

These notes are for:

- Years 7-10
- 13+yrs
- Secondary

Key Learning Areas:

- English
- Science
- ICT

Example of:

- Young Adult Fiction
- Print Text
- Science Fiction

Experience of:

- Social Perspectives
- Technology and Society
- Reading & Writing
- Speaking & Listening
- Viewing & Creating

Values addressed:

- Responsibility
- Doing Your Best
- Understanding & Tolerance
- Heroes

Themes:

- Computers
- Terrorism
- Future World
- War

*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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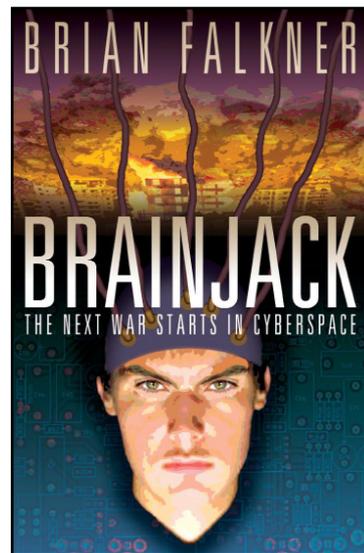
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Brainjack - Overview

Brainjack

By: Brian Falkner
 ISBN: 9781921150951
 ARRP: \$18.95
 NZRRP: \$19.99
 No. of Pages: 448
 September 2009



Outline:

It would take a very special person to crack the computer systems of the White House. An expert. A genius. A devil. All of the above, some would say. Someone like Sam Wilson, brilliant teenage computer hacker. But Sam's obsession is about to lead him into a dangerous world. A world of espionage and intrigue; of cybercrime and imminent war. A world where logging on to your computer could mean the difference between life and death.

Brainjack is a thrilling new sci-fi apocalyptic adventure from Brian Falkner, the bestselling author of *The Tomorrow Code*. Full of danger and excitement – this story will have readers on the edge of their seats! *Brainjack* also explores computer technology in a scientific and philosophical way that will encourage discussion in the classroom. Topical themes of war and terrorism can also be explored with this novel.

Author Information:

Brian Falkner was born and raised in Auckland. He is the author of several novels for children and young adults including, *The Flea Thing*, *The Real Thing*, *The Super Freak* and *The Tomorrow Code*.



How to Use These Notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

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**Guided Reading Activities for *Brainjack*:****BEFORE READING *Brainjack***

- View the front cover. Identify the title, author and tag line. Discuss what you think a “Brainjack” is? What does “next war” mean? Do you know of any wars that have happened previously? Research and discuss.
- Read the blurb. What is the purpose of a blurb? Where do you think this story is set? From reading the blurb and viewing the cover, write a brief description of what you think this story is about.
- Define the following words from the blurb:
 - espionage
 - imminent
 - cybercrime
 - hacker

Brainjack* – BOOK ONE: BEGINNINGS*Chapters 1-3**

- Read page 19. What does “size 40 type mean”? How do the words written this large have more impact? Discuss. What size font do you think has been used for this book? By looking at the imprint page can you work out what type of font has been used?
- After reading Chapter 1 write a brief description of Gamer Alley. The people there are described as “addicts” and Fargas mentions to Sam about getting a “quick hit”. How is gaming perceived as a drug in this chapter? What other legal activities or drugs can you become addicted to? Discuss.
- Read page 27. Sam describes “wireless security” as a “contradiction in terms”. What are the other contradictions he references? Why are they contradictions? Can you think of any others?
- Read page 29. “The Cold War” is referenced here. What was it and when was it? Which countries was it between?
- On page 32 “the eye of Mordor” is referenced. What classic text is this referenced from and who wrote it?
- Read page 28-40. How do Sam’s reactions relate to the sentence on the front cover of the book? What are the similarities between these actions and physical warfare? Discuss.
- Sam introduces viruses into the computer system. What is a virus and why is this biological term used to describe something technological? Research viruses, biological and technological, and how they work. What similarities are there between the two?
- Read Chapter 3. List all the problems that Sam has caused. If you couldn’t use the internet, ATMs, mobile phones or television, how would this impact your life? Write a brief paragraph on what you think a world without telecommunications would be like.

Chapters 4-6

- Who is Ursula? What is she and what does she do?
- Read pages 50-53. What are some of the scientific terms that are referred to e.g. receptor, neuro and brainwaves. Do you think it is possible for something technological to mimic part of the human body? Discuss.
- What are the four types of brainwaves discussed on page 52?
- Read pages 60-61. Sam discusses the codes that are used to encrypt the address of a hackers’ convention. What are codes, how are they useful and how have they been used throughout history? Research.
- Read page 62. Who are ‘Buzz Lightyear’ and ‘Darth Vader’? How are these characters indicative of technology and computers?
- Read pages 66-68. Why would the White House need such tight security? List other places in the world that you think would need to protect themselves with online security.
- Who is currently the President of the United States of America? If you do not live in America, who is currently the leader of your country? When were they elected?



Guided Reading Activities for *Brainjack*:

Brainjack – BOOK ONE: BEGINNINGS Cont ...

Chapters 7-11

- Read page 71. What computer programs do you use? Make a list of the computer programs that you use or have used and your competency with them. What is your favourite computer program and why?
- Read pages 72-73. What are the risks that Sam identifies? What type of risks do you think are involved with what Sam is doing? List.
- Read page 75. What is the “Mona Lisa”? Who painted this and what does it depict? Research this famous painting and find a visual reference of it.
- Read page 77. What is an avatar? Define. Draw a picture or write a description of what you would like your avatar to look like.
- Read page 81-83. Why do you think Sam’s mother includes the model Thunderbird. Where else in the book has this been referenced? Why do you think this is important to Sam? Write a brief description of your most prized possession and why it is so important to you.
- Read pages 83-84. Why are New Zealanders called Kiwis? Where else is this name used? Research and discuss.
- Read page 85-86. Kiwi mentions that Sam might be kept under the “terrorism act”. What is an “act of terrorism” and what has Sam done that could be considered this?
- Read pages 90-91. Have you ever used a spreadsheet program? What is it and do you know any formulas that can be used in one of these programs? How are maths and computers interlinked?
- Read page 92. What information about you is kept online e.g. Facebook, Twitter, MySpace? Make a list.
- Use the description on page 94 and your own imagination to create a drawn map of Recton.
- Read page 95. What does Sam find out on Google? What have you discovered on Google before and what do you use it for? Have a class discussion about the accuracy of information on the internet.
- Read Chapter 11. What are some of the steps Sam takes to break out of prison? List.

Brainjack – BOOK TWO: REVELATIONS

Chapters 1-3

- What is Silicon Valley famous for? Research this part of the world and locate it on a map. Why is this an ideal place to set this part of the story?
- Read pages 125-127. What does the term “wingman” mean and how does this term relate to plane flying? Research.
- What does it mean to defend something? In what other contexts can the word “defend” or “defence” be used? List.
- Read page 129-130. The phone “woofs” at Sam. Why do you think Sam chooses this sound? If you were writing the sound of a phone, how would you usually do it? Run a class survey to find out what everyone’s mobile phone ringtone is.
- Read page 136-137. What are the historical events that are mentioned? What do you know about these and what else can you find out about them? List three major historical events in your country.
- Read Chapter 3 of Book Two. Sam wonders what his mother would be thinking. After reading this chapter write a brief description from the point of Sam’s mother.

Chapters 4-6

- Read page 146-147. The camera sees things from different angles. Draw your classroom/home from three different angles. How might a surveillance camera view your world?
- Read page 150. Sam describes world mapping websites. Visit one of these e.g. Google maps. What different ways are the maps shown and how would each of these different views be useful?
- Read Chapter 5 of Book Two. Why is Vienna unkind to Sam and doesn’t like him? How has she been involved with him previously?
- Read page 158-161. How is Fargas’s obsession with the game unhealthy? Have a discussion about why certain things are illegal. When do you think something should be made illegal and why?

Guided Reading Activities for *Brainjack*:

Brainjack – BOOK TWO: REVELATIONS Cont...

Chapters 7-10

- Read Chapter 7 of Book Two. What are the advantages of the neuro-headset? What is the major disadvantage?
- Re write the text messages on page 166 with correct spelling and grammar.
- Read Chapter 8 of Book Two. What is the definition of a “sidewinder”?
- What are some of the names given to the different predators that Sam is battling? Why are these effective names? Come up with five names that you think would also be suitable.
- Read Chapter 9 of Book Two. What is the plane protection system that was installed after 9/11? What was 9/11 and when did it happen? How is this scenario related to those events?
- What is “China Syndrome”? How does it apply to the situation in Chapter 9 of Book Two?
- Sam and the team are working for Homeland Security. Who is this organisation and what do they do? If you don't live in America, what is the equivalent of this in your country? Name the different organisations that you know of which protect your country and its people.
- What does ‘DOS’ stand for and how will it work for Sam and Dodge? (Pages 192-193).

Chapters 11-13

- What does Dodge mean when he says “There’s always a bigger fish,”? How does this phrase relate to the events in this chapter?
- What is the definition of a “phantom”?
- How many elephants long is the Airbus? This seems a strange measurement. Can you find the real measurements for an Airbus? What other types of measurements are there?
- What is the definition of a “disclone” and why would it be an important tool in the “Field Kit”?
- What is a SWAT Officer (page 209)? Research.
- Read Chapter 13 of Book Two. How do Tactical use the neuro-headsets and what for?
- After reading Chapter 13 of Book Two discuss who you think the “insider” might be and why?

Chapters 14-16

- Read Chapter 14 of Book Two. What have the terrorists been targeting? Although the actions are destructive, how might the outcome change your perspective of them? Discuss.
- Read the description of the room on page 217 and draw this image. Include Sam and Dodge in your drawing.
- Why does Swamp Witch have this name? What were the names of her predecessors?
- Read pages 234-235. List the steps that Dodge and Sam take when investigating what happened to Swamp Witch.
- What is the *San Jose Mercury News* headline? Write this article and include your drawing from the previous activity as the main image.
- After reading Chapter 16 of Book Two, list the different moments when Sam tries to dissuade Dodge from investigating further.
- Why is machine code different from machine to machine? (Page 236)

Brainjack – BOOK THREE: WISDOM

Chapters 1-3

- What is Dodge’s full name? What is the significance of his name? (Hint: try removing the last three letters of each word). How does this hidden clue relate to his character?
- How are Ranger’s thoughts changed about Dodge and Sam?
- The last line of Chapter 2 of Book Three is “And then he remembered everything”. Based on the events in the previous chapter, what do you think it is that Jaggard remembers?
- What false information has Kiwi been fed?
- What is the definition of “brain-washing”? How does this term apply in these circumstances?
- What is the definition of an “automaton”? (Page 253)
- Book Three of *Brainjack* is titled “Wisdom”. How do these first three chapters contradict this word?

**Guided Reading Activities for *Brainjack*:****Brainjack – BOOK THREE: WISDOM Cont ...****Chapters 4-6**

- What is the definition of malleable? (Page 258)
- Why do you think Vienna trusts Sam? Would you, if you were in his position? Discuss.
- What are the government vehicles fitted with so that they are traceable?
- Ranger had the thought for everyone to use the neuro-headsets? Why would this occur to him? How would this help the phantom?
- Why should Vienna use cash instead of a credit card? (Page 268). Think about the items you have in your wallet/bag. What information could people obtain about you from these items? List.
- Why can't Ranger find Sam, Dodge and Vienna on the security cameras? How did their actions (in the previous chapter) prevent this?

Chapters 7-10

- Sam fills in the blanks for Dodge, but this section of the story isn't actually written. Fill-in the blanks and write the description that you think Sam would give to Dodge.
- Read Chapter 8 of Book Three. Re-describe what the meta-system is and what Dodge calls it.
- What is the definition of "consciousness"?
- Read page 286. What is a prejudice? What might be some of these prejudices that Dodge talks about?
- What is a plague? What are some famous plagues that have happened throughout history? Research and discuss.
- Read page 288. What is a "micro" level and what is a "macro" level?
- What is the message that is relayed over the teleprompter in this chapter? Where do you think this message has come from?

Chapters 11-13

- How does Dodge fool Ranger in this chapter?
- What sort of team is coming to track Ranger? Why is this sort of team used and what are the advantages of it?
- Find the simile on page 302.
- What is the huge helicopter floodlight called? Why would it have this name?
- What type of car does Vienna choose for them to travel in?
- What is the definition of the word "omnipresent" and how is it used in Chapter 13 of Book Three?
- What type of suits do they pick up at the hardware store? What are these and what do they protect you from? Research different types of protective clothing.
- What does Sam have to use because the GPS is offline? Can you think of any other electronic items that have replaced physical ones?
- Complete this sentence from Dodge. "We are our _____". Have an in-class debate/discussion around this topic.
- What does Vienna believe about the theory on memories? Do you agree with her? Discuss.

Chapters 14-17

- What is a "Geiger counter"? What does it count and who invented this?
- What is the definition of EMP?
- What has survived in the middle of the desolation and how has it survived?
- What is the question that Vienna asks Sam on page 329? Answer this question yourself? How do emotions help you remember situations? Discuss.
- Read Chapter 15 of Book Three. Whose perspective is this from? What narrative style is this chapter written in and why is it typed in italics?
- What does the term "neuro-phobic" (page 339) mean? What is a phobia? Research other phobias and the fears that they relate to.
- What happens on Sam's sixteenth birthday and what does he do to get back at them? Why would someone not like another person for being smart? Discuss.
- What is Ursula playing with in Chapter 17?

Guided Reading Activities for *Brainjack*:

Brainjack – BOOK THREE: WISDOM Cont ...

Chapters 18-21

- When Ranger is found what is the main problem that he faces?
- What is the metaphor that Dodge uses for Vienna on page 353? How does Sam change this metaphor? Write a metaphor to describe one of your friends.
- What is the defining moment that turns Ranger onto Sam's side?

Chapters 22-25

- Who saves Sam and how?
- What are the expansions of the following acronyms – TCP and RPC – and what are their functions? Research.
- Read the first paragraph of Chapter 24. Modelling this style, write the beginning to a chapter. Choose a road that you know and describe the scenery and weather. Use as many descriptive words as possible.
- What do Sam, Vienna, Dodge and Ranger find on the road? What does Sam remark about these people? Do these people exist in your country?
- How is Ursula using people to convert “neuro-phobes” into “neuro-users”?

Chapters 26-29

- “The big engine of the Shelby growled like a wild cat” (page 405). Try writing your own similes for the sounds of objects e.g. the sound the wind makes in the trees, the sound waves make crashing on the sand, the sound a plane makes flying overhead. Come up with at least three similes for three different sounds.
- Read page 406. Discuss the following. Do you believe that Ranger is sacrificing himself or that this is an act of self-preservation?
- What does Ranger try to do to stop the information leaking out? Do you think this shows courage? Discuss.

Chapters 30-31

- Chapter 30 and 31 are called “Birth” and “Death”. Why do think these are appropriate headings for these chapters. Look at other chapter headings throughout the book. How do the chapter headings relate to the theme or focal point of the chapters? Discuss.
- Chapter 32. List the different things that Sam sees. Discuss Sam's actions and what he does? How does he use his position for good? If you were in Sam's position, what are some things that you would change or help with?
- What is the first thing that Sam wants? Why do you think he wants this? What would you choose to eat if you were in this position?

- What are the false memories that Jaggard has had? Have these events occurred?
- Read Chapter 21 of Book Three then research the following: What are the dangers of radioactivity and how can they affect you? Why would Sam be concerned about Vienna? Research and discuss how radioactivity is also used to help people.
- What cities in the world have been affected by a nuclear blast? When and why?
- Read page 392. What is a civil war? Have civil wars ever occurred in America before? When?
- What type of new car does Dodge get?
- Read page 399. Sam discusses an “antidote”. What is the definition of an antidote? What is the antonym of this word? What are synonyms for this word?
- What is a diversion? How do the events in this chapter divert those chasing Dodge, Ranger, Vienna and Sam?
- What is a “quartet of tanks” (page 413)? If there were eight tanks, how would this phrase change? What about if there were six, five or seven tanks? Re write this phrase with the different categories.
- How do Sam and Dodge know how many computers are being infected?
- What is Sam's idea to fight Ursula? What are the risks involved with this?

Brainjack – EPILOGUE

- Read the epilogue. What is the author's final statement to the reader? How do you think you could “live your life as if it matters how you live it”. What should you do?

AFTER READING *Brainjack*

- Write a review of *Brainjack*. Include a summary of the story and a cover image with your review.
- Create a presentation of *Brainjack* and the author Brian Falkner. For further information on Brian Falkner visit his website: www.brianfalkner.com