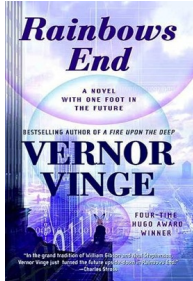




Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians



Rainbows End
By Vernor Vinge

Characters

The Gu Family	The Spooks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Robert Gu, Sr. • Lena Llewelyn Gu, ex-wife of Robert Sr. • Lt. Col. Robert "Bob" Gu, son of Robert Sr., USMC • Col. Alice Gong Gu, wife of Bob, high-level USMC operative • Miri Gu, daughter of Bob and Alice, student at Fairmont High 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alfred Vaz, External Intelligence Agency (India) • Gunberk Braun, European Union Intelligence Board • Keiko Mitsuri, Japanese intelligence agency • Mr. Rabbit (aka the Mysterious Stranger)
The Elder Cabal	Others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winston "Winnie" Blount, former Dean of Arts & Letters at UCSD • Carlos Rivera, UCSD Library staff member, disabled (JITT syndrome) veteran • Tommie Parker, "old-time computer-science jock" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Xiu Xiang, Adult Ed. "retread" at Fairmont High • Juan Orozco, student at Fairmont High • Ms. Louise Chumlig, teacher at Fairmont High • Zulfikar Sharif, grad student at Oregon State University

Selected Other Works by Vernor Vinge

- True Names (novella, 1981)
- The Peace War (novel, 1984)
- A Fire Upon the Deep (novel, 1992 - Hugo for 1993)
- A Deepness in the Sky (novel, 1999 - Hugo for 2000)
- Fast Times at Fairmont High (novella, 2001- Hugo for 2002)
- The Cookie Monster (novella, in Analog 2002 - Hugo for 2003)

Discussion Questions

1. The book is dedicated to "the Internet-based cognitive tools that are changing our lives." How does Vinge depict those "cognitive tools" in the novel? Do you think this a fair and accurate analysis?
2. Rainbows End is the assisted-living retirement community to which (for all intents and purposes) Robert Gu was sent to die. (Lena Gu was there, too.) It's also the title of the novel. How well do you think Vinge used this name/title to highlight various themes in the story?
3. "Disinformation is king nowadays," says one of the characters. Do you think Vinge agrees? What does he seem to be saying about the Internet in this novel?
4. Recursive science fiction (actually, recursive F&SF) is defined as F&SF "in which the characters, subject matter, or setting are of a scientific nature." How well do you think Vinge incorporated the "recursive" elements into this novel? Do the recursive elements make this an "insiders' book"? Or are the references open/popular enough to reach a wider audience?
5. Vinge talks a lot about the health care and "quality of life" advances in the future depicted in this novel, as well as possible new problems (JITT, Pseudomimivirus, etc.). How "right" do you think he's gotten it? Did the medical advances/problems depicted in this book make sense to you?
6. Climax: the moment at which the crisis comes to its point of greatest intensity and is resolved; the peak of emotional response from a reader. For this novel, I'd guess the "climax" is Chapter 32. What do you think about the "anti-climax" for this novel (the part that comes after the climax - the 2 months following the UCSD Riot)? Does Vinge achieve "resolution" in Chapters 33 to 35 and the Epilogue - or is that part only "anticlimactic" for you?
7. Rabbit is one of the traditional figures in "trickster" myths and legends. (Gu outright calls Mr. Rabbit a "trickster god" in the Epilogue; and Carlos Rivera calls him a "merry madman.") So, what was/is "Mr. Rabbit"? Is he "the ghost in the machine" (an AI) - or is he talented hacker? By the end of the novel, is he gone or just lying low?
8. What do you think of the depiction of the technology in the book? (The year is 2025.) William Gibson admitted that he wasn't techno-savvy and that he was frequently "talking through his hat" when he wrote his early Cyberpunk stories - but it still "worked." How does Vinge come across in comparison?
9. Vinge has been called a "visionary" author. His works frequently expand upon the concept of the "technological singularity" (the exponential growth of technology that will reach a point beyond which we cannot even speculate about the consequences). If you've read other Vinge works, how representative is Rainbows End (2006) of his style and skill? If you haven't read anything else by Vinge, does this novel make you want to read more of his works?