



The Big Book of Adventure Stories

Otto Penzler (Editor)

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A hair-raising collection of adventure stories that's so big and enthralling if you open it you may never be seen again: enter at your own risk.

Everyone loves adventure, and Otto Penzler has collected the best adventure stories of all time into one mammoth volume. With stories by Jack London, O. Henry, H. Rider Haggard, Alastair MacLean, Talbot Mundy, Cornell Woolrich, and many others, this wide-reaching and fascinating volume contains some of the best characters from the most thrilling adventure tales, including The Cisco Kid; Sheena, Queen of the Jungle; Bulldog Drummond; Tarzan; The Scarlet Pimpernel; Conan the Barbarian; Hopalong Cassidy; King Kong; Zorro; and The Spider. Divided into sections that embody the greatest themes of the genre—Sword & Sorcery, Megalomania Rules, Man vs. Nature, Island Paradise, Sand and Sun, Something Feels Funny, Go West Young Man, Future Shock, I Spy, Yellow Peril, In Darkest Africa—it is destined to be the greatest collection of adventure stories ever compiled.

Featuring:

Lawless open seas

Ferocious army ants

Deadeyed gunmen

Exotic desert islands

Feverish jungle adventures

Including:

The story that introduced *The Cisco Kid*

The complete novel of *Tarzan the Terrible*

The Big Book of Adventure Stories Details

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From Reader Review The Big Book of Adventure Stories for online ebook

Zack Sapunor says

A breathtaking introduction to a good dozen different galaxies of "genre" storytelling. From high espionage to the foreign legion to mysterious rites on tropical islands, Mr. Penzler establishes himself as the grand virtuoso of editing. Each plot twist more fun than the last!

Dfordoom says

The Big Book of Adventure Stories from Vintage Press, edited by Otto Penzler, gathers together almost fifty adventure tales most of which originally appeared in pulp magazines at some stage during the first half of the 20th century.

Penzler's definition of adventure is pretty loose, encompassing everything from spy fiction to tales of the South Seas to westerns to science fiction.

There are plenty of well-known masters of adventure fiction here - Edgar Rice Burroughs, Talbot Mundy, Harold Lamb, H. C. McNeile ("Sapper"), P. C. Wren, Robert E. Howard, Jack London, Rider Haggard, Sax Rohmer, Edgar Wallace, Rudyard Kipling and Rafael Sabatini. And there are many lesser-known names as well (who contribute some of the best stories). And some surprising names as well - you don't normally think of Cornell Woolrich as an adventure writer but he's here and his contribution is a genuine tale of adventure.

Most of the famous heroes of adventure fiction will be found here as well - Tarzan, Zorro, Allan Quatermain, Richard Hannay, Bulldog Drummond, the Scarlet Pimpernel, Conan the Barbarian, Buck Rogers, even Hopalong Cassidy. It's intriguing to read early stories of some of these heroes - who knew that the Cisco Kid started out as a bad guy?

In a collection as large as this there are bound to be a few misfires. Jack London's contribution is very dull. But on the whole the quality is fairly consistently high.

Some of these stories are very well-known - Kipling's *The Man Who Would Be King*, Richard Connell's *The Most Dangerous Game*. But mostly Penzler has chosen lesser-known works, or stories that were once widely read but are now more or less forgotten (such as *Armageddon 2419 A.D.* which introduced the character of Buck Rogers). Or *Leiningen versus the Ants*, which was the literary source for one of my favourite cinematic guilty pleasures, *The Naked Jungle*. You couldn't leave John Buchan out of an anthology like this but Penzler has unearthed a very uncharacteristic Richard Hannay story set in Africa.

With so many stories to choose from it's nearly impossible to pick favourites. Stories which came as a pleasant surprise were Theodore Roscoe's *Snake-Head* (an interesting take of the legend of Medusa), *The Girl in the Golden Atom* (a strange but ingenious science fiction story) and Georges Surdez's *Suicide Patrol*, a crime thriller set within the French Foreign Legion. Sax Rohmer's *The Hand of the Mandarin* Quong is also particularly good, but that's no surprise since Rohmer was always good.

There's a tremendous amount of fun to be had here and the wideness of the scope proves to be an advantage, tempting the reader to delve into hitherto unexplored areas of pulp fiction.

For lovers of pulp fiction and stirring tales of adventure this has to be a must-buy.

J. says

It is certainly the BIG BOOK of adventure... Conan, Zoro, Kipling, ants, the foreign legion, mighty hunters of men and/or animals, seductive blondes, the Cisco Kid, Sheena of the jungle, Buck Rogers, and even Tarzan. If you don't like some of the stories, just skip them, others will reveal unknown delights and authors you want to track down and read more of. The one page author's biography are extremely useful and often tie the author's works to movies and other stories you might have seen or read. The collection concludes with Tarzan the Terrible. I haven't read Tarzan since Junior High but the preposterous adventure caught me up and carried me on for many pages, just like it did back then. But trying to keep up with the names just got to be too much for me. Was Pan-at-lee the girlfriend of Om-at, or one of the debased Tor-o-don? All in all it doesn't matter because the action doesn't stop. On the radio the other day, Jane Goodall said she had loved the Tarzan stories as a child and it was one of the things that stimulated her interest in Africa and apes. She was upset, however, that Tarzan had married "that other Jane".

Julie Davis says

REREADING - got this for Christmas and will be picking up stories here and there, especially for bedtime reading when nothing is required except to suspend disbelief. All my original comment and final comments are below.

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I loved The Big Book of Ghost Stories and when I finished that, Hannah and I traded books (I'd given her this one for Christmas or her birthday, can't recall which).

If there is anything better than ghost stories, it is these pulp adventure tales. What a great collection. I'm currently enjoying a novella by Harold Lamb featuring his action hero, Khlit the Cossack who is under duress to track down Genghis Khan's grave (and treasure trove). I could foresee this showing up on Forgotten Classics sometime, I really could.

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The Golden Snare ... Lady Fulvia's story ... I laughed a lot at the many references to the "unclad" young lady swimming away from danger. Just in case the readers would ever forget that she was naked. (As if.)

The Seven Black Priests ... heavens to Betsy! I NEED to read more Fritz Lieber!

The Man Who Would Be King by Rudyard Kipling ... I can't believe I've never read this until now. Wow. What a great story. I've seen the movie, but never read the story. I especially liked the details that Kipling

includes about putting out a newspaper in India.

Sea Raiders by H.G. Wells ... now what on earth made me think that this would be about pirates just because it is in an adventure story book? Oh my word. Not. Pirates. *flesh creeping* Not. Pirates. At. All.

Picked this up again and am hooked (until I get tired of pulp adventure stories). My favorite stories make me long to read them on Forgotten Classics and inevitably those are the ones that are still in copyright.
gnashing of teeth

However, this is really a treasure trove of every sort of adventure ... noir, mystery, science fiction, swords and sorcerers, French Foreign Legion, and so forth and so on. If you are at all interested in that sort of story, this is your book.

FINAL

Who knew this would be the perfect anecdote to the trauma caused by Jonathan Maberry's Code Zero? Looking for something soothing I saw this in the "to read" stack, waiting for me to finish off the final few stories. Nothing can do that like African adventure, or so it seems. Sheena of the Jungle particularly hit the spot.

Overall, this book is a treasure trove that every adventure lover should have on their shelves. It takes a while to finish, but that's ok because then you can begin rereading the stories you have since forgotten from the beginning of the book.

Skjam! says

It's a big book all right!

This doorstopper contains a multitude of fun pulp adventure stories, from the so famous it's almost cliche "The Most Dangerous Game" to obscurities never before reprinted. With a wide range of genres and settings, there is something here for almost every pulp fan.

There are some flaws. The "humor" section is weak, one of the stories not even being from the pulp era. Plus, the racism and sexism of the pulp era are shown in many of the stories; this is acknowledged in the introduction and author notes.

But all in all, many hours of exciting reading, including the rare Tarzan novel, "Tarzan the Terrible", which owes its placement as the final entry I think in part due to its ending paragraph.

For more pulp-related reviews, see <http://www.skjam.com/tag/pulp/>

Tarash_bulba says

Some really nice stories mingled with some which were just Ok and some which were quite meh. Not to be read cover to cover, but more as an alternative to whatever is your main read (short story format supports this). Might be a 4 star for younger audiences but for me it was a 3.5 rounding down due to missing the wow factor overall (except a couple of stories like "The girl in the golden atom", "The soul of a turk" or "To serve man"). Yes, I liked it.

Philip Athans says

Taking a break from this massive tome in favor of a little variety -- doing a little too much "retro" at the same time!

Brian Schiebout says

The Big Book of Adventure Stories edited by Otto Penzler is a collection of short stories mostly from the pulp era of literature. The stories deal with brave heroes who must survive in a vicious world where life is cheap and daring is rewarded. I will write a short response to every story except The Devil in Iron which I dealt with elsewhere. The Golden Snare by Farnham Bishop and Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur tells the tale of Fulvia, a Norman princess of Sicily who is ambushed. Using quick thinking she is able to kill the people who betrayed her trust in them. The Mighty Manslayer by Harold Lamb tells the story of the Cossack Khlit. In this tale Khlit discovers the tomb of his ancestor Genghis Khan, the mighty manslayer. The Seven Black Priests by Fritz Leiber is a Fafhrd and Gray Mouser story. This is the first time I have actually read about these legends of sword and sorcery fantasy and I enjoyed the story of how they overcame a group of evil priests. The Master Magician by Loring Brent is a story about Peter the Brazen. In this tale Peter deals with an insane supposed magician who has established himself in the islands of southeast Asia. The Most Dangerous Game by Richard Connell is the legendary tale of Rainsford. The story of course deals with how the animal feels when man becomes the target of a hunt. The Man Who Would be King by Rudyard Kipling tells the tale of two white men who attempt to become god kings in Afghanistan. It ends up badly when the one lets love for a native reveal that he is not a god. The Wings of Kali by Grant Stockbridge introduces the reader to character of Jack Wentworth who is the spider. It tells how he removes and unscrupulous agent while they both live in India. The White Silence by Jack London tells the tale of the dangers which extreme cold can cause to a party of explorers in Alaska. Sredni Vashtar by Saki tells the story of a young boy who was not as innocent as people thought and his plot against his cousin in colonial India. The Seed from the Sepulcher by Clark Ashton Smith tells of some explorers in South America find an alien plant which feeds on man. Leiningen Versus the Ants by Carl Stephenson tells of one German immigrants work to protect his plantation in Brazil from revenging intelligent ants. The Sea Raiders by H. G. Wells tells the story of how some deep water squid attacked people off the coast of England. Hell Cay by Lester Dent tells the tale of one man's attempts to free his plane from a deadly pirate haven in the Caribbean. Off the Mangrove Coast by Louis L'Amour tells of four desperate characters in the east Indies who are searching for treasure from a ship which sank. The Golden Anaconda by Elmer Brown Mason tells the tale of a lost temple in South America which the Isaiah Ezekiel Smith explores while on a snake finding mission. In the story the snakes are dangerous but the people more so. Shanghai Jim by Frank L. Packard tells the tale of one man's quest for

vengeance on the man who murdered his brother. The Python Pit by George F. Worts tells the story of how Singapore Sammy escapes from a trap set by his stepfather by realizing the duplicity of his lovely companion. The Soul of a Turk by Achmed Abdullah tells how different cultures can have different ways of seeing the same information. Peace Waits at Marokee by H. Bedford-Jones tells the tale of a traitorous Frenchman in WWII Africa who ends up being a hero. Nor Idolatry Blind the Eye by Gabriel Hunt tells of one mans quest for meaning in life by seeking the lost golden calf from a group of cultists. The Soul of a Regiment by Talbot Mundy tells how the banner and the service matter more to their being a military unit than any single person. Snake-Head by Theodore Roscoe is a retelling of the medusa legend from the perspective of a man in the French Foreign Legion. Suicide Patrol by George Surdez tells of a man on the run who joins the French Foreign Legion and the man who chases after him. A Gentleman of Color by P. C. Wren tells the story of a Japanese Samurai who joins the French Foreign Legion and his revenge upon his tormentors. After King Kong Fell by Philip Jose Farmer tells in graphical detail what it really meant for a giant ape to fall and how in the real world things are not so glamorous. Moonlight Sonata by Alexander Woolcott tells the tale of a murder in a haunted house by a madman. The Caballero's Way by O. Henry tells the tale of the Cisco Kid and how he tricks the government agent sent out to kill him. Zorro Deals with Treason by Johnston McCulley tells how Zorro removes a false Zorro who is trying to stir up the people into rebellion against the state. Hopalong's Hop by Clarence E. Mulford tells the tale of how Hopalong Cassidy got his nickname as he is injured bringing justice to some villains. The Girl in the Golden Atom by Ray Cummings tells the tale of worlds within worlds as a man is shrunk enough to find a whole civilization inside a part of a ring. To Serve Man by Damon Knight tells the tale of a benevolent alien race who help humanity and their cookbooks. Armageddon --2419 A.D. by Philip Francis Nowlan introduces the character of Buck Rogers who is in suspended animation to the 25th century where he fights against the Han overlords of North America. Woman in Love by Geoffrey Household tells how using a person in love is dangerous for spy work, yet it sometimes works out. MacHinery and the Cauliflowers tells the story of a narcotics officers attempts to break the biggest opium ring in south east Asia. Wheels Within Wheels by H. C. McNeile tells the story of how Bulldog Drummond manages to catch an important drug smuggler in England. A Question of Passports by Baroness Orczy tells how the Scarlet Pimpernel manages to fool a diligent enemy during the French revolution. Intelligence by Rafael Sabatini tells of an accidental murder and the fool who commits it. The Copper Bowl by George Fielding Eliot tells the tale of Yuan Li and his ingenious way of killing a person. The Hand of the Mandarin Quong by Sax Rohmer tells of a man who is cursed by his deeds in Asia and eventually is killed by them. The Green Wildebeest by John Buchan tells of Richard Hannay and his adventures in South Africa and of a servant who goes completely crazy. The Slave Brand of Sleman Bin Ali by James Anson Buck tells how Sheena the jungle queen falls for a man and destroys his rival before spurning the man to return to her home. Fire by L. Patrick Greene tells of Aubrey St. John Master and Jim's abilities to escape from a bunch of crazed Boers in South Africa. Hunter Quatermain's Story by H. Rider Haggard tells how the esteemed hunter manages to kill a cape buffalo but at the loss of his whole party. Bosambo of Monrovia by Edgar Wallace tells the tale of how a new chief installs himself as chief in east Africa by lies and stealing. Black Cargo by Cornell Woolrich tells the story of an escape on a slave ship and how the last surviving white man must save himself. Tarzan the Terrible by Edgar Rice Burroughs tells the tale of Tarzan after he is married and his brave attempts to rescue his wife from a Neolithic civilization lost in time in the middle of Africa.

Steven says

I've read a great many of these stories either as ebooks or in other collections, but for anyone looking for some good solid grounding in the non-fantastic pulp stories of the past, I would happily recommend it!

Now if I could just find a dozen copies of these on the cheap, I'd happily bundle them up as holiday gifts for many folks who haven't read enough pulp but are fans of the modern genres spawned from them.....

Richard Larmer says

Excellent book with a plethora of classic pulp short stories.

Davidg says

It does what it says on the tin. It is a BIG book and it is full of Pulp adventure stories. Of course some are better than others but which they are might vary according to your taste.

Although we are warned about old attitudes to race and gender, most of those featuring women have very strong women which is probably not a coincidence for today's audience. The worst examples of racism come from the most famous of authors: John Buchan with his anti-semitism and Edgar Rice Burroughs with his white superior to black.

Actually, that last long Tarzan story is one of the weakest with coincidence and luck providing the hero's escape, rather than pluck and derring-do.

Three stars is a little mean, it is closer to 3.5 but four would have been too generous.

Adam Lewis Schroeder says

This is the greatest book ever assembled, but I'm really going to have to apply myself if I hope to ever get through the whole thing.

D.C. Gustafson says

This was a great book if you're looking for a great sampling of pulp-style adventure stories. Much of my pulp education has been old time radio and good old Jonny Quest, but I've been wanting to read more actual print pulp fiction. I really enjoyed the variety of stories presented in this volume, and the mini biographies for each author were well done and very concise. It offered a nice cross-section of genres and authors to help me expand my understanding of this style.

Since I was reading a library book (and it is one big book), I didn't get enough time to read the whole thing, but here are the highlights:

- The Devil in Iron by Robert E. Howard: This was actually one of my favorites. I've never read any Howard or any Conan before and I was impressed. The writing style was good and I thought the descriptions were

really well done. Howard really knew how to cut out the unnecessary and flesh out the important details. I found it to be very fast paced and visual. (Not a fan of the easy women theme, though.)

- The Most Dangerous Game by Richard Connell: Read this way back in high school, and have always enjoyed it. I could even quote the ending after these many years.

- The Man Who Would be King by Rudyard Kipling: A creative, if bizarre story about some characters who are rather offensive, but clever "heroes" who have a brilliant idea to set themselves up as kings. Enjoyable but different.

- The White Silence by Jack London: To be honest this one didn't really capture my interest and I abandoned it after a few pages.

Leiningen Versus the Ants by Carl Stephenson: I read this one back in high school, too, and I didn't get a chance to reread it this time. But I remember that it is an engaging story and keeps the reader engaged.

- The Sea Raiders by H. G. Wells: I enjoy stories about sea monsters so I had to check this one out. Although its not the best of its type, it does stand out with some unique elements such as a struggle with a sea menace in the shallows. Who says these encounters need to always take place in the deepest fathoms? It is written in the believable style of an ordinary man's account of the extraordinary.

- The Golden Anaconda by Elmer Brown: An average, but solid jungle adventure story. It creates a good sense of atmosphere, and features evocative description with some creepy and some curious scenes.

- Peace Waits at Marokey, H. Bedford-Jones: This story featured some of most clever writing in the book (at least of those I read). I liked the changing narrator, the fleshing out of the different characters, and the exploration of the hope that each man held onto. I should see what else this author has written.

- Hunter Quatermain's Story by H. Rider Haggard: An enjoyable, but simple story about one of Quatermain's shorter adventures. Nothing stood out to me too much about it except for the clever advertising for his King Solomon's Mines novel. Also, it's been several weeks since I read this one, but I seem to remember the hero being a little uncaring for the loss of others lives around him. Not uncommon in these stories, though, I suppose.

So, in closing, I really enjoyed this book, despite its racy cover, it's a great addition to anyone interested in original pulp adventure stories.

Linda says

I love this "Big Book" series! I've read the one on horror and ghost stories and the one on mysteries so far. They're BIG - 600-800 pages long, but each is a collection of stories by authors who specialized in the genre or who were actually known for other genres and wrote a great story in this one. For instance, included in this book are Jack London, H. G. Wells, and Alistair MacLean. Two whom you may not have heard of are Saki and O. Henry. That's what I like best - discovering great stories by unusual authors (for that genre).

I also enjoyed reading the old stalwarts here. Adventure stories were so much a part of life in the 40s, 50s and 60s with Tarzan swinging in the vines, Zorro righting wrongs in Mexican California, H. Rider Haggard's "She Who Must Be Obeyed." (Who of you who have read "She" hasn't called some female of your acquaintance "she who must be obeyed"?) These are books and authors you might not want to be caught carrying around these days of "sophisticated" adventure, but they're great reads!

The end of the book is actually the novel Tarzan the Terrible. "Terrible" is probably the right word for the story, but in a positive way. We see all the stereotypes - the Nasty German of WWI, the beautiful women, true to their men, the warriors fighting in a just cause, and so many of the others that, as 21st century inhabitants, we have been told are "politically incorrect." But they're FUN!!!!!!

Some of them fall flat, of course. Not all writers pass through the ages well. But adventure does. It's fun to compare these stories to the action stories we have today.

Bill says

Penzler's mini-biographies of the various authors is one of the delights of reading these great stories. Really enjoyed this.
