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Juvenile Fiction

Lost in Lexicon
Pendred Noyce
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As they stand on the roof of Aunt Adelaide's barn, looking over a lake that flows into a mysterious new world, Daphne says to her cousin Ivan, "Don't you ever read any books? We go in, we have adventures, we come home. Maybe we find treasure." These intrepid explorers, despite their misgivings, are immediately at ease in the land of Lexicon—following in the footsteps of the child-heroes who went before them. In the literary tradition of *The Phantom Tollbooth* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Lost in Lexicon* will keep young readers flicking the pages to find out what happens next.

After a summer spent playing board games and cards at their librarian aunt's house, Daphne and Ivan are getting bored. They complain about not having a computer or video games, and in a fit of pique, Aunt Adelaide sends them out to the barn with two word clues. Following her instructions, the cousins venture into a game-world of words, math problems, and locust-like punctuation marks. They go through Radix and Merry Measure, across the Exponential Mountains to Brevity. *Lost in Lexicon* is transparently educational, with definitions and equations embedded in the story. The novel is a clear reaction to technology-dependent youth, and its fun, easy-to-follow story is as good a solution as any. Ivan and Daphne, despite their longing for text messages, jump headlong into Lexicon—as their aunt wished, they've found a better way to entertain themselves.

Unlike its predecessors, such as *The Magician's Nephew* and *The Number Devil*, *Lost in Lexicon* is a little too obvious for adults to enjoy as much as its target audience. Young adult readers who are already leery of reading may be drawn in by the video game-like pacing of the novel, and the 150 black and white illustrations that dot the pages. But the novel is unabashedly oriented towards learning, which may be a turn-off for readers who prefer pure adventure. The attraction of *Narnia*, after all, was its sense of being away from the expectations of grown-ups and school.

Nevertheless, this is an adventure story for the digital generation, and *Lost in Lexicon*

breaks new ground in the adventure genre. This rollicking, often tongue-in-cheek novel will appeal to young readers who need a break from their computer games and long to journey into the woods of learning.

Claire Rudy Foster