

edgar rice burroughs a princess of mars

Edgar Rice Burroughs' *A Princess of Mars* is a seminal work of science fiction that was first published in 1912. This novel marks the beginning of Burroughs' famous Barsoom series, which has captivated readers with its imaginative portrayal of Mars and its inhabitants. The story follows the adventures of John Carter, a Confederate soldier who mysteriously finds himself transported to the Red Planet, where he becomes embroiled in the conflicts of various Martian civilizations. As we delve into the intricate world of Burroughs' creation, we will explore its themes, characters, impact on the genre, and much more.

Background of Edgar Rice Burroughs

Edgar Rice Burroughs was born on September 1, 1875, in Chicago, Illinois. He worked a variety of jobs before becoming a full-time writer, including a pencil sharpener salesman and a soldier in the Spanish-American War. His love for storytelling was evident from an early age, and he began writing short stories and novels in the early 1900s.

- Career Highlights:
- Burroughs is best known for creating iconic characters such as Tarzan and John Carter.
- His works have been adapted into numerous films, television series, and comics.
- He founded his own publishing company, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc., to retain control over his works.

By the time he published *A Princess of Mars*, Burroughs had already begun to establish himself as a writer of adventure fiction, but this novel would elevate him to new heights of popularity.

Plot Summary

A Princess of Mars begins with John Carter, who, after searching for gold in the Arizona desert, finds himself in a mysterious cave. It is here that he is transported to Mars (or Barsoom, as it is called by its inhabitants) due to a form of astral projection. On Mars, John Carter discovers that the planet is inhabited by various races, each with their own cultures and conflicts.

Main Characters

1. John Carter: The protagonist, who possesses superhuman strength and agility due to Mars' lower gravity. He is a noble and valiant hero, driven by a sense of justice.
2. Dejah Thoris: The titular princess of Mars, she is a strong-willed and intelligent woman, caught in a

political struggle. Her character embodies both the damsel in distress trope and a progressive female figure for her time.

3. Tars Tarkas: A Thark warrior who becomes an ally to John Carter. His loyalty and leadership qualities highlight themes of friendship and honor.

4. Sola: A Thark who serves as a maternal figure to Dejah Thoris. Her compassion and understanding add depth to the story's exploration of morality.

Setting: The Planet Barsoom

The setting of *A Princess of Mars* plays a crucial role in the narrative. Burroughs vividly describes Barsoom's landscape, its inhabitants, and its cultures. The planet is depicted as a dying world with vast deserts, ancient cities, and strange creatures.

- Key Locations:

- Helium: The city-state where Dejah Thoris is a princess. It represents a beacon of civilization amid the chaos of war.

- Thark: The city of the Tharks, a brutal warrior race that contrasts with the more noble Heliumites.

- The Red Martians: The dominant race on Mars, known for their martial prowess and complex societal structures.

Thematic Elements

A Princess of Mars is rich with themes that resonate with readers even today.

Adventure and Exploration

At its core, the novel is a tale of adventure. John Carter's journey across Barsoom represents a quest for identity and purpose. His explorations lead him to discover not only the wonders of Mars but also the darker aspects of its societies. The sense of exploration is not limited to physical travel; it also encompasses the exploration of personal values and beliefs.

Love and Sacrifice

The love story between John Carter and Dejah Thoris is central to the narrative. Their relationship is characterized by mutual respect and admiration, which was progressive for literature at the time. John Carter's willingness to risk everything to save Dejah Thoris illustrates the theme of sacrifice.

- Key Moments:
- John Carter's battles to win Dejah Thoris' freedom.
- The emotional depth of their connection, which goes beyond mere physical attraction.

Race and Society

Burroughs presents a complex view of race and society through the interactions between different Martian civilizations. The Tharks, for example, are depicted as brutal and warlike, while the Heliumites are portrayed as more civilized and noble. This dichotomy raises questions about morality, power, and the consequences of societal structures.

Heroism and Valor

John Carter embodies the archetypal hero, showcasing traits such as bravery, honor, and resilience. His character challenges the norms of heroism by demonstrating that true strength lies in compassion and integrity.

Impact on Science Fiction and Popular Culture

A Princess of Mars is often credited with influencing the science fiction genre significantly. Burroughs' imaginative storytelling and world-building set the stage for future writers and filmmakers.

Influence on Writers

Many authors have cited Burroughs as an inspiration, including:

- Ray Bradbury: Known for works like The Martian Chronicles, Bradbury acknowledged Burroughs' influence on his portrayal of Mars.
- Arthur C. Clarke: The renowned science fiction writer drew from Burroughs' imaginative settings.
- Philip K. Dick: His explorations of alternate realities and human consciousness can be traced back to the fantastical elements present in Burroughs' work.

Cinematic Adaptations

The novel has been adapted into various films and television series over the years, with the most notable

being:

1. John Carter (2012): A big-budget adaptation by Disney that aimed to bring Burroughs' vision to a new generation, though it faced mixed reviews and box office struggles.
2. Animated and TV adaptations: Various animated features and television series have also explored the Barsoom universe, introducing the story to younger audiences.

Conclusion

Edgar Rice Burroughs' *A Princess of Mars* remains a cornerstone of science fiction literature. Its blend of adventure, romance, and social commentary continues to resonate with readers, inspiring generations of writers and creators. The novel's exploration of themes such as heroism, love, and societal structures invites readers to reflect on their own lives and values. As we look back on Burroughs' work, it becomes clear that *A Princess of Mars* is not just a story of another world but a timeless exploration of the human experience. Whether you are a long-time fan of science fiction or a newcomer to the genre, Burroughs' tale invites you to journey to Mars and beyond, where the possibilities are as endless as the universe itself.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main theme of 'A Princess of Mars'?

The main theme of 'A Princess of Mars' revolves around love, honor, and the struggle for identity, set against the backdrop of adventure and exploration in a fantastical version of Mars.

Who is the protagonist of 'A Princess of Mars'?

The protagonist of 'A Princess of Mars' is John Carter, a Confederate soldier who is transported to Mars and becomes embroiled in the planet's conflicts and politics.

How does John Carter end up on Mars?

John Carter ends up on Mars after discovering a mysterious cave in Arizona that transports him to the planet, where he finds himself in a completely different environment with unique inhabitants.

What role does Dejah Thoris play in the story?

Dejah Thoris is the titular princess of Mars and serves as John Carter's love interest. She is a strong and intelligent character who plays a crucial role in the narrative and the conflicts between Martian factions.

What are the Tharks, and what is their significance in the story?

The Tharks are a tribe of green Martians known for their strength and warrior culture. They play a significant role in the story as both antagonists and allies to John Carter, highlighting the complexities of Martian society.

How has 'A Princess of Mars' influenced modern science fiction?

'A Princess of Mars' has significantly influenced modern science fiction by introducing elements such as interplanetary travel, alien cultures, and heroic adventures, inspiring countless authors and filmmakers in the genre.

What adaptations have been made of 'A Princess of Mars'?

Several adaptations of 'A Princess of Mars' have been made, including animated films, a live-action movie (John Carter, 2012), and various comic book series, showcasing the enduring popularity of Burroughs' work.

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