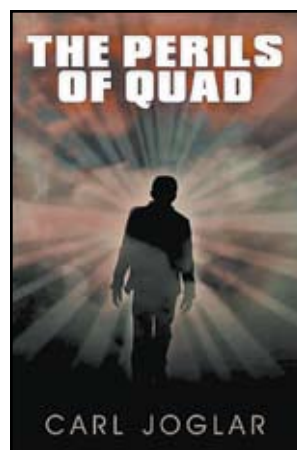


Two reads to keep kids busy this summer

AS SCHOOL IS winding down and summer vacation approaches, most parents out there (especially of boys) are looking for summer reading to chase away the summer doldrums and keep reading skills up to par while school is out. This week's column features two titles by authors who are making a first-time appearance in this column and are riding the current popularity wave of out-of-this-world fantasy. Both deal with some form of multiple worlds, and both have sequels in the works.



**“The Perils of Quad”
by Carl Joglar
(iUniverse, 2009, \$17.95)**

Carl Joglar recently moved from New York to Utah. No newcomer to writing, he is a first-time novelist and his debut book promises the kind of action young boys seem to thrive on.

This book is probably for the 9- to 15-year-old, since the protagonist is young enough to be in foster care but old enough to be interested in girls. My one reservation about Joglar's writing is a couple of language gaffs that may not be age-appropriate; however, I do plan to use this book with

my 10-year-old grandson this summer to pique his interest in reading. The storyline is interesting and easy to follow, there are enough twists and turns to keep the reader guessing and the “transformer” nature of the characters are sure to be a hit with this age group.

Sixteen-year-old superhero comic fan Bodi Hawks is hav-

ing a tough time in school and in foster care. His habit of disappearing without explanation has caused him to be branded a liar and a troublemaker who is frequently moved from family to family. After his most recent disappearance, his social worker tells him this is his last chance: Follow the rules or juvenile detention is his next stop. What Bodi isn't telling his case worker, foster families or teachers is that he is having blackout spells. He can be sitting in class one moment and the next thing he knows he is waking up in someone's garage or other strange, unexplainable place.

As Bodi tries to get to the bottom of these mystifying and unpredictable episodes, he meets the disheveled and reclusive professor Artemus Hill, who has been working for years on a theory of multiple but parallel universes — several realms or levels of existence where every person in Earth Level 1 has a counterpart in the other nine or so realms. As Bodi discovers his “altiversions,” he begins to



Regional Reads

By Charlene Hirschi

understand his blackouts and the superpowers that are his through an unusual parentage. But having the powers and learning to use or control them are two different matters.

“A pillar of smoke rose where Bodi had once stood, glimmering ash ... Then Phoenix saw something that wasn't Bodi. As the glowing smoke cleared and the figure stepped forward, it revealed a towering humanoid. It was made up mostly of smooth metal. Its chrome-like body was constructed, molded into a human torso, with legs, arms, hands and feet, all connected by intricately hinged joints. Only the head was partly robotic. When its face lifted, the robotic side's eye glowed red. But the other side was what really shocked her. The other side was Bodi's face — his hair, his eye.”

As Bodi tries to save the world from the wicked and unscrupulous Dr. Maddox, he, Dr. Hill and his friend Phoenix find themselves in many dangerous situations in the multiple worlds they visit, where they learn that only Bodi, the fabled “Quadrate,” or Quad, can save the universes from complete destruction. And just as everything finally seems under control, Joglar has one



more twist for us that makes for a surprise ending.

**“The 13th Reality:
The Hunt for Dark Infinity”
by James Dashner (Shadow Mountain, 2009, \$18.95)**

This is the second in this series of books and it would be wise to point out that the author received glowing praise from many reputable sources for the first book, “The Journal of Curious Letters.” The writing is sophisticated and will probably appeal to a wide range of teens and young adults, even though the protagonists, Tick, Paul and Sofia, are 13. However, they might find the storyline a bit hard to follow since the adventures the three young people encounter appear to happen for no apparent reason — no logical outcomes — just jumping from one realm, or “reality” as Dashner calls them, to another without reason for being there in the first place or providing any type of solution other than escaping imminent danger. However, judging from other books I've reviewed of this nature, that seems to bother this reviewer more than it actually does the audience the books are intended for.

Again, we have young heroes and heroines dealing with several realms of existence and trying to untangle a series of mysteries that “Master George” has called upon them to resolve.

Among those who experience identity problems is the kindly but troubled Mr. Chu, Tick's science teacher in the first reality. Unbeknownst to this Mr. Chu, his alter ego, Reginald Chu, has diabolical plans that include both him and Tick.

The evil Chu “reflected on the plan he'd set into place once the information had poured in from his network of spies in other Realities. They brought news of intriguing developments with massive potential consequences — especially the bit about the boy named Atticus (Tick) Higginbottom. If Reginald was not the most supreme example of rational intelligence ever embodied in a human being — and he most certainly was — he would have doubted the truth of what he'd heard. ... Tales of magic and power, of an unspeakable ability in the manipulation of the most central force in the universe.” The reader can almost hear the cackle as the wicked and power-hungry Chu weaves his diabolical plan to use Tick and his friends to uncover the force that will give him the ultimate power he wants.

There is a large cast of supporting characters, so large in fact that Dashner provides “A Glossary of People, Places, and All Things Important” in the back of the book, which is helpful in sorting things out. He also provides discussion questions, which makes this a good candidate for a family read-around. There are several interesting ethical and moral issues to be addressed in a family setting.

Book critic Charlene Hirschi holds her master's in English from Utah State University. She is among a number of freelance writers whose columns appear in The Herald Journal as part of an effort to expose readers to a variety of community voices. Authors, readers and editors are invited to visit www.charlenehirschi.com.

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