

After reading an extract of *Teen, Inc.* on the Allen and Unwin website, I was hooked and was inspired to purchase a copy for the library. The clever yet light-hearted plot revolves around 14-year-old Jaiden Beale who has been raised by a corporation. Although this highly improbably scenario seems a little hard to believe, the author weaves enough authenticity around it to get his main messages across. The text reads like a movie, with lots of dialogue, witty banter and fast-paced action and yet there is much to ponder about the underlying themes. The book has a lot to say about corporations and public responsibility as well as friendship and individual responsibility.

When Jaiden finds that the company that has been his family for almost his entire life has been polluting the environment and covering up the fact, he decides to take action. Along the way, he is faced with the situation of being a seemingly powerless teenager. With help from friends and a little light romance, the plot races along to a tense and pacy climax and all is resolved satisfactorily. Jaiden and his small circle of friends are likeable characters with all the usual teen concerns. There are a few good guys along the way, including Jaiden's straight-laced manager, 'or rather, the head of the department that managed me', Nancy and short-order cook, Ben. The 'suits' are suitably stuffy and corporate enough to be unlikeable.

I am hoping to recommend *Teen, Inc.* to my school as a novel set. It is an easy read and there is plenty to discuss. The author appears to have connected to the lifestyle of the average American teenager and this should make the book appealing to Australian students in grades 7-10. I think I would place it in Grade 8 or 9 as an English novel, not because of the complexity of language but rather because of the complexity of the questions it has the potential to raise. All in all I think it is an enjoyable book and I feel that many adolescents will enjoy reading it for pleasure.

Kimbra Weeks, New Town High School, TAS

I don't know what it is about writing a book review about a book you thoroughly enjoyed. Maybe it's something about failing to adequately present its true worth. I was hooked, I was grabbed, I was on the journey.

As an English teacher, I find there are so many books that are good and well written, but many tend also to be very similar to others I have read. That's always a concern when my job is to encourage more children to read and to be as excited about books as I am. This book did it for me. It is quirky, fast paced, funny and fun. It will grab the modern reader by the arm and drag them in. It has it all - which reminds me of the line in *The Princess Bride*, "Passion. Duels. Miracles. Giants. True love" - but in a modern context. Perhaps with our current financial status and the media so caught up in big business this has opened the audience even further. Students in Years 8 and 9 would find the characters and the plot very appealing and find true connection to them.

This book, without giving away the very exciting ending, has a very believable main character, Jaiden Beale, who is controlled by the ins and outs of a mega corporation. They have board meetings to discuss his future - whether he can go to the local school or not, and whether he can date particular girls. I loved it.

Its appeal lies with boys and girls, as it is about a typical teenager (other than the corporation) who wants friends, love and normality. The voice of the main character effectively captures the idiom of teenagers today, along with their desire for rebellion and need to fit in. This novel deals, in an interesting way, with environmental consciousness and relationships, both personal and corporate.

Jaiden's message at the end of the novel resonates effectively to the reader:

"Maybe there is no normal"

Boy do I feel better now!!!!!!

Regina Forrester, Wyndham College, NSW

Teen, Inc. opens with the observations of a fourteen year old boy on his life. The author has captured the voice of the fourteen year old very well, and his musings on the world around him are quite entertaining. After a short time, though, it becomes obvious that Jaiden's life is not quite that of a normal fourteen year old. Jaiden was adopted by the corporation, the corporation who manufactured the faulty part that killed his parents and left him an orphan. Raised by a series of managers, Jaiden's life is discussed in meetings and planned with corporate strategy. Attending a 'real' school where his identity is hidden is the only normal part of Jaiden's life. When he meets Jenny, Jaiden realises that his parent company might not be as environmentally friendly as he has believed, and that it may in fact be involved in a cover-up. He has a decision to make, whether to investigate and face the forces that are suddenly against him, or go on living his privileged life and ignore what might be going on.

I thought this book was very enjoyable, and it took quite a different approach to the usual problems of growing up. Jaiden was genuinely amusing at times and his beliefs, observations as well as his occasional humiliation at the hands of the Company seemed believable and could easily be related to. The people Jaiden interacts with are fleshed out and interesting.

I could see this novel fitting into the curriculum at Year 7 or 8. It would allow the discussion of identity, belonging and family and also offers an accessible and different way to introduce environmental concerns and studies. It was an enjoyable read and an original spin on things.

Anne Sim, Dromana Secondary College, VIC

This was a really good book. I really enjoyed reading the story of Jaiden, the boy brought up by a Corporation.

It is told in the first person, and Jaiden Beale is an extraordinary teenager. Not only does he have the normal teenage life to deal with, but due to circumstance when he was only days old, has never felt the nurture of a real family – just office managers, committees and a Corporation, NECorp. He has always felt that this was how it was – normal.

That was until he met Jenny, a fellow high school student who studied Biology with him. They were partnered up to do an assignment together, much to Jaiden's relief, but then panic settled in when Jenny suggested to go to his 'house'.

With the help of his manager, Nancy, he was able to acquire the usage of one of the Corporations houses. All was going really well until the team of Lawyers burst in and demanded that Jenny sign all sorts of legal papers.

As it turned out, Jenny's father was the head of an environmental company, trying to stop NECorp from poisoning the water supply with high levels of Mercury.

Who does Jaiden defend – his only known 'family', or his new friends.

This book is suitable for Lower Secondary readers up. A great read.

Pauline Dunn, Mountain District Christian School, VIC

Teen, Inc., written by Stefan Petrucha, is a book that you can not put down. The story is about Jaiden and how his parents are an organisation. Jaiden not only has to deal with the problem of going to school he also has to keep the secret that he does not have any parents and that his guardian is an organisation. Jaiden also has his life scheduled by a team of managers and business people all guided by Nancy; they tell him what to do and when to do it. And if high school was not bad enough they even tell him when to date and the people that he can choose from to date.

With this keeping you on the edge of your seat you fall off it when the company is taken over by a person that does not care about the environment and starts dumping dangerous chemicals into the river. With the help of his friends Jaiden has to stop this person before he goes too far, and save the environment and Jaiden's social life. This is a well written book with a great story line. I would recommend this to anyone going through high school.

William Knight, VIC