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Have Space Suit, Will Travel



Synopsis

When Kip Russell wins a used space suit, he has no idea it will lead to his abduction by aliens, much less that he will wind up crossing the galaxy with a pint-sized genius named Pee Wee and an empathetic alien creature called the "Mother Thing." It's a galaxy spanning adventure from the greatest science fiction writer of all time.

Book Information

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Authors, A-Z > (H) > Heinlein, Robert A. #1789 in Books > Books on CD > Children's Fiction >

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Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Grade 7 Up-Robert Heinlein's 1958 story comes to life and is still timely almost half a century after it was published.. Teenager Kip Russell, infatuated with the idea of traveling to the Moon, enters a contest to win such an opportunity. However, his dream becomes a nightmare and a space soap opera when he comes upon a race of space creatures who have kidnapped a little girl from Earth's Moon Station. Rescuing Pee Wee lands Kip with a traveling companion who is very smart but much in need of protection. Fortunately, or so the kids believe at first, another alien being, whom they call the "Mother Thing," is available as both advisor and space guide. Their travels take them to Pluto, where they escape the clutches of Bronx-gangster humans, and then out to galaxies beyond our own. Eventually, Kip and Pee Wee stand trial in the stead of all humanity, a race charged with its rampant disregard for peace and environmental justice. Bruce Coville's young audiobook company treats this tale handily, with each character well acted by an age-appropriate reader. Pee Wee's childish voice sometimes requires adjustment to the volume level, but she and Kip carry the major portion of the tale between them, with interesting and appropriate musical

effects added during chapter breaks and to the voice of the Mother Thing. Heinlein's writing stands the test of time, and contemporary youth will be inspired by the visions of space travel their own grandparents might have had at their age.-Francisca Goldsmith, Berkeley Public Library, CA
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"Still timely." --School Library Journal "It's easy to see why Robert Heinlein ranks at the top among science fiction writers . . . He adds a delightful sense of humor and a deft sense of timing and suspense." --Chicago Tribune --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

My 11 year old's first foray into true science fiction. This started as an assignment from his English teacher (read a SF book). I wanted him to read a real SF book and know what it really was versus the plethora of SF/Fantasy that has grayed the two genres. I bought the kindle version as it was much less expensive than trying to buy a paperback. It was our first kindle book too. At first he found the detailed descriptions overwhelming but by the time he was 30 pages into it, he was loving the story. I was very happy to be able to introduce him to the world of real science fiction (for young people), and there are not many better than Heinlein and his SF writing for juveniles. This book has also been praised as one of his best juvenile SF books too. My son stated that he still prefers the real thing (paperback/hardbound) books over ebooks for the feel and enjoyment of it, but he does not mind the kindle book.

My book club picked this as our first novel to read. It's classic 'old school' sci-fi written for YA. It was a easy, short read. I greatly enjoyed the first part of the book when he's building the space suit and was surprised by how much science terms and jargon was used. Once he's in space (obvious b/c it's on the book cover) things get a little weird, but I felt like it was very much in line for YA novels of its time. I was surprised how easy it was to read. The plot itself isn't very deep and our protagonist doesn't really make that much of an impact aside from being present. That being said, it was fun, but not serious, and a good first book for our club.

Here is the penultimate Heinlein "juvenile", written right before the militaristic Starship Troopers caused so much controversy. This is a gentler, more expansive, and, I would say, better book. First thing to say, minus any spoilers, is boy, did this guy with a spacesuit travel. The title is a play on the popular TV series from the 50s "Have Gun Will Travel." In this novel, Heinlein goes to great length

to describe the spacesuit our 18-year-old hero has won by dedicating himself to submitting thousands of entries to a soap-slogan contest. The analyses I've encountered indicate that technologically speaking the spacesuit specifications have held up pretty well. Our man goes to the moon. At first. Later to many places in space, showing a reach I don't recall in any other Heinlein I've read, more reminiscent of the vastness of space as described by A. E. Van Vogt, or Asimov in the Foundation trilogy. One interesting aspect of this novel is the degree to which it is planted squarely in the late 1950s, when it was written. Here Heinlein makes no attempt at social speculation; the book deploys all the tropes of the 50s with only the added features that humans have rockets and have gone to the moon. So our hero Kip wins his spacesuit by submitting thousands of entries of slogans to a soap company that sponsors a TV show. He's a soda jerk plagued by a real-life jerk who constantly calls him a space cadet, in scenes reminiscent of "Back to the Future". (It's not first prize, which is a trip to the moon.) Here, before Heinlein decided in Starship Troopers to make his uncompromising statement in favor of military commitment and vitality, with a society organized to support that before anything else, we see a much more balanced universe, with brutal villains and gentle heroes, embodied by the "Mother thing", a female specimen of a versatile, empathetic cat-like species that saves Kip and PeeWee, the younger tomboy female protagonist, from a brutal race of aliens. Here we see sweet young adult/pubescent proto-courtship, as PeeWee matches or surpasses Kip for intelligence and bravery, with lots of competitive banter and (very) occasional flirtation. Ultimately Kip and PeeWee must present the case before a super-galactic court that the human species should not (at least yet) be wiped out as a potential threat to the civilized inhabitants of the known universe. Challenging work if you can get it. The book is one more instance of how Heinlein can be as square as square can be (including a reference to Kip's high school winning a square dance championship), but also inspiringly all-American and ultimately transcendent as a statement that promotes improvisational bravery, independence, and decency. Pretty damn wonderful book.

"Have Space Suit- Will Travel" is among the greatest young reader adventures by one of the greatest science fiction writers ever. Join Kip (winner of a used space suit in an ad slogan contest), Peewee (precocious young super genius who snooped around where she didn't belong) and the Mother Thing (she's... um... the Mother Thing) as they try to save Earth from the dreaded Wormfaces! This book, one of my all-time favorites, first captivated me in about 4th grade, and I've introduced it to my own children. This book is suitable for skilled elementary school readers (grades 4+) and up. It doesn't get any better than this.

Heinlein what can I say...I first discovered him when I was about 13. My brother made the mistake of leaving his book laying around. I picked it up and was soon engrossed. I snuck it to my room so I could read it in peace (anyone with older siblings will understand.) an hour or so later I heard his obnoxious knock on my door. Quickly shoving the book under my pillow I opened the door. Denying I knew anything about where his book was I slammed my door in his face. Aahh little sisters can be a pain with doors! Two days later my Mom "accidentally" found it under the couch while she was cleaning! It was while she was "discussing" this with my brother I swiped Rocket Ship Galileo from his room! ;) I recommend Heinlein's books to any and everyone!

I'm new to Heinlien and somewhat new to science fiction. But this may be one of the finest books I have read. I look forward to much more Heinlien. I wish I had found him years ago.

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