



## The Attack

*K.A. Applegate , Katherine Applegate*

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The Ellimist has helped the Animorphs many times. He is all-powerful and has only one enemy, the Crayak. In a cosmic showdown, the two enemies choose champions to represent them in a battle to end all battles. The Crayak chooses the dreaded Howlers. The Ellimist chooses the Animorphs.

## The Attack Details

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## From Reader Review The Attack for online ebook

### Sam Massey says

The Iskoort may actually be one of my favorite things to ever happen in this series.

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### Jen says

[ZOMG the kiss, I know. Rachel's response was PERFECT. And the fact that \*that's\* what

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### Caitlin says

[ABOUT DAMN TIME JAKE AND CASSIE GOD and also asdjksdajsd ♥♥♥♥ (hide spoiler)]

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### Hussain says

THE KISS!

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### Nemo (The Moonlight Library) says

#### Brought to you by The Moonlight Library!

The Ellimist is playing a game with Crayak, so it's high time he meddled in the affairs of lesser mortals, right? Now it's up to Jake and the Animorphs, plus Erek the android Chee, to fight the most dangerous alien warriors in existence and save another really annoying alien species from total annihilation.

The Attack is a fan-loved favourite, but I can't really tell why. It's one of those novels that could very easily be skipped and not miss anything important in the overall story arc – except that Jake and Cassie finally get it on... and by 'get it on' I mean KISS because for god's sake this is a children's book series, get your mind out of the gutter.

But overall the story is set on another planet and basically the Animorphs have to fight the Howlers to the death, except that the Howlers are literally made to kill other sentient species and are completely undefeated. Except that the Animorphs are intelligent, yo, and the Howlers do have one or two weaknesses: a collective memory, and they are all children and think killing other species is a game. So when Jake and the Animorphs upload their own memories into one howler, and Crayak is forced to wipe them out to preserve the entire race, the Animorphs win and one memory gets through: Jake and Cassie's kiss.

That's basically it. The Animorphs spend most of their time on the move and attempting to fight the howlers, who seem undefeatable. The Howlers are going to attempt to kiss every planet they invade. It's not particularly short in comparison to the other novels, but it's also not as exciting as everyone seems to think it

is. I also think that Ax doesn't get a very good portrayal in this book but that's just me.

Overall, unless you want to see the famous kiss, then it's okay to skip this one. You won't miss much.

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## Julie says

KAA temporarily interrupts what is going to become a streak of 5 more ghostwritten books in order to write *The Attack*, which is awesome awesome AWESOME and always lodged itself in my memory, because of a) the Howlers, which are some of the most amazing, frightening antagonistic aliens, and b) the Animorphs' crazy adventures off-world, on another alien planet, in a zany Dr Seuss setting. Any romp featuring the Ellimist is guaranteed to be pretty mind-boggling and thought-provoking and fascinating, and I love the creative ways KAA is able to bring them to new settings away from Earth, and this is the first time the Crayak is properly introduced and explained, a whole twenty books (!) after his first appearance. The book also harkens back to Jake's nightmares and trauma from being infested as a Controller, which is another great example of this series' continuity and not conveniently forgetting about past experiences that leave a lasting imprint on them.

PLUS, they get to go on an adventure with Erek, and he is another one of my favourite minor characters <3333

The worldbuilding in this one is just so ceaselessly creative; I loved every last piece of information about the Iskoot (their various guilds!!) and the Howlers. The secret behind the Iskoot, and the real reason for the Ellimist & Crayak staging their battle on this ground, is a deeply compelling one with hints of long-standing, future-set repercussions (long after the Animorphs' time).

Sigh. This book is so fantastic.

**EDIT:** OH MY GOD. I FORGOT TO MENTION ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS. JAKE AND CASSIE KISS!!!! CAKE, AT LAST. And it's a 'running full-tilt at each other, leaping into each others' arms, *thank god you're alive, I thought you were dead* instinctive kiss and the others are awkward about it until Marco cracks a joke and they all laugh and *it is just the cutest thing, okay*. Romance is not a big part of these books at all, but the few times you see it, I'm so invested because I adore these characters, and they've taken literally like 28 books (counting Megamorphs) to get to this point. The definition of slow-burn, y'all. Hell, maybe Animorphs was the origin of my love for slow-burn organic ships in fiction.

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## JonSnow says

Edit\* Solid 5 stars, not merely 4. This was a welcome book after the dread that was #25. And guess what. Applegate wrote #26! This book had it all! Love and hate, morality lessons, you name it. It was a stupendous book.

Spoilers ahead:

Omg, Jake and Cassie kissed! Shit just got real! You know, as if Howlers engineered to slaughter sentient beings, by some super-god-like-being at war with the Ellimist... weren't enough. Oh and add to that the fact

the Howlers are children with no adult stage who rejoice in the splendid activity of sentient slaughter. Wee, just like dolphins, fun fun happy slaughter time. It's late. Im over caffeinated, working 15 hours overnight... :)

This was a neat book and it was the last one I read many years ago! I actually vaguely remembered it as I was reading but that never detracts from the entertainment. at first I thought Guide and the other Iskoort we're just stupid annoying aliens. But through the character Guide I became amused by them and also fascinated by the fact that they are a different type of Yeerk, a good Yeerk, a symbiotic Yeerk neither Isk nor Yoort, able to live on their own. This dependency upon one another eliminates the parasitic need to infest other races and thus we find out that apparently in 300 years when they meet the Yeerks they will finally realize that there is another way other than dominating species and xenocide, through engineered symbiosis.

another amusing aspect of this book in and amongst all the darkness and horror was the fact that they managed to implant the idea of love in the Howlers, before Crayak was able to annihilate the Howlers who had lost. Because as it turns out the reason there is no memory of the hollers ever losing is because those that lose our swiftly killed so as not to ruin and contaminate the collective memory. But alas Jake and Cassie with their kiss in there show of affection and love have infected the howlers and thus made them no longer useful as a shock troop and deadly weapon of Crayak.

Speaking of darkness and horror KA Applegate does a remarkably decent job at having the reader comprehend the pure terror the Animorphs are feeling when confronted with such a horrifying enemy as the Howlers. It is this mix of humor and terror that particularly intrigued me about this book. one thing I have noticed with books, movies and shows is that no matter how dark something gets, the addition of humor at the right moment can drastically increase the likeability of something. For instance the television series Stargate SG-1 was remarkably good at incorporating humor and thus made the series much more entertaining as a result. Hence Marco in Animorphs, and the cheesy jokes abounding.

Over all this book was a drastically impressive improvement from the previous ghostwritten book. I am very glad that people on Goodreads recommended I continue with the series because having read this book I now know that there are yet more great stories to be told.

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### **Jenn says**

No way this doesn't end up in the Animorphs top ten. Absolutely stellar.

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### **Nikki says**

The kiss. Finally.

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### **The Library Ladies says**

(Full review here at the [thelibraryladies.com](http://thelibraryladies.com).)

Narrator: Jake

Plot: I remembered exactly three things about this book:

Crayak shows up

The Howlers have lava skin

JAKE AND CASSIE FINALLY KISS

Rachel literally says “it’s about time” after it happens. Preach it. (source)

Ever since becoming Controlled way back when and seeing a monstrous eye creature, Jake’s been having recurring dreams with this same eye-force-of-evil that keeps saying “Soon.” Now the answers have come in the form of the always-dreaded Ellimist who shows up at one of their school meetings, freezes times, and tells the Animorphs that he needs their help.

He gives them a brief overview of the state of things. Crayak is a similarly almost all-powerful being with whom the Ellimist has been warring with for forever. Once, they actually had a full on brawl, but after realizing that they took out huge swathes of the galaxy, they both agreed that their conflict needed to be continued in a different way (the Ellimist was upset by the general loss of life, Crayak at the loss of opportunities for continued dominion). Since then, they have been involved in an intergalactic game of chess, essentially. But they’ve come to an impasse. There is one alien species they cannot comprise my on. Crayak wants to destroy this species, the Ellimist can’t allow this to happen. To solve their problem, they’ve decided to host a cage fight, each putting up their seven best fighters. Winner’s team takes all. The Animorphs are surprised and horrified to learn that the Ellimist has chosen them, plus Erek. Crayak has chosen his Howlers, the alien species that wiped out the Chees’ creators, the Pernalites, so long ago.

The Animorphs debate their options. They all wonder at the Ellimist’s choice: how could they be his best fighters? Knowing him and the tricks he’s pulled in the past, they are suspicious that there is more to the story. On the other hand, the fate of an entire species is on the line, so ultimately, they agree.

In a second’s time, they find themselves smacked down in the middle of an alien city on another planet. The city is made up of a series of buildings, bridges, and stairways all towering miles above the planet’s surface. It is populated by an alien species that do their best to give the Helmacrons a run for their money as most obnoxious alien species. The Iskyoort are all obsessed with buying and selling random things, up to and including body parts and memories, and continuously badger the Animorphs until they finally decide to sell some of Rachel’s hair to hire a guide...who calls himself Guide.

As they wander, they run into their first Howler. Even with six against one (Erek cannot fight, given his peaceful programming), the battle does not go well. Not only is the Howler vicious and powerful, but he uses his namesake ability to devastating effect, emitting a head piercing howl that cripples most of the Animorphs. Ax, the only one not in morphs, suffers the most and briefly runs away from the battle. He does return, but they all suffer horrific wounds. Tiger! Jake gets stabbed in the neck and passes out. He wakes up in a room somewhere and is informed that they all barely escaped, and only survived by listening closely to Erek’s directions when one of them was about to be attacked. Ax is clearly not dealing well with the fact that he ran away, and is hiding in a corner.

The Animorphs realize there’s no way they will be able to outfight the Howlers, they will have to out think. They ask Guide whether the Iskyoort have any memories purchased from the Howlers that they can review. He says yes, and Erek downloads them all into his memory bank and shows one horrifying scene to the Animorphs, a group of Howlers systematically eliminating a peaceful group of aliens who don’t understand why they’re being attacked. The scene is hard for them all to see. They realize that the Howlers simply kill for the pleasure of killing, something that Cassie is quick to point out doesn’t make any biological sense. Erek reveals that it is because Crayak himself created the Howlers with only this purpose in mind.

They sleep in shifts, but are soon attacked again. Jake orders them all to morph small, hoping to outrun the

Howlers. EreK manages to block the doorway with his own body to allow them more time to complete their morphs to fly. After they escape, they have EreK find Guide and hide him in his hologram so the Howlers can't simply follow him to the Animorphs. The others also demorph and hide in the hologram as well. They realize that the rules of the game prohibit the Howlers from attacking the Iskyoorts themselves. Guide leads them to a place he calls the "Servant Guild" where he says they will be taken care of. He then informs them that he needs to leave them for a bit as the Iskyoort are a symbiotic species, and one part, the Yoort, needs to feed every three days in a Yoort pool.

Reality hits: the Iskyoorts are a variation of Yeerks. They force Guide to explain and explain fast. Guide explains that they are not like the Yeerks the Animorphs know. Far, far back in their own history, the Yoorts created the Isk. And to make them true symbiotes, the Isk NEED the Yoorts to live, but the Yoorts also NEED the Isk to live. One cannot survive without the other, thus creating a unified being. Slowly the reality of this sinks in, and with their understanding of the species, they see why this fight is so important to the Ellimist. If the other Yeerks could see this, learn of this alternative, some of them might also see this as a better way of living. If they Iskyoorts are wiped out, however, the Yeerks may continue as they are now forever.

They are then attacked once again by the Howlers, this time they push an airborne poison into the air system, prohibiting the Animorphs from re-using their bug strategy. Jake has EreK project an image of birds flying out one window, drawing the Howlers' fire, as the rest escape as actual birds through a back window. One Howler, however, spots them and takes off after them, shooting at them with a Dracon beam. Rachel and Cassie both quickly get hit, and Marco a bit later. Jake shouts at the others to use the Iskyoorts as cover. He tries to dive after Cassie, who is stunned on the ground, but realizes that he is simply leading the Howler to her. He is forced to leave her behind.

Jake manages to trick a Howler into chasing him through a hedge that leads to a drop off from one of the bridges. The Howler has miles to fall to his death. Jake manages to drop after him, demorph to human, acquire the Howler, and make it back to peregrine falcon before hitting the ground. On the flight back up, he meets up with Tobias who leads him to the entire group. Everyone is there, including Cassie. THEY KISS. Rachel says "Finally" and all readers agree.

Throughout this all, Jake's had a series of revelations. First, he realizes that Crayak must have a way of controlling the Howlers, so he can direct them as he chooses. Second, EreK had mentioned that when he downloaded the memories of the Howler, it was ALL of the memories, reaching back millions of years. From this, Jake theorizes that the Howlers have some type of collective memory, and in this collective memory the Howlers have never lost.

Jake then asks for a volunteer to pose as bait to lure the Howlers in. Ax volunteers, and they move to a more populated area, full of Iskyoorts and put the plan in action. Ax wanders out, gets the attention of the Howlers, and then runs, using the crowds of Iskyoorts to prevent them from getting a clear shot at him. Meanwhile, with grizzly!Rachel and gorilla!Marco standing nearby to take him out should things go badly, Jake morphs the Howler. Once morphed, he is bombarded by the same collective memories that EreK saw. Worse, he realizes that the Howlers are children, with lifespans of only three years. To them, they don't understand anything about killing other than it being a fun game. There are no adult Howlers, and they are all simply created by Crayak, with no reproductive system of their own. Jake is horrified to realize this, but there is still no other choice, so the plan proceeds.

A bloody Ax barges into the room, followed by the Howlers. The Animorphs grab one, and using the Iskyoort memory device (a headset and a transmitter), Howler!Jake begins to download his own memories into the collective. All of the Howlers pause. Then suddenly they disappear. Seconds later, the Animorphs, too, disappear and find themselves in the presence of Crayak himself. Crayak isn't pleased, but the Ellimist shows up and confirms that they Animorphs one, the Iskyoort will live. Jake searches his Howler memories.

As they planned, Crayak had to kill his own Howlers to prevent Jake's memories from polluting the entire species, not allowing the childlike Howlers to ever realize that this was more than a game, that their kills were actual beings. But Jake spots one memory that slipped through: his kiss with Cassie.

The Ellimist confirms that this will be problematic for Crayak, as in a future battle, he's seen the Howlers attempting to kiss the species they were sent to kill. He also confirms that the big win of this entire ordeal was that the odds have now been somewhat increased that 300 years in the future, the Yeerks will meet the Iskyoort and realize that there is another way. The Animorphs are all a bit put out that this is all they will have to show for their work. Jake goes home, and his dreams of Crayak are gone.

Our Fearless Leader: It's great to finally get the tie-in to Jake's book #6 when he was a Controller and first saw the super scary red eye. From the very beginning, it's clear that Jake feels a sense of relief knowing what this is really about, and also understands to a greater degree than the others the power and awfulness of this creature.

As I discuss in the "plans" section below, this book does a lot to highlight Jake's quick thinking and ability to put together a complex plan using only pieces of knowledge. He also is able to anticipate the needs and actions of his group. He comments early that he's grown to respect Marco's suspicions and give them extra weight. He effectively uses Ax's adherence to military order to force him not to sacrifice himself when the Howlers attack, saying that he has to follow his Prince's orders. He anticipates that Rachel will volunteer for the mission to pose as bait and is able to subtly warn her off, allowing Ax to volunteer. When Cassie goes down as a bird, he accepts that he has to leave her behind in order to draw away the Howler to save the entire group, even though this decision tears him apart.

It's really great stuff all around. And particularly the end, when he has to confront the reality of the Howlers as children, we see the weight these decisions place on Jake and how he leans on his friends to help support him in making these choices.

Xena, Warrior Princess: There are a specific kind of Iskyoort whose who point is to shop (Guide explains that there must be people to buy all of the things they want to sell!). She claims that she has found her people: a species dedicated to shopping. Also, when Jake asks for volunteers for the dangerous mission to lure the Howlers to them, he has to quickly catch Rachel's eye and subtly shake his head. She already has her mouth open to volunteer, when he spots her, but she quickly understands what he's doing by giving Ax an opportunity to feel better about himself after running.

A Hawk's Life: Tobias doesn't have much in this book. He's the most comfortable traveling around the city though, given his ability to fly. The others are quite perturbed by the heights and lack of railings that make up the world.

Peace, Love, and Animals: Besides the BIG KISS, Cassie provides further insights into violence and how out of whack with evolution and biology the Howlers are with their baseless violence. She is also an early "yes" vote in the discussion of whether or not to play the Ellimist's game, as she sees the potential loss of an entire species as a nonnegotiable factor.

The Comic Relief: Marco suffers quite a bit of damage in this book. He gets hit badly in the first fight, gets a wing blown off in the second, and gets stabbed in the third. Other than that, the struggles to not be bitter and angry about the limitations of Ereka's programming that prohibits him from fighting.

E.T./Ax Phone Home: Ax has a pretty distinct arc in this book, dealing with the fact that he is forced to run away when they are first attacked by the Howlers. He completely retreats into himself, and when the Howlers attack again, looks to want to go on a suicide mission to attack them, to prove to himself that he is now a coward. For the first time ever, Jake has to pull the "Prince" card out.

Later we see how savvy Jake is when he “offers” the opportunity for someone to take on a super special, super risky mission to serve as bait. Jake also takes the time to have a one-on-one conversation to Ax, telling him to snap out of it and cut himself some slack. The other Animorphs were all in morph and they know that the Howlers’ “howl” is meant to take out sentient species. That being the case, Ax, as the only one in his true form, was the only one hit with the full force of the howl. And given how much it messed up the others, even with their morphs shielding them somewhat, Ax running away was by no means a show of cowardice. Ax is skeptical, but it’s clear that some of this gets through to him, and with the opportunity to lure the Howlers in, by the end of the story, it looks like he makes it through this internal crisis OK.

Best (?) Body Horror Moment: The gore of the fights with the Howlers was pretty bad. In the first fight, Jake describes gorilla!Marco getting hit by a flechette that pretty punched a hole the size of a pop can through him. Also when Jake is morphing the Howler, there are some lovely descriptions of his being able to see his own spine. Really, the Andalites need to work on this technology a bit more. It seems that morphers have an up-close view of their body without skin WAY too often in the process.

Couples Watch!: Um, obviously the kiss! I do like that the kiss itself played an important role in the story, as the one memory out of millions that slipped through into the Howlers’ group consciousness. This fact did help alleviate the problem that it really did feel like a “Finally!” moment in the the worst way. As I mentioned in a few reviews leading up to this, especially when laid parallel to the pacing and arc of the Tobias/Rachel romance, Jake and Cassie’s relationship has felt oddly lacking. It almost didn’t feel believable that they would have still been caught up in the teenage shyness and silliness after living the very traumatic and adult lives they’ve had to with this war. But, again, by tying the kiss into the actual over-arching theme of the book, Applegate does a good job of justifying the delay. It is implied that Cassie and Jake’s love is the first step to the ultimate ruin of the Howlers.

If Only Visser Three had Mustache to Twirl: I don’t think I made either of these connections as a kid, but re-reading this book now, it was really hard to picture both of the big bads in this without referencing other, similar villains. Crayak might as well BE Sauron for all his descriptions sound exactly the same: big red eye that is on fire. Yep! The Howlers also are very similar to Predator, not so much in how they look (which I still think is super cool, with their dark lava-like skin), but in their general being that is focused on being the most efficient killers in the universe.

I also really loved the late-game reveal about the Howlers being children. For one, they were already awesome villains and were handily beating our heroes throughout most of the book in a way that we’ve never seen before. But then to realize that they are pretty much ignorant of what they’re truly doing? It’s like they think they’re in a very elaborate video game or something. And that they have no life outside of this game and are only kids, just like the Animorphs, but more sad, in that their lives are only 3 years long and they are just tools of this greater evil. It does a lot to “humanize,” as it were, the Howlers, making them not just mindless killing machines, but truly pitiable and almost tragic beings.

Adult Ugly Crying at a Middle Grade Book: Applegate doesn’t shy away from the reveal around the Howlers being children. Several pages are given to Jake fully coming to grips with what this means, and to Cassie’s horror. And to the fact that they still have no choice but to go through with a plan that’s success lies on Crayak destroying the remaining six Howlers. The very last bit of the book is what really got me though:

Instead I dreamed about Cassie. But in my dreams I also saw that Howler, falling and falling beside me. Falling still, as I spread my wings and split my fate from his.

Marco’s always saying you choose how to see the world. That you can look at what’s funny and cool, or you can focus on all the things that aren’t.

So I tried to follow Marco’s advice. I tried to turn my dreams to Cassie. But even looking into her eyes, I still saw that doomed Howler falling.

What a Terrible Plan, Guys!: All of their plans are pretty good here! Jake adeptly pivots and shifts as he

gains experience with the Howlers' methods. He quickly understands that simple survival is the key until they work out a better plan of action, coming up with first the fly morph to escape, and then the bait-and-switch with Ereks' hologram as they escape as birds. He also puts quite a few moving pieces together to form the final plan where they essentially hijack the Howler group mind.

Favorite Quote:

Throughout the story, there's a lot of descriptions of precarious traveling from one level to another level using railing-less stairways miles in the sky, so Marco is a bit upset to learn:

Guide led us to a different level. This time we went up. And this time we took an elevator.

"Elevators! You have elevators?" Marco raged. "We're traipsing up and down stairs and you have elevators?"

less scenic,> Guide said.

Scorecard: Yeerks 6, Animorphs 12

A bit point to the Animorphs! Obviously they weren't up against the Yeerks themselves, but in 300 years...But seriously, the Howlers were probably the toughest guys they gone up against yet, and the Animorphs were quite smart about putting together the one plan that would work to come out with a win.

Rating: I didn't notice as much as a kid, but man, reading these again as an adult, it is so, so clear when you go from one of the ghost-written books back to one written by Applegate herself. Not only is the plot of this story so much more focused and clear, but the characterization is much more solid, and the series gets back to its roots of tackling the bigger moral and philosophical aspects of their ongoing battle. It's such a breath of fresh air after the last few books.

Beyond that, this book is a solid installation into the series. We finally get an explanation for the red eye that Jake saw so long ago. The Ellimist shows up again, and we get a better idea of the sheer scale of his ongoing battle with Crayak. And Jake and Cassie finally kiss. FINALLY.

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## Noella says

[with collective memories (hide spoiler)]

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## Sarah says

I kind of hated this. Here's why:

1. The Ellimist is a big ol creep and I hate him. He's meant to be a good guy, but really, no one is good except for the six animorph teenagers and they are completely alone because even the good aliens who are meant to help them are actually terrible.
2. (big spoiler) There's a race of alien toddlers who are created to be horrifically violent and murder entire races, and this, to them, is play. They don't know any better because they are murdered at age 3 before they

can learn about what they are doing.

3. I was struck by Jake's disparaging thoughts on nonviolence in this book. His thoughts on this make sense to me. The kids have really reached a point where every mission is a by-every-means-necessary ordeal, and any attempt to be virtuous and merciful is met with scorn.

This is such a harrowing installment in the series. It gives us good background into the mythos and history of this intergalactic conflict.

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## Ben Babcock says

The Animorphs save everyone with the Power of Love™, and it would be disgusting if they didn't need this win so very much.

*The Attack* is notoriously the last *Animorphs* book written exclusively by K.A. Applegate for a very long stretch. As such it is regarded (accurately) as an island of quality among otherwise mediocre, or at least uneven, books. Indeed, this is a great book—not quite five stars, because it didn't really move me the way some of the previous books have, but as far as the story goes, it successfully combines high stakes with a plot that makes sense. The whole thing practically gives one chills, reading it.

We've seen the Ellimist before, so when he shows up again proposing that the Animorphs help him in some big interstellar game of chess, they naturally hesitate. Except that the Ellimist's opponent is Crayak—the weird, semi-mechanical, force-of-pure-evil being that Jake first glimpsed when his Yeerk died at the end of #6: *The Capture*. So they agree to participate (duh), and along with Erek, get sent to a world “millions of light-years” from Earth, to save the indigenous Iskoort species from Crayak's seven representatives—deadly, never-defeated Howlers.

(Minor science nitpick: Applegate, earlier in the book, implies that the Ellimist and Crayak are limited to this galaxy, because a “more powerful” force ejected Crayak from another galaxy. A distance of millions of light-years would put the Iskoort planet well outside our galaxy, which is an order of magnitude smaller.)

There's a lot to like about *The Attack*, particularly if you like Jake as the narrator. Never has he been so clearly the leader of the Animorphs as now, when they undertake one of their most dangerous missions ever. The others all look to him automatically, and he exercises his authority much more explicitly here—for example, he orders Ax to stop moping about running from the Howlers, invoking his reluctant role as Ax's “prince”. Jake has to struggle to conceal his fear, particularly given that much of it comes from the indirect involvement of Crayak, who continues to plague him in nightmares.

As usual, Applegate also raises moral issues surrounding war and conflict. The Howlers are deadly. They killed the Pemalites, slaughtered countless other species in cold blood ... but they are also just *children*. Like WTF? Is it ethical to kill them? Indeed, you'll notice that the Animorphs' chosen resolution—Jake's idea—very deliberately side-steps that issue. *They* don't kill the Howlers; Crayak does. They are indirectly responsible, of course. But their hands are technically clean. I wonder how they feel about that. It's interesting that Erek managed to work it around his pacifist programming.

We also get treated to a brand new, amazing alien species. The Iskoort are a delight. In a few sentences Applegate implies entire social strata. Consummate salespeople, the Iskoort society is organized around the exchange of goods and services. They buy and sell everything—including memories, and there are entire parts of their society dedicated to buying what factories produce; it's a kind of satirical look at capitalism for

kids, I suppose. This might be one of the first books that, while reading it as a kid, made me realize I just don't visualize when I read. I had no real image in my head of what an Iskoort looked like. I still don't. I paid very close attention to Applegate's meticulous description of their strange bodies, but it didn't provoke anything in my mind's eye. Maybe I need imaginary glasses?

And then there is the carrot Applegate dangles in front of us, the resolution to the Yeerk problem. One of the longer-term issues in this series has been the kind of endgame we might expect—even if the Animorphs and Andalites defeat the Yeerks, what will they do with them? Genocide seems a bit extreme. Confine them to Yeerk pools to live out a very restricted existence? Or maybe there's a third option.... This is what I love about Applegate and this series: she reminds us that there are always possibilities, that there is always hope. And part of being a hero or being "the good guy" is being able to see that bigger picture, to look at battles from a different perspective, instead of persisting in an us-or-them mentality.

Next time, the Animorphs have to dive deeply to get to another alien shipwreck. James Cameron, eat your heart out.

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

← #25: *The Extreme* | #27: *The Exposed* →

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### **Tulsi says**

I loved this book. Probably the best one of the regular books, until the final three. An epic battle between our heroes and a second race of super predators. Lots of mythical history of the galaxy, but also the inclusion of the idea that a solution to a conflict can be found in different ways than violence. This is the reason we read these books.

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### **Jenny Clark says**

"Me, I like quiet and still. Didn't used too. But now I guess any time I get to sit quietly, no running, no morphing, no terror, no screams, no horrible decisions and horrible aftermath..."

That sums up this book pretty well. Jake is haunted by what he as done, and by Crayak. The Howlers were a really well written antagonist. Jake wanting to save them because he saw they were all children was really deep.

Jake and Cassie! Yes, after so long! Yes!

Gosh, I love this series more with each book.

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### **Swankivy says**

Oh, you thought this battle was already epic? How about when the Animorphs get pulled in as the players in a grand-scale gambling game, fighting for a nigh-omnipotent creature named the Ellimist?

26 was awesome. The Animorphs (fighting for the Ellimist) have to fight the Howlers (who are on Crayak's side). In a completely unfamiliar environment. Without understanding of their motivation. Gosh, like they don't already have enough to worry about.

Notable moments and inconsistencies:

This book opens with a prologue--not the usual fare for *Animorphs*--and makes reference to the events of a previous book, when Jake was infested with a Yeerk. He remembers that after the Yeerk died, he saw a vision of a creature with a red eye that could see him. Way back when that happened, readers had no context to understand who/what was looking at him, but in this book we finally get to find out what that was all about.

The Iskoort race is introduced in this book. They communicate through thought-speak like the Andalites, but have a honking/wheezing ability for vocalizing, which comes from their stomachs. They are very pushy, like alien salespeople, wanting to sell or receive services without a care for whether the targeted party is interested.

Not that it's impossible, of course, but it's odd that of all the people to lose balance and be knocked off a platform, it'd be Rachel, who's a gymnast and has experience balancing on various gymnastic equipment.

The Howlers are introduced part-way through the book; though they've been mentioned before as the executioners of the Pernalite race, they've never been described until this book. The narration describes them as being on the large side of man-sized, formed out of a black lava-looking substance with red cracks, having blue eyes, and having a rotating mid-section and human-like hands with a set of wrist claws above them. They regenerate limbs and have a powerful howl that can paralyze victims. They also carry a lot of weapons, and--unbeknownst to most--have an extremely carefree, happy disposition, not entirely unlike the Pernalites. Making war is a game to them, and they're all children.

Cassie is unusually cynical and pessimistic in this book, though she's still very caring and empathetic. Jake's narration comments on how unusual this is several times.

This is also the book in which Jake and Cassie have their first kiss. Rachel's response is, "It's about time."

A thought-speak tag failed to close during a conversation shortly after Jake morphed a Howler.

The other races that the Howlers had destroyed up to that point besides the Pernalites were called Graffen's Children, Mashtimee, Pon, and Nostnavay. They will also be attacking the Sharf Den in the future.

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## **Kelsey says**

I really liked this one. A lot of weird stuff goes on, and Erek and Ellimist are both in it. We also get some more interesting lore about the larger galaxy.

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## **Stephanie says**

A refreshingly strong installment in the *Animorphs* saga. It is rich in plot, in character development, and despite being driven by the Ellimist and his games, rich in the fact it all makes sense. This is the quality I

remember in the Animorphs books, and am glad that I was not completely misremembering things.

The Ellimist draws the Animorphs more directly into his games, and the Animorphs learn who he is gaming against: the Crayak. And they are the Ellimist's pawns, his little secret weapon, to further his goals – which he also clues them in to more. Between fighting the Yeerks and being plucked out of their lives to be the Ellimist's pawns, there is just no rest for the Animorphs. The subtle changes they have been going through as they grow and adapt to their new lives are becoming more and more evident, not to mention more pronounced.

In this match, it is the Animorphs plus Erek the Chee against seven Howlers – the race which destroyed the Pernalites. And they are fighting each other to determine if a new alien race, the Iskoort, will survive. But why the Iskoort? What is so special about them? And how do you defeat an undefeated race which has all the knowledge and experience a continuous collective memory has to offer?

### **Reality was plenty distorted.**

The Ellimist had grown thoughtful. Perplexed, almost. Hard to picture when you were looking at Beth's bangs and the zit on her chin, but I knew who he was and what he was, and I guess I've had to get past judging anyone by looks. In a world where anyone could be a Controller, you begin to realize just how irrelevant looks are. – page 14 – And when one of your closest friends is a red-tailed hawk, and another is an Andalite, and another is an android, to pick out the most obvious ones... yeah, looks really don't matter nearly as much as what is on the inside.

Floating across our field of vision, like distorted TV pictures, were flickering images of our own interactions with the Ellimist. The times he had played a role, though never a controlling one. When he had shown us that we could escape Earth and live on a sort of game preserve for endangered humans. And when he had used Tobias to help some Hork-Baji escape to found a free colony.

And when he had twisted time to return Elfangor from his happy life, hiding as a human, to a world of struggle, pain, and ultimately death as an Andalite warrior.

Elfangor, who was Tobias's true father, and the one who had given us our powers. – page 19 – I guess Tobias did tell the others about his parentage after finding out himself. I really would have liked to see that explanation and their reactions, though...that probably would have been sufficient to redeem his last book for me, too.

“So what does this tell us?” Rachel demanded. “This Crayak already doesn't like us, so we go and fight his handpicked team? Maybe win? Then he loves us? I don't think so.”

/Side bets,/ Tobias said.

I nodded. No one else got it. – page 29 – I had to really think about this, sad to say. But it makes sense that Jake and Tobias would get it right away. Jake the leader who strategizes, and Tobias the thinker, the eyes in the sky, the one who also strategizes.

“You can't fight,” Rachel said bluntly [to Erek]. “No offense, but I'd rather go get Jara Hamee or one of the other free Hork-Bajir. Or like Ax said, an Andalite warrior. We need firepower.”

“Yes, but that won't be enough.” Erek shook his head. “You won't defeat the Howlers in one-on-one combat. They are too deadly. You'll need more than your morphs. You'll have to outthink them. And I know them. I know the Howlers.”

The argument hit home with Rachel. “Fair enough.” – page 32 – Ah, direct evidence of Rachel's realization/maturing after she had waited with David until he was trapped in morph.

“Don't lie to us, Guide. Have you ever met an Andalite before?” [I asked.]

Guide shot a nervous glance at Ax. /No./

“Well, Andalites have the power to mind-meld with people. They can look right inside their thoughts and know if they’re lying, and if you are lying, they make your head explode.”

No one cracked a smile. Although Marco had to struggle.

/Now Ax is a Vulcan?/ Tobias asked me in private thought-speak. – page 42 – And the Star Trek references continue! I’d say Ms. Applegate is much more of a Star Trek fan than a Star Wars fan; whatever it is, I am thoroughly enjoying the references.

/He wouldn’t have put us here if we weren’t at least theoretically capable of winning,/ Tobias said.

“Unless there’s some other, deeper game the Ellimist is playing,” Cassie said. “He’s fighting a battle for entire species, entire planets. We’re just pawns.”

That was more cynicism than I was used to hearing from Cassie. But she wasn’t wrong. The Ellimist and Crayak were both way over our heads. – page 64 – I was enjoying the chess references throughout the story, and wish there had been a “Checkmate” or at least a “Check” mentioned somewhere by Jake at the end. That would have been perfect. As for Cassie’s cynicism: I’d say Cassie is just getting more realistic – after what she has seen, she can’t remain the same gentle, always hopeful person she was before. She had to adapt and grow up, and this is a reflection of that.

“They’re faster than we are, stronger than we are, better armed than we are,” Cassie said glumly. Then she lifted her face, eyes wary. “But are they smarter than we are?”

[...They’ve had a lot longer to evolve and become technologically advanced]

/Doesn’t make them smarter,/ Tobias said. /The Ellimist said some species evolve quickly, others slowly. If you get a billion years’ head start, of course you have better weapons and technology than a species that started later. Doesn’t mean you’re smarter. Maybe it just means you started earlier./

It was a weak thread to hang by. But it was all we had. – page 65 – And you have hung by much thinner threads before, so this is not exactly abnormal.

(view spoiler)

## Kim Dyer says

In my opinion, The Attack has been one of the strongest books to date. Following on from a couple of weak efforts, this book is action packed and full of well-integrated twists. It also marks a shift in the series's lore. It is only the second book (after Megamorphs #2) to turn the focus away from the Yeerks, instead focusing on the bigger picture. While I have never been a fan of the Ellimist, the addition of his chaotic evil counter-part, the Crayak, is strangely compelling. I like the idea of the two forces at work controlling the universe and I'm curious to see how it will effect the war going forwards.

The story also has some great character development for Jake. It's not as heavy-handed as some of the other stories but it's interesting to see how deeply the battle against the Howlers effects him. As Jake comes to realise the creatures' motivations, it leads to some really powerful scenes and show that he's grown since his moral dilemma concerning a human serial killer in The Warning. While it is the first book where Cassie and Jake kiss, it's clear that their relationship will not be easy due to the terrible toll that the war has already taken on Jake. It's surprisingly powerful and left me curious to see where his next book will take him.

All in all, highly recommended. I hope the series can maintain this momentum in the next one.

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## Alan Gilfoy says

"Liking this Ellimist book was a piece of cake"

Normally, I think the Ellimist books are weird, and EreK comes off as mainly an exposition machine. However, I found a lot to like about this one.

I liked the Iskoort world and people even before it was revealed what the species was really all about. The reminds me of how I liked Leera and the Leerans from #18 The Decision. I understand how the Animorphs were initially suspicious of the Iskoort's story, though they eventually figured it out.

The terms for the Ellimist-Crayak fight are a good example of rules of war as a quid pro quo to control the carnage. It is indeed very important for both sides to stick to that in order for it to work. Likewise, the Chee are a good sci-fi and exaggerated spin on the ethics of pacifism.

The high emotions of them escaping danger again make sense as prompting the romantic development. Marco and Rachel riffing off each other about it also makes sense.

The shopping culture makes a point about how capitalism needs to hustle its excess. Are jokes about mallrat Rachel the sugarcoating on that?

The ending seems to say that although Jake and the other Animorphs are trying to focus on the good things, the bad things have still taken ahold of them.

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