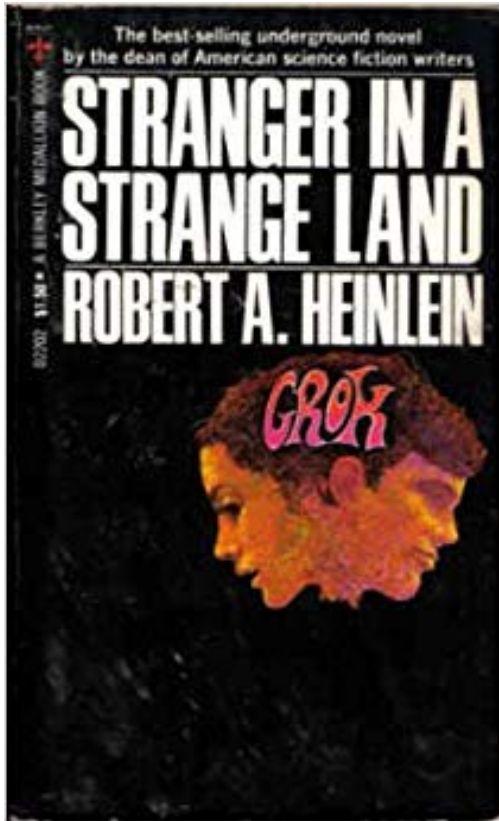


Stranger in a Strange Land *by* Robert A. Heinlein



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Reviews of the *Stranger in a Strange Land* *by* Robert A. Heinlein

Bu

I love this book, which is quickly becoming one of my all time favorites. But this is definitely not the uncut version.

Since I was required to read the uncut version, I did some research to ensure this kindle version was right, and it definitely is not. I had to drive all over town to find what I needed, but. Am now reading them side by side to make notes in my kindle version for reference later, and I can assure you of two things: the kindle version is not uncut, and the uncut version is far richer in language and content and just a better read. Many of the deep philosophical concepts Heinlein included in his novel are simply missing - or abbreviated to the point of near-invisibility - in the edited version. I had been wondering what all the fuss was about, until I reread the first five or six chapters in the uncut copy. This is truly a marvelous novel - if you read the right one.

Risteacor

I read *Stranger in a Strange Land* when it first came out in 1961. It was the most important and influential book I ever read. It changed my life, and the lives of millions of others. Inspired by SISL, I went on to create the real-life Church of All Worlds, which is still going strong over half a century later. The 1961 edition is the essential version, edited by Heinlein himself. The later unedited version issued by his widow is a travesty, as it is sloppy, and omits the single most important line in the entire original edition--Heinlein's definition of "Love" as "That condition in which another person's happiness is essential to your own." I corresponded with Mr. Heinlein extensively in the 1970s, and here are his own words regarding these two versions of SISL:

"SISL was never censored by anyone in any fashion. The first draft was nearly twice as long as the published version. I cut it myself to bring it down to a commercial length. But I did not leave out anything of any importance; I simply trimmed all possible excess verbiage. Perhaps you have noticed that it reads "fast" despite its length; that is why. *I WILL FEAR NO EVIL* does not read as "fast" because it never received its final trimming; I became extremely ill and could not do it, and would not allow an editor to do it because my stories are fitted together like jigsaw puzzles and it is awfully easy, in trimming, to leave out an essential piece. So *I WILL FEAR NO EVIL* is not as good a story as SISL, in my opinion--too slow--even though, again in my opinion, what I have said in it is just as important. But I'm pleased enough that I was able to finish it at all; it just missed being posthumous. (Mrs. Heinlein signed the contract; I was too far gone even to write my signature.)

"The original, longest version of SISL is in a fireproof vault of the library of UCSC and can be seen there by any scholar who convinces the special collection librarian that he has a legitimate interest. But it is really not worth your trouble, as it is the same story throughout--simply not as well told. With it is the brushpenned version which shows exactly what was cut out--nothing worth reading, that is. I learned to write for pulp magazines, in which one was paid by the yard rather than by the package; it was not until I started writing for the *Saturday Evening Post* that I learned the virtue of brevity. (And I am still too wordy in a private communication such as this, or in conversation.)" (---Robert A. Heinlein to Oberon (Tim) Zell, 2/28/1972, personal correspondence)

Zololmaran

Stranger in a Strange Land was one of the first scifi books I ever read as a kid - and a bit over my head at the time! An odd mix of semi-conservative morals (there is some focus on homophobic concepts, though it seems less anti-gay and more pro-straight), religious iconography, strong liberal morals, anarchy, libertarianism, sex, and scifi advanced enough to fall under Clarke's Third Law. This has a very moving message, deeply engaging characters, a poignant and impactful story, good development arcs, great worldbuilding, and an alternative view of the world and of humanity. This is not for the squeamish; there are descriptions of death, sex (including group sex), extreme injury, dissection of religion, cannibalism, politics, polyamory/polygamy, and more. At times it is hard to say if it's a scifi story or a fantasy one - depends on your point of view. Mike and Jubal are two of the most likeable characters ever written (in my opinion) and their development over the course of the story paints it as a coming of age for both of them, in some lights. Despite the tender age at which I first read it, I would not consider this a book for children in any way, not just because of the R-rated material but also because much of the book would likely go over their heads or leave them confused. This is not a boy's adventure story like many of Heinlein's works nor does it feature incest or other strange behaviors like some of his more adult works - but it is definitely one of the most 'adult' of them all, in content but also in message and theory. This is a book I think everyone should read, even if some of it is rather dated these days. Changed my mind and life as a young thing and continues to entertain and move me now. If you can stomach the material - and unless you are very delicate you should be able to - this is not one to miss.

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