



A World Below

Wesley King

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A class field trips turns into an underground quest for survival.

Mr. Baker's eighth grade class thought they were in for a normal field trip to Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico. But when an earthquake hits, their field trip takes a terrifying turn. The students are plunged into an underground lake...and their teacher goes missing.

They have no choice but to try and make their way back above ground, even though no one can agree on the best course of action. The darkness brings out everyone's true self. Supplies dwindle and tensions mount. Pretty and popular Silvia does everything she can to hide her panic attacks, even as she tries to step up and be a leader. But the longer she's underground, the more frequent and debilitating they become. Meanwhile, Eric has always been a social no one, preferring to sit at the back of the class and spend evenings alone. Now, he finds himself separated from his class, totally by himself underground. That is, until he meets an unexpected stranger.

Told from three different points of view, this fast-paced adventure novel explores how group dynamics change under dire circumstances. Do the students of Mr. Baker's class really know each other at all? Or do they just think they do? It turns out, it's hard to hide in the dark.

A World Below Details

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From Reader Review *A World Below* for online ebook

Angie says

Mr. Baker's 8th grade class is headed to Carlsbad Caverns for a field trip. Some of the students are more enthusiastic than others about the trip. Eric isn't thrilled that his mom is the chaperone. Silvia has panic attacks and is worried about one coming on when they are underground. They are exploring deep in the cave system when an earthquake hits. Mr. Baker is swept away and the rest of the class falls into an underground river. Eric is able to get to shore, but the rest end up at a huge lake. As they try to find each other and the way out, they discover they are not alone.

Carlos is the young king of Medianoche and his struggling to live up to his father's teachings. The people of Medianoche have lived underground for four generations. Their enemies, the Worms, led by Jana, have increased their attacks and tensions are high. The arrival of surface dwellers has thrown everyone into a tizzy. When Carlos meets up with the survivors he has to make a choice.

This was an excellent adventure. It was fast-paced and exciting and I didn't want to put it down. I wasn't sure how I was going to feel about the Medianoche storyline, but it worked. Eric was wonderfully resourceful and I enjoyed the fact that he learned the difference between being alone and being lonely. Silvia's story was perhaps my favorite. She was the true hero of this story. In fact she saved the lives of two of her classmates. She became the leader of the group even though she was terrified.

Yolanda Ridge says

I entered the Goodreads giveaway for this book because I **LOVED** *OCDaniel*. Unfortunately, *A World Below* is not my kind of book. I like adventure but not fantasy and I found the story line about the underground colony far fetched. (The blurb makes the book sound contemporary - it's not.) Because there were so many characters, none are very well developed. And because there were so many cliff hanger chapter endings, where you think they are going to be attacked by some horrible creature and never survive, I stopped being surprised when they survive yet another unbelievable obstacle. The ending implies a sequel but I hope King does another book more like *OCDaniel*.

Kison says

A World Below is about an class going on a graduation trip but it goes terribly wrong. The main Characters in *A World Below* are Eric, Silvia and Carlos (The Midnight King). What happens in the was when the class was in the cave there was an earthquake which made the floor beneath give up and they fall into an underground lake. When that happens the class splits up in three different ways. Eric gets separated by himself, Mr Baker (the class teacher) gets separated by himself and Silvia and the rest of the class are together. Soon after Eric travels around the underground caves he finds a Carlos who lived in the ground his whole life. Him and his people have lived underground for over a century in a place called the Midnight Realm. Eric tells Carlos what happened and Carlos helps him finds his Classmates. Meanwhile Silvia and the class find Jana and her group of friends who are outcasts of The Midnight Realm and who are at civil war with the Midnight Realm because they executed Jana's father. Jana tell the class the way to get out of ground

but she tells them the direction to the Midnight Realm. The reason she told them that was the villagers of the Midnight realm would kill the class in an instant. So Carlos Had to find his classmates before it was too late. At the end Eric finds his classmates and gets out of the underground and Jana and Carlos are at peace.

My overall opinion in of A World Below is that it is an interesting and a fast paced book. It also talks about animals and biology which made me more interested in the book then I already was about the book. For example there were big spiders (almost the size of an average 13 year old) which almost killed Silvia but they escaped by harming the spider which captured Silvia and running away and the characters in the book were talking about nature and how Moss only grow on the north side of trees . One part I disliked very highly was the beginning. The reason for that was the author talked about the midnight realm out of nowhere and the next chapter he talked about Eric's classroom which got me confused and that was the reason why I disliked the beginning. Overall this is the book is a great book and I would recommend to my peers and everyone else.

Troy says

Pretty good but a bit heavy-handed on the "everyone has issues to work out and you should not be too hard on yourself" message. On the other hand, not bad stealth therapy if you need it.

Audrey says

After a group of teens fall into a cavernous world with all sorts of deadly creatures, their definitions of strength, leadership, and weakness will change. They learn to work together to get back to the surface and make alliances with "others" they never dreamed existed. Imaginative and fun.

Sam says

3.5

Thank you to Simon & Schuster Canada for this ARC!

I have heard a great deal from children I've talked to regarding how much they love Wesley King's books. I can totally see why, too! *A World Below* was my first introduction to King's works, and while I wasn't in love with this book, I like it and I see the appeal as to why kids would enjoy it as well.

A World Below focuses on a teacher who takes his class to the Carlsbad Caverns. Our main protagonists, Eric and Silvia, are not entirely keen on this trip, and they worry Mr. Baker's enthusiasm is not entirely warranted. They soon learn that there is a world below the caverns, after an earthquake separates the kids from their teacher. Shenanigans ensue, and we are given a story that is fast paced and full of adventure.

I want to stress that this is a very plot heavy middle grade novel, which sometimes I find a bit difficult because I am very drawn to more character driven stories. This book is not that, as it's larger focus is

definitely on the adventure regarding the kids trying to navigate their way through Carlsbad Caverns. If anything, reading this book reminded me a lot of the 80's classic, *The Goonies*, which I don't know if that was intentional or not, but that was what I was envisioning as I read the novel.

The kids felt a little too interchangeable for me, and I think that was where my struggle came with the novel. I wanted a bit more distinction in terms of personality, and I didn't entirely feel that way. However, I think the maps and exploration aspects of the story were fabulous, and I think I would have adored this book growing up given it plays to a readers sense of wonder and desire to have answers regarding a situation. There's also a playfulness in the writing that is utterly delightful as well!

I enjoyed my time with *A World Below*, but perhaps it wasn't the best starting point for me regarding Wesley King's works. I think this is going to be a novel that younger readers will absolutely gobble up and heighten their sense of exploration. Definitely worth checking out if you're a fan of *The Goonies*, though!

Agnes Marshall says

Sooooo good!

Jessica Van Tassell says

This was not what I expected. I was looking forward to a straight survival story, so when this had elements of fantasy I was not prepared for that. I finished the book so it was still somewhat engaging but had too many types of plots running at once.

Stephanie says

Wonderful read, a great addition to anyone's personal library.

Thank you for choosing me to receive a free copy via Goodreads giveaways.

Colline Vinay Kook-Chun says

This tale is a fast-paced adventure story that will encourage reluctant readers to turn the pages to find out what happens. As I reached the end of each chapter, I could not put the book down. The writing is simple and easy to read, yet the content will cause you to flip the pages quickly. I recommend this read for any middle school child who enjoys reading adventure stories. It will enthrall, the dynamics between the children will be believable, and the outcome will be greeted with satisfaction.

JoAnne Richards says

I really enjoyed this adventure into the caves below and all of the challenges and creatures that the students encounter. It's fast paced and almost leaves you breathless. The two main characters have emotional problems. Self-worth and panic attacks. And of course none of their classmates know anything about their personal struggles. Both of these characters grow through the challenges they meet and become the unlikely leaders. A perfect classroom read aloud (Gr 6 to 8) to have an adventure, but to also open the doors of discussion to emotional and mental health problems.

Keitha says

A great adventure/survival story with lots of cliff hangers at the end of chapters.

Niki says

I've got to set this one aside. I'm not sure if it is my headspace right now, but it wasn't doing it for me. (I kept choosing to do other things rather than read, which for me is a sure sign it isn't working for me right now.)
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Megan says

This is a great young adult adventure story. It is fantastical enough for fantasy fans but doesn't ever go too far into that world for fans of real life adventure.

Ms. Yingling says

E ARC from Edelweiss Plus

Eric finds school tiring and a bit dull, and he tries to be as undetectable as possible. When Mr. Baker, his Able and Talented teacher, tells his class that they are going on a graduation field trip to Carlsbad Caverns, he's okay with it, although he wishes his mother weren't chaperoning. Silvia is also lukewarm about the trip, since previous eighth graders had stayed in hotels and eaten in fancy restaurants. Still, Mr. Baker's goofy enthusiasm makes the trip okay, and the group arrives for their short stay in the caves armed with flashlights and snacks. When an earthquake swallows Mr. Baker and washes the students further into the cave, things become dire. Eric's mother had just headed out of the cave to set up snacks, so she is very panicked. Eric is separated from the group, but Silvia, despite her history of anxiety, manages to rally the group, provide help, and lead them on a path hopefully out of the cave. Unbeknownst to the students, there is a civilization living

deeper in the caves, called Medianoche. There are two warring factions, one headed by Carlos, a young king, and the other by Jana, who leads a group of people who have been ostracized by the main community. Carlos worries that the earth quake is punishment for his failure to condemn two of Jana's people to death. When Carlos finds Eric, he wants to help him leave the cave (which is rife with killer spiders, beetles, and experiencing aftershocks of the earthquake!), but also find his friends before Jana does. Supplies run short, flashlight batteries run out, and there is danger at every turn. Will the students ever get to the surface, and what will happen to the civilization below ground once they do?

Strengths: This started off with a brief note saying that all of the students on the field trip should be considered deceased! That got my attention. The introduction of Carlos' world almost lost me, but was brief enough, and I was intrigued by Eric's attitude towards school and his isolation. The story about his father's departure added a nice bit of character development, as did Silvia's problems with anxiety, and it was great to see how well she coped. The details of all of the dangers underground were what will make this an easy sell to students, and the twist at the end involving the reasons that Carlos' people were underground was clever. I loved Mr. Baker!

Weaknesses: I wasn't thrilled about the somewhat fantastical element of Carlos and his people living underground, but it is a testament to the quality of King's writing that he makes it work. Also, I still think there would have been another bus driver, even if Mr. Baker had his bus driving license! (But again, King thought this through!)

What I really think: Definitely purchasing! We are going to say this is fantasy because of the underground civilization and the giant killer bugs.
