



## The Test

*K.A. Applegate , Katherine Applegate*

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Tobias, the other Animorphs, and Ax have seen things so bizarre that no sane person would believe their story. No one would believe that aliens have taken over Earth, and are in the process of infesting as many humans as possible. No one could believe the battles and missions and losses these six kids have had to deal with. And it's not over yet.

Tobias has been captured by the same human-Controller that nearly tortured him to death once before. She claims that she's now a part of the Yeerk Peace Movement. That she just needs a favor. Tobias isn't sure what to believe, but he knows that if the Animorphs and Ax don't find him soon, what he believes won't matter anymore...

## **The Test Details**

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## From Reader Review The Test for online ebook

### Stephanie says

I almost wanted to put this book down by the time I was halfway through, it hurt so much to read. I read it slowly, and each word was like another stab in my heart for Tobias. I can only imagine how much harder it must have been to write it. I wouldn't be surprised if the term "poured my blood, sweat, and tears" into something was created just for this book. Thankfully, after about page 90 or so, it finally got easier to read – if only because there was an active mission that the Animorphs were undertaking, and there was (slightly) less introspection and harsh self-analysis on Tobias' part. Slightly.

In this book, Tobias is still haunted by his torture at the Yeerk Taylor's hands, and confirms that he has spent even more time than usual in his own mind – not very healthy in general, and least of all for any of the Animorphs. He takes a risk and saves a deaf child, and he feels he is "stronger" for it – as if he needs to prove to anyone how strong he can be. However, he gets hurt and then captured by animal control, where Taylor finds him and recaptures him. This time, though, it is not about torturing him for secrets about the Andalite bandits. No, this time, Taylor claims to have joined the Yeerk Peace Movement, and that they are arranging something big to tip the balance in favor of the peace movement. Taylor pushes Tobias' buttons, and in consequence, also pushes the Animorphs buttons. The plan she proposes is dangerous, and with a high innocent casualty rate, but the Animorphs still go along with it because it means causing significant damage to the Yeerk invasion force of Visser Three and turning the tide of the war.

As the mission unfolds, however, Tobias and the other Animorphs find themselves back in the age-old moral dilemma about harming innocents for the greater good. It will be enough for a member of the team to sit out the mission, something that has always been an option, but which no one had ever chosen to do before. And Tobias personally finds himself, perhaps without realizing it at first, having to face the fears that the torture brought out in him instead of burying them deep as he has been doing.

Despite appearances in the previous books, Tobias has not been doing well after he was tortured within an inch of his life by the Yeerk Taylor in The Illusion (Animorphs, #33). I was glad – not really the right word, maybe relieved? – that this book picked up with him trying to deal with what had happened to him, the torture itself, and how emotionally raw and scarred it left him. Torture is no simple matter, and he was tortured *thoroughly*, both physically and possibly more painfully, emotionally. Addressing the state Tobias is in after that chapter in his life is a very important thing. If K. A. Applegate had not explored his state of mind after the torture and reverted back to the whole bird-vs-human dilemma which book #33 tried to backtrack to, it would have undermined Tobias as a full, developed, complicated character, not to mention left open a huge area of discussion. The Animorphs books are exceedingly good at bringing tough moral, emotional, and war-related issues to the forefront, and approaching them in a matter which breaks them down, analyzes them, and makes them not only understandable, but hopefully more bearable in that all readers - no matter if they be a child or an adult - may gain empathy for people who have suffered any measure of what is brought up in *Animorphs*.

Though I have to say, I was grateful that the book used the events of the mission to deeper explore Tobias' internal struggle and pain, because I think I would have been a sobbing *mess* if things had continued as they were at the beginning of the book. And that is no stretch of the truth.

There were too many poignant quotes to only choose one like I normally do... so instead, you get four:

**All these normal people – moms and dads, kids and grandparents – represented the very thing we were fighting for. Humanity.**

**Evil, even the worst evil, has banal origins every human can understand.**

**But there is always a choice**

**There's no real point in worrying about what you might have done. The past is the past [...] Let it go**

Quotes and comments:

My friends, the Animorphs, the ones who fight the Yeerk invasion of Earth, say that since my capture, I live too much of life in my head. They must be right. I'd almost missed everything. – page 3 – Even more so than after you were first trapped as a hawk...

See, it wasn't long ago that the Yeerks captured me. A crazed and insane human-Controller made my life a hell for several excruciating hours. I survived. I even thought the torture was over. I didn't realize that torture doesn't end when you're freed.

People think it does. People who've never been through torture think that when the physical injuries heal, you're healed, too. They're wrong. – page 4

My name is Tobias. I'm a human. I'm a hawk. If you want to find something in the forest, you'd do well to ask me.

There's nothing I don't see. -page 7

(view spoiler)

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## Nemo (**The Moonlight Library**) says

### See the full review on **The Moonlight Library**!

Tobias and the Animorphs have made a deal with ex-Sub Visser Taylor, the insane Controller who tortured Tobias, to blow up the Yeerk Pool using natural gas and Taxxon morphs. But is it all a clever trap to eliminate the 'Andalite bandits' once and for all?

Here's a little tidbit you might find interesting. Taylor gives the Animorphs a web address to contact her: <http://www.EarthIsOurs.com>. It doesn't exist anymore, but back when this book was first published, it DID exist - because of course **I visited it**. Like in the book, it consisted of an image of Earth and a contact box. I copied the Animorphs and sent a random message saying "We're in." It's totally not original, and I wonder how many emails that host got saying just that! Totes hilarious.

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## Caitlin says

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"You make an interesting argument," Ax said [...] "But there are a lot of inconsistencies between what you say and what you do. [...] How can you make this argument kn

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## Ben Babcock says

Alternative title: *Tobias is Not OK*. Another extremely well-written, gut-punching character story with an otherwise uninteresting plot to keep it chugging along.

*The Test* reveals that Tobias is still basically shattered from his torture at the hands of the sadistic, and possibly mad, Yeerk Taylor. While the rest of the Animorphs have been dealing with their own shit, apparently, for the last *ten books*, Tobias has been keeping it together around them but then metaphorically going off and crying in a corner.

We see Applegate explore PTSD and related symptoms of war in many ways over the course of this series. *The Test* is different in that Tobias' trauma is linked to a very specific incident, rather than the culmination of years' worth of battle scars and moral dilemmas. It's also still quite raw, and when he suddenly encounters Taylor again—and has to *work with her*—all those feelings come flooding back.

I also think there's something to the fact that Tobias, now living in the form of a hawk, suppresses a lot of his emotions. He always describes his hawk-self as a cool, calculating, deadly being. There isn't much room in the hawk for mercy. So I get the sense that it's much easier for Tobias to push down his more human emotions when he's cruising around in hawk-mode, especially if he's hunting. You don't want your compassion for living creatures to get in the way of that dinner you need. Yet this means that it becomes ever more difficult for Tobias to process his feelings, and I think we really see that here.

Basically, *The Test* is a roller coaster of emotion. In addition to the prominent problems of our protagonist, Applegate shows Cassie breaking ranks once again when it comes to the morality of a mission. The Animorphs have gone from “how do we fight the Yeerks” to “should we even be doing this” and seeing the Yeerks as a more diverse, rather than monolithic, enemy. In an era where a lot of villains came in Saturday morning cartoon flavour-of-the-week cookiecutter squads of minions and bad guys, this kind of shades-of-grey portrayal is stunning. In this book we’re reminded that there are Yeerks who are much worse than Visser Three (like Taylor), Yeerks who want peace, and of course, Yeerks who are just there, Yeerking it out. And as the Animorphs come to terms with this, it becomes harder and harder to accept just wholesale slaughtering Yeerks as a way of fighting their invasion.

Tobias’ voice ultimately carries this one. It’s not a coincidence that this book was written by the same ghostwriter who did *The Illusion*. Tobias isn’t usually my favourite character/narrator, but I have to admit that a lot of his books are just *good*, and this is no exception.

I’ll finish with another retro tech thought: wow, the lengths to which Ax goes to get Internet out in their little hideaway, and the whole thought of dialing in to go onto AOL. Wild.

Next time: Cassie is stranded in Australia! Let’s guess how many stereotypes we’ll get to see.

#### **My reviews of *Animorphs*:**

← #42: *The Journey* | #44: *The Unexpected* →

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#### **Jenny Clark says**

So Taylor is back. And she wants Tobias to help her create democracy. Or so she says. This is a deep book; Tobias is dealing with the after math of his torture, as is Rachel. Tobias is becoming hardened, even more than the others, and so is Cassie. I think the quotes speak for themselves in this one.

"Seems obvious to me," Marco answered. "It's the means, not the end, that interest her. She's keen on democracy because it's a process that will eject Visser Three."

"Do you always assume the worst of people?" Cassie asked.

"Always." Marco smiled. "People are who they are. My bet is that when Taylor failed to break Tobias with torture, the visser sent her packing. She's probably been plotting revenge ever since."

For a second, nobody spoke. Jake glared at Marco and I was pretty sure I knew why. I was guessing it was probably also the reason no one had mentioned how I'd been recaptured in the first place. No one had mentioned that I'd made a huge mistake by rescuing the lost kid. Now I realized why. Marco'd mentioned torture, something he was apparently not supposed to do when I was around, not even in passing.

Their hypersensitivity made me mad. Did they think the memory would mess me up? Couldn't they see me getting stronger? Couldn't they tell I'd be fine?

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No one said anything. Silent agreement.

Except for Cassie.

Her eyes got wide. She began to stand up.

"None of you guys are really thinking about this," she said in a voice that made a couple of older kids sitting at the table next to ours look up.

"Shhh."

"No," she said. "It's wrong. I won't. I don't want to judge you guys, but you're talking about strategy and risk like this is some computer game. Like there aren't others involved. Have you forgotten that we're supposed to be in this to save lives?"

Jake put his hand on her shoulder and gently encouraged her to sit back down. No one seemed to know what to say. She continued. She spoke very quietly, but urgently.

"Has anyone stopped to think that we'll be responsible for the death of hundreds, maybe thousands of people? People who already suffer the worst fate imaginable? And not that any of you care, but we'll be killing thousands of defenseless Yeerks right along with them."

"My God, you mean we'd be killing Yeerks?" Marco said with a straight face. "That's... that's unthinkable!"

No one laughed.

"Let her finish," Rachel whispered.

"They're not all like Visser Three," Cassie went on. "We know that. Some of the Yeerks and Controllers are just kids like us. They never had a choice. They participate or they're eliminated. And it's not like they get the information they need to make an informed decision. If you'd been raised since birth on empire propaganda, you'd fight to take over Earth, too."

"You make an interesting argument," Ax said through a mouthful of nachos. "But there are a lot of inconsistencies between what you say and what you do." He swallowed noisily. "How can you make this argument knowing what you've done in the past?"

"That's different," Cassie responded forcefully. "I'm not against defending myself and you guys. I hate violence, but self-defense is justified, in all societies. Unlike murdering people..."

"Killing slugs," Marco corrected.

"Killing Yeerks when they're defenseless, when they're not engaged in battle, when they're not actively threatening our lives... no! You don't... why can't you... can't you see!" She stopped. I could almost feel the passion radiating from her body. "It's... it's just not right."

"But they are threatening our lives," Rachel insisted. "Not just ours, everyone's. Just by being who they are."

"Yeah, and why do you think they're at the Yeerk pool?" Marco put in. "I can tell you this much. It's not because they're planning Earth Day activities.

"Look, during World War Two we bombed factories and highways and railroads. Even regular cities. Just because someone's not wearing a uniform or carrying a weapon doesn't mean they're not fighting a war. I know this plan is bad, Cassie, but we've gotta think of the big picture."

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"What about Tidwell, and others like him in the peace movement? They have to go to the pool because they'll die if they don't feed. For them, it's no different than eating."

"The peace movement Yeerks are a small minority," Jake countered coldly. "We can't really consider them, except maybe to warn them."

"Not consider them!" Cassie repeated disbelievingly. "What if your brother's at the pool when the gas explodes?"

Jake looked at his hands. "I guess it's a sacrifice I have to deal with in order to protect thousands more," Jake said, his voice now expressionless.

"Jake, I don't believe you!"

"You should," he said, looking back to Cassie. To me. "Besides, family involvement doesn't really come into play here. It can't. The Yeerk pool is a target. End of discussion. It's not like we're bombing a bunch of innocent people at the mall on a Friday afternoon..."

Again, I looked at the people alla round us. Families, couples, kids like us. Enjoying themselves. Here to see a movie, meet their friends, shop for clothes. They'd done the jobs they had to do at work or at school. Now was their chance to relax. Have fun.

Cassie looked around the food court, too, and then back at Jake.

"Isn't it?"

\*\*\*

*said Ax.*

*Marco asked.*

*Stop it!> she yelled suddenly.*

*I said.*

*I thought of all the stories Ax had told us of entire planets enslaved. Of how that couldn't be enslaved was killed. Of great and peaceful societies destroyed by Yeerks. A Yeerk was in the corner, not twenty feet away. A creature capable of the greatest evil, cowardly hiding inside a human so that no one would see the threat. How many were there now? Thousands? Fewer? More? Every day there were more human slaves. It was my first thought in the morning and my last thought before I slept.*

*They'd killed Elfangor, my father. The father I never knew.*

*The day would come when there would be no one left. An entire planet erased. I couldn't let that happen.*

*I repeated.*

\*\*\*

*But there is always a choice. In any and every situation. It's usually the choice between bad and worse. But it's still a choice.*

*"Come on," she said again. "Be my host. Offer me your body and you can have anything you want."*

*Choice. Traitor or...*

*I asked.*

*"It is a kind of freedom," she answered.*

*I asked.*

*"It is a kind of happiness," she replied.*

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*I heard Rachel say.*

*I stepped around her. My rear legs weakened. Then I saw the bodies. Human bodies. Maybe half a dozen. Male and female. Suited to look like gas company workers.*

*Sprawled now every which way. They were alive -- barely. They'd obviously been on the losing end of one every fierce battle. None seemed conscious.*

*Yeerk slugs wriggled and writhed helplessly on the floor.*

*Jake gasped.*

*Marco added.*

*[...] I followed the sound. There was a door to what looked like a little office. I peered in.*

*And then I saw her, sitting with her elbows on a table, her head in her hands.*

*Cassie. Crying.*

*She had turned off the gas and saved our lives. She had done this.*

*She didn't look up. She didn't move.*

*With delicate Andalite arms, I tried to lift her from the chair. She stood but was limp in my arms.*

*Her sobs stopped. Halting half-gasps took their place. She turned in my arms, turned so that she stood and faced me. Her eyes, red and wet, stared up at mine. Salt streaks dried on her face.*

*"No," she said. "It will never be okay."*

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### **ladysugarquill says**

Animorphs is delicate to write. It's too easy to turn Cassie into the perfect sweet girl who is always right. Most of the time they avoid the pitfall.

This time they didn't.

When a crazy-ass torturer yeerk comes to them talking \*democracy\* with a shady plan even her human host broke free to warn them against - there is no way in hell none of the animorphs even thought this may be a trap. There is no way in hell *Marco didn't mention it*.

Had they discussed it and decided it had to be done anyway, or taken a "let's accept now and we'll see once we get going" approach, I could have bought it, but this had trap written all over it, and it was not even handwaved to hand Cassie the moral high ground on a platter. (And incidentally, there is no way Cassie didn't go and warn them instead of setting off on her own. She fucking yells "I can't do this by myself" in the very next book!)

So I'm usually the last person to say the author is wrong but - here the authors were wrong.

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### **Noella says**

This book took a serious tone as Tobias comes to face his torturer Taylor once again. The Animorphs take a risk in working together with her to bring down Visser Three's army. It really dawned on Tobias how decisions will lead to casualties and sometimes they cannot be prevented while the animorphs pursue their greater goal of ridding the world of Yeerks.

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## **JonSnow says**

3.5/5

This could have been so much better, but it wasn't bad. I enjoyed the Taylor character, but the obviousness of her dishonesty is so stark as to be laughable.

I was really hoping for more tension and interaction between Tobias and Taylor, given she tortured him in a former book. Yet at no point does she seem to acknowledge she knows who he is, that she tortured him. And at no point does he mention it. So we never get anything in the way of a confrontation about that between the pair.

First half of this was good, but the second half was less good.

Overall it wasn't bad. But I had hoped it would be better. It started interesting, but kind of went on and on droning to the end.

Have I mentioned I hate Cassie? Yeah, I have. And I do. It's like she doesn't see reality before her. She is at war with the Yeerks, and wines and complains whenever she has to kill someone who is trying to kill her. Her and Jake are my least favorite characters, which is suitable since they're more or less a couple, kind of.

What I did like about this was that it was a Tobias book. I love Tobias books. He's one of the most interesting characters in my opinion, seconded by Marco/Rachel/Ax. Nothing beats a good psychological Tobias book. So in spite of things not going how I wanted with this, I give it a rounded up 4/5

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## **Ryan says**

Tobias narratives are always my favorite. And this one didn't disappoint.

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## **Julie says**

Another single-day read, because I *had* to finish this one quickly. 4.5 stars!

I feel like the planned missions have been sidelined for a while: background noise, haven't had much focus on them lately, as the Animorphs were derailed by extra-dimensional adventures, the arrival of the Andalites, the buffahuman incident, more Andalites, the Helmacrons, etc. So this one comes as a breath of fresh air: a reminder that they do still have day-to-day missions, harrying and striking at the Yeerk empire.

Ghostwriter: Ellen Geroux, the best of the best! She's still picking up the pieces from #33 and Tobias' torture and PTSD (the handling of it is very, very good: I loved the line about how people think that when the physical wounds heal, that you're all better -- but you're not). This book features the inevitable return of Taylor, yet also a bit to do with the Yeerk peace movement as well.

Plus, most importantly, the Animorphs are directly facing more hard-line moral and ethical questions: the issue of how much is acceptable in a war, how much collateral sacrifice they can accept as a means to an

end. That debate in the food court was *fantastic*, with Cassie arguing for their souls in a way that I understood this time, and doesn't come across as empty moralising. Their task ultimately doesn't even sit right with Rachel, of all people, either -- and Tobias, normally quite sensitive, seems to have become surprisingly harsh after all of his experiences.

And like, despite all the Tobias feelings in this book, that's not what wrecked me in the end, but Cassie. *Cassie*. Oh, my godddd. Tears welled up in my eyes in a freakin Pret a Manger at lunchtime while finishing this book.

Other good things: the horror of the Taxxon morph, plus a bit more Andalite worldbuilding which I always appreciate.

Also, at one point they name a website, and it turns out that an Animorphs fan back in the day registered the EarthIsOurs. I spent a little while poking around the web archive of it, and giggling to myself. This was what the internet looked like in the late 90s/early 2000s, y'all! There are so many old ugly nostalgic Animorphs fansites still rusting away out there, like archaeological sites.

Plus, this fansite administrated by the same people, ahhh. I just read the chat transcript with KAA and it offered some REALLY thoughtful and intelligent commentary on the series from Applegate herself. If someone else follows those links, though, **I don't recommend reading the chat** unless you already remember/know details about the ending of the series.

Anyway. Back to the point: this book is great, well-written and emotional, as I've come to expect from Geroux. These moral questions are just going to keep plaguing them more and more, but you can see the issues fracturing the team already.

Favourite spoilery quotes below:

(view spoiler)

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## Jonathan Grant says

I liked this one, was kind of annoyed that Taylor got away tho.

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## Swankivy says

Tobias's serious stuff is tested by having to revisit his torturer. As if he isn't psychically scarred enough by having been tortured and being trapped as a bird who occasionally pretends to be a boy and being in such a weird position as far as his relatives and relationships . . . now he has to face it again? If these kids had therapists, the therapists would need therapists after hearing their stories.

Notable moments and inconsistencies:

This book is ghostwritten by Ellen Geroux.

Tobias is trying to rescue little Bobby, but has to go for help because he "doesn't have a morph that can haul Bobby out of there." Tobias's large land morphs include a polar bear, a horse, and a bull, not to mention his own human self; "I don't have a morph for that" seems like a poor excuse.

When Tobias is imprisoned after getting injured, he claims he can't morph even though the Yeerks might come and get him, because there are video cameras recording him. After the humans left, it would have been much more practical to morph into a fly and get out of the cage than it was to just sit and wait to be found. Tobias seems to be making a lot of stupid decisions in this book.

This book incorrectly uses the term "jerry-rigged." The accepted terms are "jerry-built" or "jury-rigged." Something that's "jerry-built" is inexpertly thrown together and it's always an insulting term. "Jury-rigged" just means that you rather ingeniously thought of a temporary solution.

This book again mentions "AOL," even though their fake version of AOL in a previous book was called "Web Access America."

In this book they say that Taxxons are only given as hosts to low-ranking Yeerks, because their insane hunger is very hard to master. But in a previous book, it's established that two of the Council members--the highest-ranking Yeerks in existence--have Taxxon hosts (albeit Taxxon hosts who are fed scraps of meat nearly constantly).

Two new Andalite terms are introduced in this book: *unschweet*, which is a process of cutting an Andalite's fur as a dishonor, and *notallssith*, which means being unable to control a morph.

It's been said in other books that sometimes Yeerks try to escape a dying host's head "before the death reaches them." And yet in this book Taylor suggests she will survive if she crouches inside the skull of her host inside a reinforced metal shell. It seems like if the host dies, she should die too regardless of whether the Yeerk's physical body is preserved--unless she disengages completely from the brain somehow, and that isn't

specified.

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### **Jen says**

This is one of the few Animorphs books where I just sort of stare at the cover for a while because it so perfectly encapsulates the book itself (the original cover, not any reprints). The human Tobias, ghostly behind the morphing sequence, looks like he's all of 9 years old, not the near-high-schooler that he actually is. And the morphing sequence is hawk to Taxxon, a creepy lobster-centipede beast with too many eyes and a tongue that reaches off of the cover itself. It is an ugliness that is consuming this kid who is way too young for any of this.

I appreciate so much that Applegate & Co. picked up the torture story from #33; that was way too big and important to leave behind for the rest of the series. So Taylor's reintroduction feels a bit forced, but once she's in, she's in and I utterly believe all that Tobias is fighting in working with her. Listening in on the pain and self-doubt and drive to prove himself and all of the mess that the torture shoved into him is so powerful here because it's never sappy. Tobias's confusion and deep, deep anguish felt real the whole way through-- and then it gets coupled with the absolute crazy of the Taxxon morph and also Tobias's need to pretend to be an Andalite. (view spoiler) Having already read The Andalite Chronicles and the fate of the trapped Andalite there, the Taxxon morph was that much more overwhelming and crushing. I was so glad we got both Tobias' and Ax's reactions to it, showcasing again that even though these guys have been morphing for literally years now, they still don't have it totally under control for every new morph.

I pretty much couldn't with the ending; the way Cassie's story goes largely undescribed is perfectly executed to make it as heartbreakingly tragic as possible, somewhat like the scariest horror stories are those that only suggest the man with the knife behind the door. I don't even want to know the ferocity her actions took, but it really is the continuing downward spiral of the Animorphs as they begin to see that war cannot be won with pure morals. (view spoiler)

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### **Julie Decker says**

Tobias feels good about helping a lost boy get found, but he took a risk to do it--he thought-spoke to the boy and to his father, and ends up getting some newspaper fame for his trouble. But since some well-meaning clinic folks found him after he was injured, he's trapped in a cage in a facility trying to heal him. Then one night, attracted by the publicity, Hork-Bajir come in and try to steal him. A group of human-Controllers counters, making it look like two factions of Yeerks are fighting to get him. Tobias ends up being stolen by Taylor, his old torturer from a previous book. But she doesn't do what he expects; she tells him part of the Yeerk population is rebelling against the current administration, and she wants his help striking against the Yeerk pool under the town.

After some confusion, the Animorphs negotiate with Taylor and come to a plan involving Ax and Tobias morphing Taxxons to dig a path to the Yeerk pool, which Taylor will fill with natural gas and kill them all (including the hosts). But since Taylor has quite a history of deception, they don't know if they can believe her, even though striking at the Yeerk pool sounds really promising. Cassie is morally opposed to killing

innocents in the pool, so she abstains from the mission. Tobias and Ax have to face the fierce Taxxon hunger as they dig the tunnel, but when Taylor becomes a double-crosser in a way they didn't quite expect, they have to figure out her motivation and what it has to do with the enemies of the Yeerks. . . .

My favorite lines:

Tobias: I didn't realize that torture doesn't end when you're freed.

Tobias: Ever have something work out so perfectly, you feel you could fly? That's how I felt--and the cool thing was, I could actually do it. I could actually fly.

Taylor: "Good. It would be much harder to solicit help from an Andalite who's dead."

Tobias: Help? Yeah, and Rachel will pass up a sale at Express, Crayak will win the Nobel Peace Prize, a Yeerk slug will turn down a promotion.

Barista: "Uh, what can I get you?"

Taylor: "Decaf latte with skim."

Tobias (in morph as Taylor): "Triple espresso. Heavy on the cream and the sugar."

Taylor: "You dare abuse my body, you filthy grass eater?"

Marco: "Well then, what am I waiting for? Sign me up! An army of cold, power-hungry Yeerks can't control the Taxxons. Not to worry. The short kid who got a B-minus in gym won't have any problems."

Rachel: "You got a B-minus in gym?"

Marco (when Ax in Taxxon morph won't move or answer): "It's a comprehensive system failure. Can't be fixed on-site. We'll have to haul this beauty back to the shop."

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## Almira says

I have mad respect for Tobias. If you're going to say bad stuffs about him I will go Rachel and MoriartyxRamsay you. I am not kidding. I will burn your house down and eat your whole family if you say one bad shit about this boy. Nothing personal, it's just how I show my love to my fictional... damn it. Right. He's fictional. Damn it, sorry I got carried away.

I've said this before but I will say it again: Tobias is my favorite character, the first ever fictional character I have ever loved. Theon Greyjoy might've been through a lot, same as Jojen Reed, but Tobias had been my friend for like, forever and we have this bond I can never have with future favorites. He's everything I'll never be but want to be. He makes decisions I could never make. While I would choose death over any inconvenience any time, Tobias would choose survival and winning against everything, everyone, that damaged him.

Maybe he's strong because he'd been through stuffs I'll never go through (right we'll never know, I have like 20 years more in earth, somebody would think about torturing me too right, or turning me into a red-tailed hawk forever, yeah fck off :]). But it's not just that. He knows which battle to pick, or more like which enemy to pick, and actually win it. I just can't imagine picking bird life over human, or accepting I have an Andalite for a father and everything else I've known since day 1 had been lies over lies. Or being captured, again, by Taylor Psycho Yeerk Girl who tortured me. Damn it, right. When I got to know it was her I want to

go Miaka and just kill the shit out of this psycho, self-obsessed villain.

I'm just glad this one has lots of actions for Tobias. I'm glad the Taxxon morphing was over. I hated it that he has to do it, damn I mean, Taxxons are hella gross. \*\_\*

This is a shitty review, right? Right. I can't get better at doing this thing, unfortunately. This is... I just say everything and hit save. Wharevs.

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### **Ashley says**

Ah, Tobias. The poor guy can't catch a break. Teased, abused, abandoned, stuck living as a hawk, undoubtably psychologically scarred from the war, and on top of that, tortured...and now he has to work with his torturer to take down Visser Three. And at most he is probably only fourteen. Jeez.

While Taylor's actions quickly became stereotypically evil, her backstory made her more complex - at least regarding Taylor-the-girl vs Taylor-the-Yeerk. I mean, selling out your mind, body, and family to regain beauty that was lost in a horrific fire? Extreme, and sad. And I'm sure some people would take that offer.

This was a really good one, very introspective. Goes into the idea of fear being the source of evil, as well as what constitutes a necessary sacrifice. Also deals with making choices, and the results of those choices. Heavy book. Once again, these books might be written for younger people, but the content and ideas are very much for a mature audience.

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### **Nicole says**

OK LIKE WAS IT NOT ENOUGH??? Tobias went through an abusive childhood, became permanently trapped in a hawk morph, then got captured and tortured by a yeerk and was forced to relive every traumatic experience in his past, then in THIS BOOK YOU GOTTA HAVE HIM NOT ONLY COME FACE TO FACE TO HIS TORTURER AGAIN BUT ALSO MORPH A FREAKING TAXXON?????????  
WHYYYY

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### **Amalia Dillin says**

I don't know. I mean. I feel like an argument could have been made that this should have been Cassie's book. She seems to be the one with the real moral crisis here. But Tobias v Taylor redux did not really have a lot of punch for me?

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### **Kim Dyer says**

This book is kind of a follow up to The Illusion, which you may remember as the novel which contained the 30 page graphic torture scene. You may think that a second encounter with Taylor would affect Tobias badly, but this is surprisingly brushed under the carpet relatively early in the tale. Instead, the book actually

turns into a relatively dull Yeerk Pool infiltration. It shares some similarities with The Sickness in the uncertainty whether a Yeerk can be trusted, but lacks the drama and tension of this tale.

However, there were a couple of things I found interesting. Tobias's understanding of the Taxxon morph (given his experiences as a hawk) was kind of interesting and gave an insight into these creatures that we've never had before. Additionally, Cassie's contribution to the story was interesting. While she has questioned the Animorphs' brutality before, this marks the first time that she's outright refused to join a mission. I'm curious to see how this shift in her character will effect future volumes.

So, all in all, this book is a bit of mixed bag. I don't think we really needed a second Taylor story, but I did enjoy some of the moral issues posed by this mission. It's not one of the best, but does provide some interesting characterisation, particularly for Cassie.

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### **T Berry says**

I remember this one being better. But I also wasn't clearly remembering what actually happened in this book, so maybe I was just bleeding memories of this one with the previous Taylor books (which was better). There were a handful of good spots in the book, but overall it was not....good. Early in the book there was a lot of thoughts of other characters being explained. Either from Tobias's point of view (i.e. him thinking of how the other characters were thinking, which was mostly an issue because it felt excessive. Like it was more than he should've known, or said.) or, in at least one instance, him having a thought and then the character instantly answering the question he had in his head. Clumsily lampshaded with the "as if she read my mind" line and it was rough.

Also, I understand that this was a sequel to the previous book where Tobias was tortured, but even so his victim complex seemed...odd to me. I mean I haven't been tortured, and I don't have PTSD, so I could be wrong about it. But between Tobias's constant worrying about his own weakness to his complete acceptance of what Taylor was saying, which would make more sense for a victim of Stockholm syndrome, as I understand it.

He calls himself out for acting as Taylor's press secretary (or something along those lines) at one point in the book. It just felt weird to me, pretty much the whole book.

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