

tarzan alive a definitive biography of lord greystoke

Tarzan Alive: A Definitive Biography of Lord Greystoke is a fascinating exploration into the life of one of literature's most enduring characters, Tarzan, who is often perceived solely as a fictional creation of Edgar Rice Burroughs. However, this biography posits that Tarzan, or Lord Greystoke, is not merely a figment of imagination but a complex character with a rich backstory that reflects the themes of identity, civilization, and the wilderness.

This article delves into the various aspects of Tarzan's life, character development, and the cultural impact he has had on literature and media, while also examining the intricate relationship between reality and fiction in Burroughs' creation.

Understanding the Origins of Tarzan

Edgar Rice Burroughs introduced Tarzan to the world in 1912 in his novel "Tarzan of the Apes." The character is depicted as a man raised by apes in the African jungle after his parents, Lord and Lady Greystoke, are marooned and subsequently perish.

The Concept of the 'Noble Savage'

- Cultural Context: The portrayal of Tarzan as a 'noble savage' is intertwined with the early 20th-century fascination with primitivism and the idea of returning to nature. This concept

resonated with readers who were increasingly disillusioned with modernity.

- Psychological Implications: Tarzan's dual identity as both a man of the jungle and a product of British aristocracy raises questions about the nature of civilization itself. Is he more human when he is with the apes, or does his return to civilization strip him of his true essence?

The Influence of Burroughs' Life on Tarzan

Edgar Rice Burroughs' own life experiences significantly influenced the creation of Tarzan.

- Background: Burroughs was born in Chicago in 1875 and had a varied career, including stints in the military and as a businessman before turning to writing.

- Adventures and Explorations: His fascination with adventure literature and exploration of places like Africa shaped his understanding of the jungle and its inhabitants, which he vividly portrayed through Tarzan.

Life Events of Lord Greystoke

While Tarzan is a fictional character, the biography attempts to humanize him by charting the key events that define his life, drawing parallels with real-world issues and historical contexts.

Childhood in the Jungle

1. **Isolation and Survival:** After being orphaned, Tarzan learns survival skills from the apes, emphasizing themes of adaptation and resilience.
2. **Discovery of Heritage:** His eventual discovery of the Greystoke estate and the realization of his noble lineage serves as a pivotal moment in his life.

Return to Civilization

- **Conflict of Identity:** Upon returning to England, Tarzan grapples with his dual identity. He is torn between his primal instincts and the expectations of aristocratic society.
- **Cultural Clashes:** Tarzan's interactions with the British elite highlight the cultural

misunderstandings and prejudices of the time. His raw, instinctual behavior is often at odds with the rules of etiquette, leading to both conflict and humor.

The Legacy of Tarzan

Tarzan Alive: A Definitive Biography of Lord Greystoke not only chronicles Tarzan's life but also examines his profound impact on global culture and literature.

Literary Contributions

- **Pioneering Adventure Genre:** Tarzan is one of the first characters to embody the archetype of the adventure hero, paving the way for future literary figures.
- **Influence on Other Works:** The character has inspired countless adaptations in various media, including films, television shows, and comic books.

Cultural Impact

1. **Symbol of Masculinity:** Tarzan has often been viewed as an embodiment of ideal masculinity, a figure who is strong, resourceful, and deeply connected to nature.
2. **Environmental Themes:** The novels also touch upon themes of conservation and respect for nature, which resonate with contemporary environmental movements.
3. **Racial and Colonial Issues:** While Tarzan is often celebrated, his character has also been critiqued for its colonial undertones and the racial dynamics present in Burroughs' writing.

Tarzan in Modern Adaptations

The character has undergone various transformations in modern adaptations, reflecting changing societal views and cultural sensitivities.

Film and Television

- **Classic Films:** The early 20th century saw a slew of adaptations that emphasized Tarzan's physical prowess and romantic escapades, often sidelining deeper themes.

- **Recent Interpretations:** Modern adaptations, such as Disney's animated film and the more recent live-action versions, have made efforts to portray a more nuanced Tarzan, incorporating contemporary issues like environmentalism and identity politics.

Tarzan in Popular Culture

- **Merchandising and Branding:** Tarzan has become a brand, with merchandise ranging from toys to clothing, indicating his lasting appeal.
- **Theme Parks and Attractions:** The character has played a role in theme parks, further embedding him into popular culture and offering interactive experiences.

Conclusion

Tarzan Alive: A Definitive Biography of Lord Greystoke serves as a thorough exploration of not just a fictional character but a cultural icon whose influence spans generations. By examining the interplay between Burroughs' life and the adventures of his creation, readers gain insights into the complexities of

identity, civilization, and the human experience.

The character of Tarzan continues to evolve, reflecting the ongoing dialogues about race, environment, and what it means to be human in an increasingly complex world. As we delve into Tarzan's legacy, we uncover not just a story of survival and adventure but a mirror reflecting our own societal values and challenges.

Thus, the biography of Lord Greystoke transcends mere storytelling; it becomes a lens through which we can examine our past and contemplate our future.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is the author of 'Tarzan Alive: A Definitive Biography of Lord Greystoke'?

The book is authored by Philip José Farmer.

What is the main premise of 'Tarzan Alive'?

The book presents a fictional biography of Tarzan, suggesting he is based on a real person named John Clayton, Lord Greystoke.

How does 'Tarzan Alive' reinterpret the original Tarzan stories?

Farmer blends elements of fiction and reality, exploring Tarzan's life in a way that connects him with historical events and figures.

What genre does 'Tarzan Alive' belong to?

It is considered a work of speculative fiction, with elements of biography and adventure.

In what year was 'Tarzan Alive' published?

The book was published in 1972.

How does Philip José Farmer approach Tarzan's heritage in the biography?

Farmer delves into Tarzan's noble lineage and examines the implications of his upbringing in the jungle.

What themes are explored in 'Tarzan Alive'?

Themes of identity, civilization versus nature,

and the impact of colonialism are central to the narrative.

Did 'Tarzan Alive' receive any critical acclaim?

Yes, it has been praised for its imaginative approach and depth in character development.

Is 'Tarzan Alive' part of a larger series or universe?

Yes, it is part of Farmer's World Newton family that connects various literary characters in a shared universe.

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