



FICTIONAL SERIES INSPIRES REAL-WORLD CURIOSITY

This Week's Book

Explorer Academy series by Trudi Trueit
National Geographic — available in hardcover (\$16.99) and paperback (\$9.99)

If you have middle grade readers in your household, and you haven't yet heard about the Explorer Academy action/adventure books written by Trudi Trueit of Everett Washington and published by National Geographic, beat a quick trip to your local bookseller and snap up the series to date.

Don't make the mistake that I did and buy the most recently published book in the series. That's like jumping into the deep end of the pool without learning how to dog paddle first.

Context and back story are important in this fictional series, which focuses on a group of 24 kids from around the world who have been admitted into the Explorer Academy, an exclusive training program designed to help them become the next generation of top inventors and explorers.

The first book of the series, "The Nebula Secret," came out just over a year ago. In it, 12-year-old Cruz Coronado is invited to attend the Explorer Academy. It is located in Washington, D.C., and run by the "Society," which resembles the National Geographic Society, but on steroids.

Cruz lives halfway around the globe in Hawaii with his dad. But his mom had been an alumna of the Academy, and after graduating had gone on to do top-secret work for the scientific arm of the Society. She died in a laboratory accident when Cruz was only five.

As much as Cruz will miss his dad, he figures attending the Academy will help him understand who his mother was.

When he arrives, Cruz meets the other kids who have come from all over the world, and when their classes begin, they're introduced to an educational program that starts with problem-solving in ultra life-like computer simulations and goes on to take them on expeditions aboard the Academy's exploration floating classroom vessel.

Along with the cutting-edge technologies, archaeological treasures, and intriguing clues in code, this book is packed with action and thrills.

Cruz begins to realize that it isn't only in the computer-simulated programs that things

are not always what they seem to be. He learns how to hone his powers of observation, exercise his judgment, and cope with betrayal. And when a cluster of ominous incidents begins to point Cruz toward the suspicion that his mom's death may not have been an accident — he realizes that his life could be in danger, too.

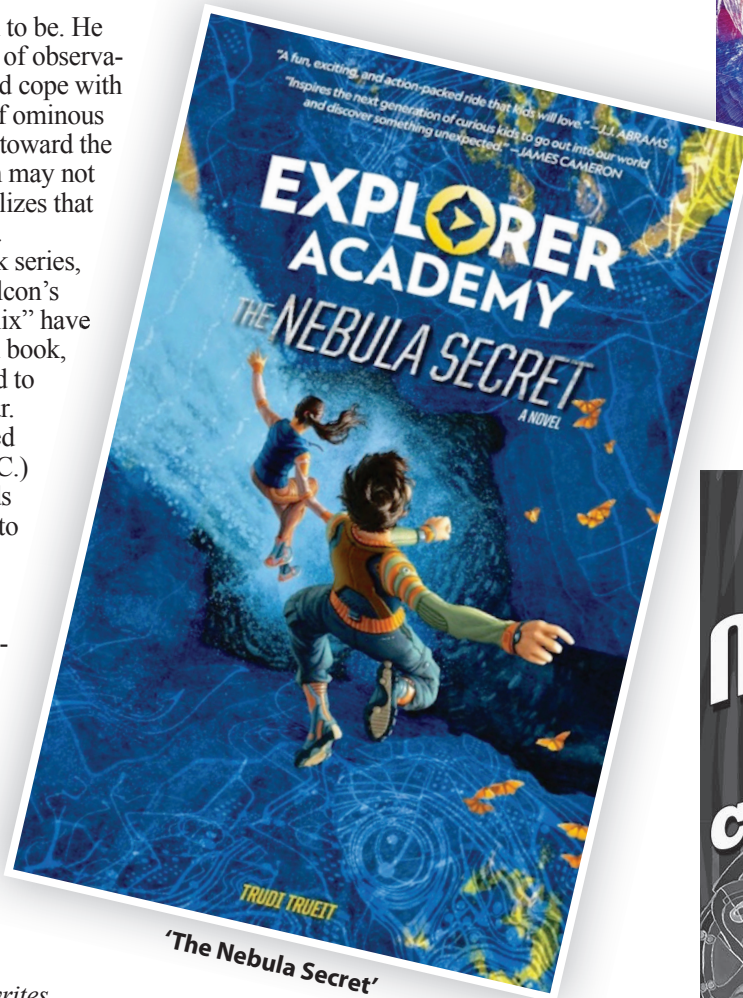
In this projected seven-book series, "The Nebula Secret," "The Falcon's Feather" and "The Double Helix" have been published so far. A fourth book, "The Star Dunes," is scheduled to come out in March of next year.

These books are embellished with visuals by Vancouver (B.C.) artist Scott Plumbe, who blends illustrations with photographs to good effect.

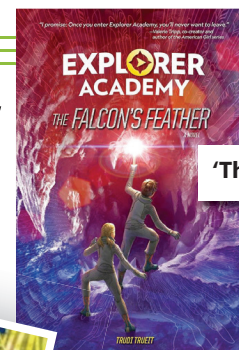
The books are also supplemented with a "Truth Behind the Fiction" section that showcases the dynamic work of young scientists who right now, in real life, are researching the topics that the Explorers investigate in these stories.

Three cheers for this terrific series — it's mentally stimulating, inspirational and fun!

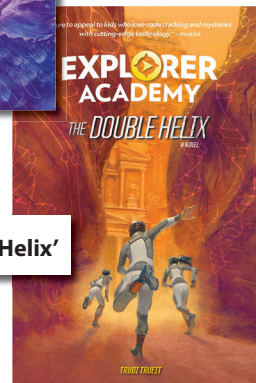
The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at bkmonger@nwlinc.com



'The Nebula Secret'



'The Falcon's Feather'



'The Double Helix'



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