

tarzan of the apes edgar rice burroughs

Tarzan of the Apes is a groundbreaking novel written by Edgar Rice Burroughs, first published in 1912. This iconic work introduced readers to the legendary character of Tarzan, a man raised by apes in the African jungle, and it has since become a significant part of literary and popular culture. Burroughs' story is not only an adventure filled with excitement but also a profound exploration of themes such as identity, civilization, and the clash between nature and nurture. This article delves into the creation, themes, characters, and enduring legacy of "Tarzan of the Apes."

Creation and Publication of "Tarzan of the Apes"

Edgar Rice Burroughs was an American writer born on September 1, 1875. Before becoming a novelist, Burroughs had a varied career, including stints as a soldier, a cowboy, and a pencil sharpener salesman. His foray into writing began with the publication of "Tarzan of the Apes," which was serialized in "All-Story Magazine" in 1912 before being released as a book later that year.

Inspiration and Development

The inspiration for "Tarzan of the Apes" came from a combination of influences, including:

- Adventure novels: Burroughs was an avid reader of adventure fiction, which inspired him to create his own thrilling narratives.
- Jungle explorations: The fascination with Africa and its untamed wilderness during the early 20th century also played a crucial role in shaping the setting of the novel.
- Personal experiences: Burroughs' background, including his experiences in the military and his interest in anthropology, informed his portrayal of the jungle and its inhabitants.

The story revolves around John Clayton, the heir to the British Lord Greystoke title, who is marooned in the African jungle after his parents are killed. Raised by a tribe of apes known as the Mangani, Clayton adopts the name Tarzan, which means "white skin" in the ape language.

Plot Summary

"Tarzan of the Apes" follows Tarzan's journey as he navigates the complexities of life in the jungle and later encounters civilization. The plot can be summarized in several key sections:

Early Life in the Jungle

- Tarzan grows up among the apes, learning their ways and developing extraordinary physical abilities.
- His discovery of his human heritage occurs when he finds his parents' cabin and learns to read and write from the books left behind.

Encounter with Humans

- Tarzan's first encounter with other humans comes when he meets a group of explorers, including Professor Archimedes Q. Porter and his daughter, Jane Porter.
- His fascination with Jane leads to a series of events that compel him to leave the jungle and explore the world of civilization.

Conflict and Resolution

- Tarzan faces various conflicts, including his struggle to reconcile his jungle upbringing with the norms of human society.

- The climax of the story involves Tarzan's confrontation with the antagonist, a rival suitor for Jane's affections, and his ultimate decision about where he truly belongs.

Themes in "Tarzan of the Apes"

"Tarzan of the Apes" is rich with themes that resonate with readers, making it a timeless exploration of the human condition. Some prominent themes include:

The Nature vs. Nurture Debate

- The novel raises questions about the influence of environment on personal identity and development.
- Tarzan embodies the idea that innate qualities can be shaped by one's surroundings, as he transitions from wild ape to cultured human.

Identity and Self-Discovery

- Tarzan's journey is one of self-discovery, as he grapples with his dual identity as both a man and an ape.
- His struggle for acceptance in both worlds highlights the complexity of identity.

Colonialism and Racism

- The story reflects the colonial attitudes of the time, presenting a Eurocentric view of civilization as superior to the "savage" existence in the jungle.
- Burroughs' portrayal of African tribes and cultures can be seen as problematic and representative of the racial stereotypes prevalent in early 20th-century literature.

Characters in "Tarzan of the Apes"

The characters in "Tarzan of the Apes" are vividly drawn and contribute significantly to the narrative's depth. Key characters include:

- Tarzan (John Clayton): The protagonist, who embodies both the wildness of the jungle and the civility of man.
- Jane Porter: The love interest of Tarzan, representing the civilized world and the moral compass of the story.
- Professor Archimedes Q. Porter: Jane's father, who serves as a mentor figure and a link between Tarzan and the civilized world.
- Kerchak: The leader of the apes, who initially opposes Tarzan's place among them but ultimately respects his abilities.
- Tantor: The elephant who becomes Tarzan's friend, symbolizing loyalty and the interconnectedness of life in the jungle.

Enduring Legacy

"Tarzan of the Apes" has made an indelible mark on popular culture, inspiring various adaptations across different media. Its legacy includes:

Film Adaptations

- The character of Tarzan has been portrayed in numerous films, starting with silent films in the early 20th century to modern animated features.
- Notable adaptations include Disney's animated version, which introduced the character to a new generation.

Comic Strips and Graphic Novels

- Tarzan has appeared in comic strips and graphic novels, further expanding his appeal and reach.

Influence on Other Works

- The character has influenced countless adventure tales, spawning a genre of "lost world" narratives and stories of heroic figures in exotic settings.

Conclusion

"Tarzan of the Apes" is more than just an adventure story; it is a profound exploration of humanity, identity, and the delicate balance between civilization and the wild. Edgar Rice Burroughs' creation has transcended time and cultural boundaries, continuing to captivate audiences with its themes and characters. As we reflect on the impact of Tarzan, it becomes clear that his story will remain a significant part of literary history, serving as a reminder of the complexities of human nature and the enduring allure of the jungle.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main theme of 'Tarzan of the Apes' by Edgar Rice Burroughs?

The main theme of 'Tarzan of the Apes' revolves around the nature versus nurture debate, exploring the complexities of identity and civilization versus primal instincts through Tarzan's upbringing in the jungle.

How did Edgar Rice Burroughs come up with the character of Tarzan?

Edgar Rice Burroughs created Tarzan while imagining what would happen if a human child was raised by apes in the jungle, drawing inspiration from adventure stories and his own fascination with exotic settings.

What impact did 'Tarzan of the Apes' have on popular culture?

'Tarzan of the Apes' significantly influenced popular culture by introducing a heroic figure who embodies both the wild and civilized worlds, leading to numerous adaptations in film, television, and literature over the decades.

What is the significance of Tarzan's dual heritage in the story?

Tarzan's dual heritage as both human and ape highlights his internal conflict and struggle for belonging, ultimately questioning what it means to be civilized while confronting themes of race and identity.

What are some notable adaptations of 'Tarzan of the Apes'?

Notable adaptations of 'Tarzan of the Apes' include the animated Disney film 'Tarzan' (1999), various live-action movies such as 'Tarzan the Ape Man' (1932), and numerous television series and comic book interpretations.

How does 'Tarzan of the Apes' address colonialism?

'Tarzan of the Apes' addresses colonialism by depicting the interactions between Tarzan, representing a Western ideal, and the African jungle and its inhabitants, often reflecting the attitudes and biases of early 20th-century imperialism.

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