school, fails to land a job, as does seven of her friends (which she's shocked about, since they're all such bright students). They are driven to a city (it never specifies which) and let off in their designated area. They are given just enough government credits to survive every month, and are told that if they ever leave their DA, the Thought Police will track them down in mere moments.

That's how *Invitation to the Game* starts out: a group of teens trying to survive in a dark and savage world. I believe if the author had spent more time exploring this world and all of the interesting pieces of future culture, then the book would've been a lot better, but it was written over twenty years ago, so I doubt I can change her mind.

The group actually fares well for a while, until in a night bar they heard of something called 'The Game', and it perked their interest. On a few occasional nights since then they went to taverns and such and ask about this 'Game' that has capital letters. Eventually they find something about it, but not in any of those dirty, scum-infested bars.

The Game is a treasure hunt. You're given clues every time you play, and the clues are all for a prize in the end, which nobody knows what it is. Only those invited can participate. It sounds sort of weird and maybe a bit boring, but the teens continue looking for information about it.

And then they get invited to it. They don't know how, or why, or even if they should accept or not. Soon they find it is amazing beyond what they had imagined before.

I'll stop the story synopsis at that point, as I don't want to tell you the entire story. Whether or not I made it sound great or horrible, I loved the book both times I read it. It's full of adventure, and jam-packed with various emotions such as intrigue, depression, joy, hatred, triumph, and realization that in the end it can all work out if you work together (the long version of saying "teamwork").

The plot was great, and I didn't really see the ending twist coming (though I'm the type of person who doesn't usually see twists coming). I've fallen in love with the author's portrayal of the future (though I certainly hope our future doesn't turn out that way), and if there were other books that take place in the same universe, I'd read them for sure.

Monica Hughes is a great author. There are many things that I think she could have done better, but altogether it was a spectacular novel. I'd recommend it to people at any age.

Wealththeow says

In a future dys/utopia, Lisse and her friends have all just graduated from school. But there are too many people and not enough jobs, and they are each left unemployed, on the dole, and at a loss for how to live in a highly regimented society with no place for them. They quickly learn hard lessons about dumpster-diving and squatting, and even faster, they lose interest in the hard-partying lifestyle of their fellow unemployed

youths. When the group is invited to play a free virtual reality game, they jump at the chance to escape the grime and social stigmas of their daily lives. Living on an alien planet within "the game," each of the group finds new purpose to their lives. But when they disconnect, they're still just as poor and unwanted as ever.

Bibliotropic says

(Reread this book as comfort reading because nothing makes me feel more creative and more like I might actually get somewhere with my life than reading this book!)

Whenever I read this book, I am reminded of the fact that short summaries, even the back of the book itself, simply do not do this story justice. It's one of the few books that I would recommend without hesitation to be on a school's reading curriculum, since not only does it tell an engaging story about unemployed life in a dystopian future, but it also has the thread of hope running through it that tells people that no matter what, they have useful skills, even if they don't yet know what use those skills are.

The story is told from the perspective of Lisse, who has just graduated from school and found herself with no employment prospects. This is far from unusual, as she came from one of the top schools in the country, which had a 10% job placement rate in a world essentially run by robots. Along with her friends from school, Lisse starts out her new life as an unemployed.

The world Hughes set up is an interesting one. Unemployed people are taken care of, in a basic sense, by the government, given shelter and enough credits to buy food and cleaning supplies. Anything else they want they must get by scrounging materials from garbage cans, anything throw away or to be recycled. They may not work, except at "indie" things like selling art to the employed who have money to spare. They may not travel, and they are limited to their Designated Area. Gangs essentially rule the streets, the government's first line of defense is the thought police, and overcrowding is a major problem.

Then when the tables turn and they find themselves in unfamiliar surroundings, they are forced to exercise every one of their individual talents to the utmost in order to survive as a society. That, in a nutshell, is what this book is about. Society, whether it be overcrowded and terrible or tiny and held together by only the bonds of friendship and necessity. What makes a society, and what makes a good or bad society? Monica Hughes is not afraid of asking the big questions, nor of posing them to young people who most of us would deem incapable of truly understanding such broad concepts. Most adults couldn't properly answer what makes a good or bad society, after all, and I enjoy coming across good YA novels that don't dumb the issues down for children, but instead present the questions in an entertaining and provocative way.

And like Michael Grant's *Gone*, this book doesn't flinch away from the fact that life involves death, killing, and other unpleasant things, especially when one is in exceptional circumstances.

I could read this book a hundred times over and never get bored of it. I highly recommend it to, well, just about anybody, really, be they young or old. It's the kind of book that makes you want to think, that makes you want to be productive, and makes you examine yourself and your place in the world.

I know I, for one, feel pretty confident that if I were in the same situation as Lisse, all my friends would have plenty of clothes to wear. Most people would consider skills like making a drop spindle, spinning yarn, and knitting to be quaint hobbies at best in this modern world, but when I read this novel, it's easy to remind myself that there are plenty of situations in which my "quaint hobbies" could be the difference between

barely surviving the cold and being comfortable and warm.

Read this book for yourself and then take an inventory of your skills. You'll be surprised at what you don't even know you know.

Dramapuppy says

I tried to think of a reason to give this book three stars. I really did. It's true it entertained me for two or three hours. I never wanted to put it down; I had to know what would happen. Hughes' writing is certainly engaging. And the premise is so intriguing!

But... there are so many things wrong with it.

First of all, there are ten main characters. I can list seven. I can describe none. No one had a distinct personality, even the narrator. For example, Katie knows karate. That is literally the only thing we know about her. At least that I can remember. And apparently three of them had incredibly generic names. Anyway, it was frustrating to read about a bunch of strangers. They all talked the same way. Read a line of dialogue; any one of the characters could have said it and you wouldn't know which.

The writing, while intriguing, was just...bad. Maybe I just don't like the style? It just read really weird. It was supposedly in first person but... no teenager talks that way!

The premise, while interesting, makes absolutely no sense! (view spoiler)

You can tell Hughes just wanted to write this and when she got to the end she realized how little sense it made but just didn't care anymore.

But at least it's entertaining, right?

Diallo says

I read the *Invitation To The Game* by Monica Hughes. I think this book is wonderful to read, I think it's wonderful because I like books/movies about the future and I wish we had flying cars like in old movies. *2015* would be like. The main setting is inside the game and in the Designated Area. The main characters are children named Lisse, Scylla, Brad, Rich, Paul, Katie, Alden, Trent, Karen and Benta and robots. The conflict was the robots were doing jobs for the kids and others but the other people need jobs but the robots took them. I would recommend this book because people would find it wonderful like I did. It's the best book I ever read. I would recommend this book to people who want to go to the future and what it would be like.

Flannery says

So, when I saw this on the shelves at B & N, I thought it sounded like a mixture of *The Running Man* (awesome) and *The Hunger Games* (also awesome) and I had to buy it. Having finished it, I can't say that it is as good as either of those books, but it is definitely enjoyable. This book was originally published in the early nineties and, though the author passed away a few years ago, obviously her publisher didn't want to miss out on the YA dystopia trend. I have to say, though, that this book is not dated at all--but I did chuckle at her prediction that we'd be using e-readers in the future...

The beginning of this book is definitely not its strong point. Monica Hughes introduces us to Lisse, our protagonist, and her group of friends, all of whom are graduating from Government School. In a *The Giver*-type ceremony, each graduate is given their future job assignment or confirmation that they are an Unemployed. As their society has replaced more and more of its workforce with robots, an increasing number of students find themselves Unemployed. Surprise! Lisse and several of her friends join the ranks of the jobless and move to their "Designated Area," where the Government provides them with their basic needs. All around their neighborhood, they hear whispers and conversations about "The Game."

Now, don't get crazy, I'm not going to tell you what *The Game* is, it would ruin the whole story. But I will tell you that each kid specializes in some sort of occupation while at school. Lisse's group is balanced so each person brings something to their team. When they start playing *The Game*, it is clear that some people bring more to the table than others and this book was a little frustrating for me because the person who is dead weight on the team is THE PROTAGONIST. Seriously, we have a chemist, a farmer, someone medically trained, a historian, someone that knows karate, etc. And Lisse? Useless. (view spoiler) She keeps getting injured, sick, crying, and generally holding her team back.

This book is pretty interesting in that it shoves political theory into the minds of young adults. There were undertones of rebellion, questionings of authority, and at least a few discussions of the organization of society. The author really packs it all into 182 pages--it's like a clown car--but I didn't mind as I became invested in the story. In fact, I thought it was a great misdirection method--I couldn't wait to find out what *The Game* really was and what it had to do with the organization of this society! (view spoiler)

If you really want to know what *The Game* is about, I'll tell you: (view spoiler)

I don't regret buying this one, nor do I regret reading it. The writing style (especially the dialogue) were

annoying at points because the characters (who were basically cardboard, let's not kid ourselves here) had simplistic conversations and then they went to a club where the author said a Pierrot approached them. Now, I had an idea of what a Pierrot was, but I had to look it up to confirm my suspicion. Who the hell is the audience for this book? In most respects, I feel like it is middle readers, but every once in a while it felt like a teen book. I am clueless who I'd recommend this book to amongst my friends, but it was worthwhile.

N.T. Embe says

This book, is absolutely a fantastic read! The writing style is so easy and clear that you flow right through the book and are sucked into it before you even know it! Everything runs so smoothly! It's amazing how well Monica Hughes makes this book run, and I have only the highest compliments for her. It's a short book as well! Under two hundred pages which makes it an even easier task to go through swiftly, but the pace is never rushed, even though you can read it within a few hours if you're a fast reader or even not so quick! On top of that, Monica Hughes has a GREAT talent for bringing you right into the situation. The book and its characters are IMMENSELY relate-able. The situation is twisted of course to match the future year, yet even though this book is categorized as Science Fiction, there are only a few mild elements to it that really brings about that feel, which makes it not wholly an alien landscape. You have the school they go to, you have the idea of being assigned jobs by the government, and then the concept of being dictated where to live. It all has a very Dystopian air about it, which is probably the stronger of the two elements in the book. But it mingles it so very well that you don't even pay much attention to either. They serve as only the mild sparks of the unusual that make this book a really interesting read! Plus, even with these elements, the book never strays too far from the impossible, even at the surprise twist towards the end! (Don't worry. This review will remain Spoiler Free, I promise.)

The story is set in the future, during a time period where almost every job has been replaced by robots. Not too unusual a scenario, but even if this makes it familiar, it also makes it easy to relate to. When a batch of kids fresh from high school end up as the Permanently Unemployed, you're sitting right there thinking, "Well great! We get to stay in one place, with this amount of money, for the REST of our BORING lives! Wonderful!" It's enough to play on the emotions of any self-respecting individual! And then, (Warning, corny line coming up) everything changes when they get introduced to The Game. Since that itself is a spoiler, I won't tell you what it is. *Smiles* However! It's enough to get these kids crazy involved with it, since heck! ANYTHING is better than this slum life they're FORCED to live because the entire Government has them in lock-down until they DIE. You get this enormous sense of the unfairness of this corrupt, slowly degrading world, and you feel even worse because you know that there's not a stinking thing you can do about it. It brings about a vivid feeling of imprisonment in not just these kids, freshly raised with all this knowledge! And now no where to use it...but in the reader as well.

And speaking of the kids! These characters are AWESOME. They're so smart and they work so well together, and even when they have fights and disagreements, you GET what they're going through, because you would probably feel the same way if you were in their shoes! Plus, the main character, Lisse? She's awesome. She comes off as such a quiet type, but she has her moments of speaking out and stating her thoughts aloud (as well as in narrative, which is really great to read) and mingling them with those of her friends. What Monica does is takes all these different people and uses them to create every single side of the argument possible, and you feel so easily bounced back from one to the other that you don't even mind when you're not quite sure who's speaking, because what they say makes so much SENSE. It's a book that plays on your emotions more than anything, and it's a *great* ride. Because it's also fun! You've got a lot of seriousness in it, but the bond of this band of teenagers is so tight that everything you go through feels...well, normal!

And not in the boring normal way either, but in the way that makes you feel like you're right in there with them, going through the same things they are. It's a great way of being carried along in the story, and I know that if you don't agree with one of the characters, you'll find yourself echoing the thoughts and words of one of the others. That's what Lisse's job is throughout the book. She's the one that we get to relate to, and who sets the scene for us. It's because of her that our emotions begin to fuse with those of the people around us in the story, since we're seeing it from Lisse's point of view. And that's the key to *really* enjoying this book! Because we get to know Lisse's thoughts, it evokes in us a lot of corresponding ideas until we're just as deep in as the rest of them.

Plus, this book's got that GREAT twist at the end. Considering it's such an EASY book to fall into, and it really does carry that sense of normality and relate-ability to it, when you get thrown for that big loop at the end, you're just as stunned as the rest of them. In my opinion, that's what makes this such a great and really fun book to read! You know it's Sci-Fi and Dystopian, but you forget all that in the fact that it's also really, really, *really* personal! Monica Hughes herself said it in the book! It's about the subtlety of the story. You get so drawn in, you can conceive of the situation they're in with the government and living situations, because it's something that CAN happen to OUR world and US. And because of that, when you DO get the twist at the end, you're shocked! Because after everything being so easy to relate to, you've suddenly been thrown a curve ball you couldn't have seen coming if you were as involved with the characters and their thoughts as I was! And sure, you probably could figure it out, but that's not the magic of this book. Its true wonder is revealed when you give up your own thoughts and just get captured in the book itself, in the characters and in their thoughts and arguments. When you flow right along with them, when you go through their troubles and their attempts to survive and learn, you get so into their situation that the ending *does* take you by surprise and it's AWESOME for it!

This is truly a great story. Simple and fun, easy to read and filled with enjoyable, intelligent characters of all kinds! It's the kind of story you like to pick up and read because it's just a blast to be taken along for the ride! I would recommend this story definitely for the Sci-Fi minded Dystopian lovers. It's not top-full of one over the other, but it's a great story to read just for enjoyment's sake! And it's so *easy* to read and enjoy that I don't see why anyone shouldn't read it! Go on and have some fun! It's worth the trip if you're willing to let loose and let the story take you. Try it out! I hope you'll be amazed! Maybe that's just the child in me though? It's definitely not over-complex, and it's also a typical middle-school book I'd say. But there's nothing wrong with enjoying a simple read for the sake of enjoyment itself. *Smiles* I think if you have an open mind, and read this book seeking to enjoy it, you will. And that's a good enough reason to pick it up and try!

Mindi Mallia says

This is the first book in a really long time that I haven't been thrilled with. I picked this up while browsing through the store one day and thought it looked interesting. The book is really short, I assumed it would be a quick and easy read. Realistically it would have been, but it took me forever to get through because I just wasn't interested in it. The only part that I was mildly interested in was the last 40 pages or so, and only because the twist was so far out of left field that I read closer to see if I could pick up on what I had missed earlier. A few other issues that I had with it were the big periods of time missing between chapters. I get that it was necessary to move the story along, but it just seemed disjointed. There are also a ton of characters and I felt like it was difficult to keep them all sorted in my head, and harder still to form any real attachment to any of them but a few. Even the main character wasn't all that interesting.

I'm making it sound like I hated the book, and that's not true, I really didn't. It's just that I tend to care about

the books that I read and what happens. I feel like everyone could have died in the end of this book and I couldn't have batted an eyelash. It was just one of those books whose plot and characters didn't connect with me, and if I can't connect with the characters then their story isn't that important to me. I don't know, maybe I need a bit more time to process it, but I'm kind of relieved to be done with it just so I don't have to spend any more time convincing myself to finish it already.
