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<div align="center">The Cost of Escapism: Why the OASIS Should Remain Fiction</div>

In today's world, where technology is advancing rapidly, the idea of a fully immersive virtual universe like the OASIS from *Ready Player One* is both captivating and concerning. In Ernest Cline's *Ready Player One*, people escape their grim, deteriorating reality by diving into a massive virtual world called the OASIS. While this digital universe offers a place for entertainment, learning, and connection, it raises critical questions about the effects of using a virtual world to escape from the problems of real life. The theme of escapism runs deep in the novel, showing both the positive and negative aspects of living in a world that is not real. While the OASIS provided countless possibilities from gaming and education to socializing, it is ultimately just a distraction, offering temporary relief from the hardships people face in the real world. Even though the OASIS might seem perfect at first, the consequences of spending too much time in a digital escape are extensive.

To begin, programmers should not create a real-life version of the OASIS because it would lead to severe addiction. In *Ready Player One*, users often get so caught up in the OASIS that they neglect their real-world responsibilities. Wade Watts, the protagonist, even says, "I don't need food or sleep or sunlight or anything when I'm logged into the OASIS" (Cline 42). This kind of immersion can easily lead to addiction, where people prioritize the digital world over taking care of their bodies and fulfilling responsibilities in the real world. The consequences of addiction to the OASIS are not just individual; they can have societal effects as well.  If the

OASIS were created in real life, addiction would likely become a much bigger problem. People would lose themselves in a world that feels perfect and escape their daily struggles, but at the cost of their physical health and mental well-being. Wade's addiction is not unique; his friend Aech also spends almost all her time in the OASIS, trying to avoid facing the harsh realities of life. The OASIS offers the perfect escape from a society that feels hopeless, but this creates a dangerous cycle where people prioritize a digital life over everything else. This addiction would have serious consequences, not just for individuals, but for entire societies, as it could lead to a decline in social and economic systems. The immersive nature of a real-life OASIS could make people more vulnerable to this kind of addiction, ultimately diminishing their ability to live healthy, fulfilling lives in the real world.

Moreover, programmers should not develop a real-life OASIS because it would increase social isolation. The OASIS allows users to interact with each other through avatars, but these interactions are artificial and detached from real-world relationships. Wade's relationship with Art3mis, for example, is built entirely through their avatars and messages, which creates a distance between them. Art3mis even calls out the virtual nature of their connection, telling Wade, "You don't live in the real world, Z. From what you've told me, I don't think you've ever have. You're like me. You live inside this illusion" (Cline 186). While their relationship in the OASIS feels real in the moment, it is not the same as connecting face to face, and it is not a substitute for real human interaction. Spending too much time in the OASIS could cause people to lose touch with the people around them in the real world, leading to emotional detachment and loneliness. Art3mis points out the limitations of this virtual world, suggesting that it is impossible to experience real love or deep connection when they're filtered through a digital medium. And Wade is not the only one who struggles with loneliness, Shoto, another character,

feels isolated despite being constantly surrounded by people in the OASIS. This shows that, even though the virtual world offers a sense of community, it is not the same as true connection. The more time people spend in a virtual world, the more likely they are to distance themselves from real-world relationships, making them more isolated and less able to build the kind of deep and meaningful relationships that come from face-to-face interactions. If the OASIS were developed in the real world, this social isolation would likely increase, leaving people more disconnected from the world around them.

Lastly, programmers should not create a real-life OASIS because it would open the door for corporate exploitation. In *Ready Player One,* the IOI (Innovative Online Industries) is a corporation that seeks to gain control of the OASIS to profit from its vast user base. Wade describes the IOI's intentions, stating, "The IOI wasn't interested in helping people. They were interested in controlling the OASIS and exploiting it for profit" (Cline 291). The IOI sees the OASIS as an opportunity to manipulate users and generate immense wealth by exploiting their time and date. This desire for control reflects real-world corporate practices, where companies mine user data for targeted advertisements and push profits above ethical concerns.  If the OASIS were created in the real world, it is likely that similar powerful corporations would attempt to take control, using users' personal information and in-game behavior to sell targeted advertisements or push transactions, further draining people's money. This kind of manipulation already exists today in various digital platforms, where users are constantly bombarded with ads. In the novel, the IOI's methods are exploitative, they force people to work for them in the OASIS through jobs that are dangerous and low-paying. They even use "debt slaves" to carry out menial tasks. A real-world OASIS could easily become a platform where corporations control user access and behavior, further deepening the inequality between the rich and the poor. This

exploitation could create a system where only those who can afford better equipment or subscriptions have access to the full benefits of the OASIS, while others are left at a disadvantage. With corporations running the system for profit, the OASIS could evolve into a tool for manipulation, surveillance, and control, leaving users at the mercy of large corporations that prioritize wealth over their well-being.

The OASIS, while an appealing idea, would bring major problems in the form of addiction, social isolation, and exploitation. As discussed, creating such a virtual world would likely lead to users becoming trapped in unhealthy cycles of addiction, neglecting their real-world responsibilities. It would also encourage social isolation, detaching people from their meaningful, face-to-face relationships, while fostering loneliness and emotional detachment. Moreover, the control of the OASIS by large corporations, such as the IOI in the novel, would only lead to increased exploitation, further deepening the inequality in society and placing users at the mercy of corporate interests. Instead of creating a real-world OASIS, programmers should focus on developing technology that enhances the real world, encourages genuine human connections, and addresses the real challenges people face. The OASIS serves as a cautionary tale, a reminder of the dangers of escaping into a digital world that could ultimately harm us more than it helps. For the sake of humanity's well-being, the OASIS should remain a fictional dream.

Works Cited

Cline, Ernest. *Ready Player One*. Crown, 2011.