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The Game of Sunken Places

Laura Wadley

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Anderson, M. T.. *The Game of Sunken Places*. Scholastic, 2004. ISBN 0439416604. 16.95. 260 pp.

Reviewer: Laura Wadley

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fantasy; Adventure Stories;

Subject: Fantasy-Juvenile fiction; Games-Juvenile fiction; Vermont-Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

When Gregory Buchanan receives an invitation from his Uncle Max in Gothic lettering inviting him and a "companion . . . of solid reputation and respectful and unspotted demeanor" to visit him at his creaky old house in Vermont, the boys sense adventure and decide to go. When they arrive, Uncle Max makes them exchange their Levis and T-shirts for knickers and starched collars after which they are immediately plunged into adventures galore as they are more or less forced to play a spooky old game, *The Game of Sunken Places* with a game board not unlike the one that caused so much trouble in *Jumanji*. The boys must meet and somehow vanquish trolls, Gelt the Winnower, the stomach flu, and the ghostly and ghastly Thusser Hordes.

The Game of Sunken Places is a very funny book, which is both its greatest strength and its greatest weakness. The book is never very scary because the jokes are so good that the reader knows that the truly terrible possibilities are unlikely to eventuate. The surprise ending is truly surprising, but is so quick and ill-prepared for that it seems like kind of a throwaway. Still, *The Game of Sunken Places* makes for compelling reading and will probably be a great hit with 5th and 6th grade boys especially, who may not be diverted by the funny bits from the action and suspense.