

Trachanoids: Defenders of the Earth

James J. Fitl

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In a dimension where dinosaurs and humans roam the Earth together, life is far from harmonious. Humans keep to themselves, avoiding dinosaurs and fighting them off when necessary. Dinosaurs keep to their own groups, and inter-species encounters are filled with bickering and name-calling in a struggle to survive. When a sudden attack on the Earth forces all of the inhabitants to work together to defend themselves and their planet, they learn about tolerance and the power of cooperation.

The aliens who invade Earth are called the Mugo, described as a fearsome “cross between wolves and crocodiles.” Their home planet of Udga is failing, and they come to Earth with a plan to enslave the humans and use the planet’s resources for themselves. Their weapons are technologically advanced, and their power seems to surpass anything the larger and ferocious dinosaurs can muster, and certainly exceeds what the humans can handle with their spears.

The odds shift in Earth’s favor, however, when several of the dinosaurs are trapped together in a cave where they discover the Tierian Medallion, which “unleashes a dinosaur’s power within.” Soon the dinosaurs have all tapped into their own individual super powers and form a plan to save their planet.

Trachanoids is an imaginative mix of science fiction and fantasy, and the pairing of dinosaurs and humans battling invading aliens is unique and inventive. One concern is that the dinosaurs have names such as “Tarek” and “Zaark,” which some younger readers may find confusing as they try to keep track of characters, and the names and descriptions of the various weaponry and alien vehicles occasionally bog down the action. However, James Fitl wisely includes a guide at the back of the book which lists each dinosaur by name, species, and unique power. He also includes a section containing further explanation of the aliens and their vehicles and weapons.

Fitl has created a website to complement the book, offering games, toy Trachanoids Dinosaurs, and activities, including trading cards. The website is colorful and informative, and readers may wish that some of the same attention to detail was included in the book; while the black and white illustrations are serviceable, they simply don’t do enough to draw young readers into the story. Each dinosaur’s power is depicted by a different color, and the exclusion of a visual illustration of this aspect may leave readers wanting more. Fortunately, a full color version is available online (ISBN 978-1-4257-8808-7).

While the pages of the book may lack the dazzling color that could truly make the story and characters come alive, the story itself is unique and well-written. The website and the ending of the book clearly indicate that there are more adventures to come for the Trachanoids.

JEANNINE CHARTIER HANSCOM (July 14, 2011)

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