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Freedom from a fear of maths
Review by JAMIE KHOO
JAYDEN'S RESCUE

Author: Vladimir Tumanov
Publisher: Utusan Publications
Price: RM12.00

Sunday June 20, 2004

DO you dread maths classes and maths tests? And never quite have the motivation to solve homework maths puzzles?

Alex, our hero of *Jayden's Rescue* struggles with his maths classes and barely manages to scrape through with a C in his weekly tests – he would much rather be reading in a cosy corner of his room, engrossed in an exciting fantasy book all about wizards and dungeons.



Then one day, stressed out about yet another maths test, Alex chances upon a new book on his shelf called *Jayden's Rescue*.

In it, a queen called Jayden finds herself imprisoned by an evil king in a gloomy castle with 400 rooms. Her only chance of escape is through all those hundreds of rooms, each of which contains an evil monster *plus* a maths puzzle.

Only by solving the questions correctly can she move from one room to the next and finally win her freedom.

The trick, however, is that Alex and the reader have to solve the problems for Jayden – the pages of the magical book will not turn until each puzzle is solved.

Jayden's Rescue engages both reading and maths skills. Because the maths puzzles are written out as little poems rather than just numerical problems, the reader has to exercise comprehension and reading skills too in order to work through them.

The language is colourful and lively, with fantasy elements incorporated in the maths puzzles to make the subject fun while demonstrating that it is a large part of our everyday lives.

At the same time, aspects such as simple addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, algebra and square roots are all covered, reworked into new and interesting approaches. Using monsters and fantastical backgrounds, the seriousness of maths is replaced by fun and forms part of the adventure narrative.

The reader does not have to solve the puzzles on his own but tackles them together with Alex and his friends. Each problem is worked through within the story and answers are provided for the reader to check against.

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Your left brain seeks substance over style

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