



# The Doom Machine

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Bestselling writer/illustrator Mark Teague presents a witty, vivid novel about Jack and Isadora, two kids who discover a spaceship and are taken aboard by aliens who plan to take over the Earth!

When a spaceship lands in Vern Hollow, Jack's hometown, he and his no-account inventor-uncle Bud are busy trying to fix a car driven by Dr. Shumway and her daughter, Isadora. Although Uncle Bud secretly knows the aliens are after one of his inventions, everyone is surprised when the space aliens capture seven of Vern Hollow's residents and take them into outer space on a wild adventure. . . . (more)

## The Doom Machine Details

Date : Published October 1st 2009 by The Blue Sky Press

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Author : Mark Teague , Scholastic Inc.

Format : Hardcover 376 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Young Adult, Adventure, Childrens, Middle Grade, Action

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# From Reader Review The Doom Machine for online ebook

## Alba Arango says

Jack Creedle, and the town of Vern Hollow, have been invaded by aliens. Well, not invaded per se, more like under the watchful eyes of creepy, giant spider aliens who are after Uncle Bud's invention—a refrigerator-looking machine that actually can create holes in space and time. But, when Jack, Uncle Bud, Isadora Shumway and her highly-respected scientist mother are kidnapped by the spider aliens, things really get crazy.

What I liked: GREAT characters! All the main characters are different with their own individual quirks and attitudes. The plot is solid and interesting enough (who doesn't love a group of hapless earthlings who have to save the Earth from alien invaders?).

What I didn't like: Teague writes the story from many points of view, and each time we shift from one to another, there's a scene break. Sometimes there's two scene breaks on one page. It got tiresome by chapter five. I appreciate trying to write the story from multiple points of view, but there are better ways to accomplish that. It was also unnecessarily long. 376 pages that could easily have been told in 250.

An okay read, but nothing spectacular.

3.5 out of 5 stars

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## Melissa McShane says

I had high hopes for this book; the premise is a clever take on the alien-abduction story, and though I was familiar with Mark Teague mainly as an illustrator of children's books, his collaborations have been good enough that I was willing to take a chance on this. Unfortunately, the concept isn't well supported by the execution. The third-person narrative veers between omniscient and limited in a way that comes across as awkward, as does the shifting POV, and some of the descriptions come across as too self-consciously clever. The pacing between sections is also irregular, as if Teague is rushing through one to get to another. I'm pretty sure this is intended to be a middle-grade novel, and the characterization bears this out; these are mostly stock characters, but with enough alterations that they don't seem like stereotypes (the smart science-kid is a black girl, the hero is tough and good-hearted, but also a redneck). On the other hand, some of the plot elements are harsh enough that they don't seem to fit. Example: the aliens are spider-like, carnivorous, and obsessed with food, and the human characters always have the threat of death hanging over them. That's all fine, but the alien captain is just a little \*too\* vicious and violent, the hero's Uncle Bud is maybe just a bit too selfish (the kind of selfish that gets other people killed)...it all seems just a little off to me. Ultimately, when I realized that I not only hadn't picked up the book for several days, but couldn't remember where I'd left it, I decided it was time to give it up.

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## Karen Williams says

Creative, engaging storytelling.

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### **ELLAM says**

Honestly, this book was garbage. The pacing was really slow during the beginning and middle, but then sped up by the end. The story kind of blurs by despite the excruciatingly slow pace. It was mentally taxing to read this. I felt real, physical pain when slogging through paragraph after paragraph. The story is cobbled together and the characters are flat and uninteresting. The plot sounds somewhat intriguing, but is executed terribly. Aliens taking over the world should be interesting. It felt more like I was slowly paging through a 1100 page novel about how “interesting” and “exciting” the world of snails is.

Only read this book if you hate yourself.

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### **Esther Keller says**

In 1958 Jack's little town is visited by aliens. While he tries to make a run of it with his uncle, and a mother and daughter who got stuck in town when their car broke down, they are kidnapped by the aliens and taken on an intergalactic adventure.

Too many characters, strange plot. I wasn't quite sure what to make of this. It was too long for the intended audience and just too strange. My biggest wonder: who's this book for?

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### **LauraW says**

Mostly action and weird happenings, this is a typical adventure book for upper elementary/middle school kids. It is enjoyable and the characters are interesting, but it lacks the depth that would make it more than just good entertainment.

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### **Trevor says**

Genre: Humor/Fiction

I thought that this book was bad. It jumped around a lot. At the beginning, it shows a town, out of nowhere (doesn't tell you the name either) and boom, one day a UFO came out of the sky and landed. Then all of the people left except 4 families. It was spread all across the news.

Next, it switches to some other people.

It was way too jumpy for me. It also did not have a lot of the five stanzas, and did not have much imagery. I would not read another book by this author any time soon, but if he improved his writing skills, then I would.

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## **Jeannie Mancini says**

### Teague Rockets into Outer Space for Kids

Published for ages 8-12, Mark Teague's Doom Machine novel is a Science Fiction outer-space story for all ages. I just loved this old-fashioned retro 1950's small town America story filled with humor, adventure, and science, accompanied with great black and white illustrations drawn by the author himself.

It's 1956 in a town called Vern Hollow, a Mayberry RFD kind of rural community with a delightful cast of characters. Our very young hero, Jack Creedle is a juvenile delinquent always crossing the line of obedience and is forever running from the law complete with hightop sneakers. However, he is also the best crackerjack auto mechanic in the county who can hotwire or rev up any vehicle made, with or without wheels. Jack's ornery sarcastic mom runs the town Inn, and Jack helps by earning his keep as a paperboy. Getting up at the crack of dawn each day to the crowing of his cranky old Rooster named Milo, Jack tosses the news from his bicycle onto every resident's porch before school.

Enroute to Boston, Isadora Shumway and her astrophysicist mother crawl into Vern Hollow in a limping old woody station wagon in need of dire repair. Finding it unusual that the only town monkey wrench is a child, and upset that the job will take a few days to fix, Isadora and Mrs. Shumway settle in to the Inn to wait until Jack can find auto parts to do the job.

One day as Jack is delivering the daily news, the sky is suddenly filled with a strange and eerie light. The town folk look up and see their very first authentic flying saucer. An alien soon appears on national television letting America know they are here, and they are real! Hell breaks loose in Vern Hollow and the US army comes to set up base in Jack's living room, informing him that there is an alien invasion and that the woods around the town are swarming with giant alien spiders called Skreeps. They have come from light-years away from a far galaxy, for a secret item. A mechanical invention that they know exists on earth and was created to help them with a most perplexing space travel problem.

The adventure soon begins as Jack's uncle Bud, who is a secret rocket scientist and brilliant inventor, is taken hostage along with Jack and the Shumways. The aliens find their device, built by Uncle Bud for an unknown Mr. X who promised to pay big if built correctly, and whisk them all up into outer space for the greatest sci-fi extravaganza for kids I've seen in years. Their new home is the flying saucer of wonders filled with ugly spiders manning the navigation across the universe. Zipping past stars, diving into black holes, flying without gravity inside time tunnels, are just some of the scary and exciting escapades Isadora and Jack experience as they finagle and escape from some pretty tight jams and death defying stunts. Their mission is to save Earth, and themselves by using Uncle Bud's Doom Machine to unravel the mysteries of space travel at the hands of some not so benevolent very big spiders!

I felt greatly entertained and was delighted with this fun story of an intergalactic journey to outer space. Two thumbs up, I look forward to another book by this author.

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## **Dawn says**

I wanted this to be a good sci-fi read, but I just couldn't get into it. The pictures and subject suggest a book for younger students but the language is fairly difficult.

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### **Karissa says**

I got a copy of this book through the Amazon Vine program. After reading the synopsis I was hooked, this sounded like a fantastic book. It was a great read. Very amusing and would appeal to children and adults alike.

It's 1956 and Jack Creedle is a trouble maker, but he's a trouble maker who is really good at fixing cars and trying to hold his own paper route. One morning while delivering papers he sees a flying saucer land in the forest. Little does Jack know the Skreeps have returned and they are here to collect a special item. Ironically the special item is something that Jack's uncle Bud built and it just happens to be a time machine of sorts. If the Skreeps get there..uh..legs on it, it could mean the end of Earth. When Isadora and her mother get stranded in Vern Hollow they are sucked into the adventure with Jack and Bud. It is an adventure that will take all of the participants literally out of this world to Skreepia and beyond.

If you want to compare this book to something I would say think of it as a 1950's sit-com version of Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy but suitable for all ages. This book is zany and crazy and full of intriguing characters. The characters are very interesting, the plot moves along at a great clip, and there is a lot of great humor. This is fun science fiction for kids (and adults) that has a bit of a pulp science fiction feel to it.

This book reminded me a lot of Philip Reeve's Larklight series too. It has that zany adventure through space feel to it. The book itself is very well put together and has some very nice sketches throughout that help readers to picture some of the more crazy creatures easier. This would be a great book to read to kids. The writing is easy to read and engaging. Teague does a great job creating a goofy but believable premise. The book wraps up nicely.

Overall I really enjoyed this book. I hope to see more books from Teague in the future. If you like Daniel Pinkwater, the Larklight series by Philip Reeve, or are looking for a kid-friendly version of the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy this is the book for you. Everyone should check out this zany space adventure.

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### **Michael Jandrok says**

It's 1956, and the small town of Vern Hollow is about to be the epicenter of an alien invasion. Newspaper boy Jack Creedle is out on his route one morning when he sees a flying saucer land in the forest. But the tale he tells is met with skepticism, as Jack has had a bit of prior trouble with telling the truth, a trait that seems to run in his immediate family. Joined by a new friend, the stranded Isadora Shumway, Jack begins to get to the bottom of the saucer mystery, only to realize that the UFO sighting is just the beginning of a grand interstellar adventure that will take him from one end of the galaxy to the next.

"The Doom Machine" is written with gentle humor and a fond affection for all of the traditional tropes of 1950's-era pulp science-fiction. The characters are well-developed, the dialogue is crisp, and the plot careens along from one adventure to the next, leaving the reader clamoring for the next chapter. Author and artist Mark Teague keeps things moving right along, spicing up the text along the way with dozens of black and

white illustrations depicting the action and scenery. The ending ties things up neatly, but leaves plenty of loose ends upon which to base a sequel.

Good job all around on this book. I'll admit that I have a personal fondness for this kind of pulp space-opera, but this book kind of transcended the genre in some ways. The story may be set in 1956, but the writing itself is fresh and lively, with just enough of a basis in hard science to keep the whole premise together. If you're like me and you can remember catching a few black and white sci-fi classics on Saturday afternoon TV, then this book is right up your alley. It might even be MORE up your alley if you dig on stuff like Andre Norton's "Sargasso of Space" or Robert Heinlein's "Have Space Suit, Will Travel".

One last thing, the hardback version book is beautifully bound and illustrated with high-quality paper. I'm impressed all the way around. If you have read a few of my previous reviews, then you know I am a sucker for a great physical presentation. Good job, Blue Sky Press!

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### **Hung Nguyen says**

"The Doom Machine" by Mark Teague is an amazing book that definitely deserve more recognition. This book was recommended and lended to me by a friend when I was clueless on which book to read for the IRP assignment. There is an old saying, "don't judge the book by its cover", sometime it's not true, because this book is astonishing from the cover to it plot. The cover was definitely different from what it was online. It have a plain black cover with the title "the doom machine" in red and normal font vertically in the middle of the black cover. The cover gave a mysterious vibe that is a perfect combination with the title. I would recommend this book to any individuals with the interest of fictional, mystery, a bit of humor, and creepy yet adventurous topic. Another recommendation would be who like movies such as The Maze Runner, Kong: Skull Island, and Race to Witch Mountain, because they provide similar story with a bit more creepy and less PG-13. In the beginning of the book, page 3 and 4, Mark Teague use the literary device that is foreshadowing when he describe Jack's knowledge on car and his understanding about Mr.Vandestar's problematic car. And then he mentioned that Jack was the one who done most of the engine work that was supposed to be done by his crooked uncle. It foreshadowing how he going to use his skills set to hotwire the spaceship. Another usage of literary device was third-person-omniscient point of view, unlike many other fiction books that the primarily focused is on the protagonist's thoughts and feelings. Mark Teague decision of using third-person-omniscient give this book a more diverse perspective. He gave the audience options for different characters by making them more understandable. It also help with the flow of the story as it made it easier to capture moments of the story. Multiple similes were used in the beginning of page 190 to compare the new environment that the group is in. More specifically, they are comparing the plants they witnessing to the what they've known. This is important because it shown the setting of the places they going through, and how Mark Teague is able to focus on such small details. It also help with the pace of the story at the moment, a slow pace after and before a tense scene. Mark Teague did an excellent job on this book like many others of his. I like "The Doom Machine" and would definitely recommend the book to anyone.

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### **H says**

Teague's book is good - funny and fast-paced and full of action - and I loved the design of it - the thick pages felt so good in the hand! But - - its so very thick that I'm a bit afraid that it will be a hard sell to most kids... That said, its a nice bit of funny science fiction and I think much more successful than the most comparable

book - Larklight (which I thought was entertaining but missed its market). The tone is just right with its fifties-era sci-fi movie setting, but if kids don't "get" the irony of the 50's setting, it's still entertaining. I particularly like that the main boy character is so thoroughly from the wrong side of the tracks, and isn't noble - he's a rascal and a hustler who never "reforms" - and that Teague never really stops the action to give a lecture about being a better or more noble person, etc. He gives kids plenty of credit to decide who is really good, who isn't, who deserves to be cheered on and who doesn't, and I really like that. I've always thought Teague is a smart writer/illustrator who manages to balance the line between providing moral lessons in his humorous fiction without smacking his readers in the head with it. This novel-debut makes me hope for more - but next time I hope he makes it shorter, so this librarian can really sell it to the kids!

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### **Madeline (The Bookish Mutant) says**

I loved it! It was that special kind of book that can pull off the sort of fast-paced, intergalactic, almost Star Wars-ish type of fun adventure. Lovelovelove. But the ending kinda had me hungry for a sequel...\*crosses fingers\*

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### **Reading is my Escape says**

Two kids must save the world...

Skreeps - 9 ft. tall alien spiders from the planet Skreepia. They land on Earth to obtain a "special item" from the ooman bings. They capture Jack, his Uncle Bud, Isadora, her mother (a scientist), and the town cop and his son. Uncle Bud has created a device that looks like a refrigerator but has the ability to create holes in space & time. The Skreeps want it so they can take over more planets, including Earth.

This story is aimed at kids ages 9-12. It is a bit scary because the Skreeps are huge spiders (and well...yuck). The Skreeps fight each other constantly and threaten the kids and their families. Isadora is a great character, smart, logical, and willing to do whatever it takes to test a theory. Jack is a juvenile delinquent who can fix any car, and it turns out spaceships too. I liked the way the two of them worked together and/or fought throughout the story. Isadora is always smarter and braver, but Jack is clever in his own ways.

There is a lot of talk about time and moving outside time and always being somewhere. It gets a little confusing, but I don't think the author expected his audience to understand it, just accept it. Some kids are good at that.

The Skreeps are constantly trying to prove themselves better than each other, and the constant bickering leads to some funny scenes. The story includes an evil queen, rebels, heroes, pirates, prophets and prophecies, surprising monsters, and enough twists and turns to delight any sci-fi fan.

Teague is very creative and has written a wonderfully entertaining story. The giant spiders (Skreeps) are seriously creepy at times and may be too much for sensitive readers.

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