



Mimsy Were the Borogoves

Lewis Padgett, C.L. Moore, Henry Kuttner

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Novelette, Classic science fiction, the basis for the film "The Last Mimsy"

Published under the joint pseudonym Lewis Padgett.

Mimsy Were the Borogoves Details

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From Reader Review Mimsy Were the Borogoves for online ebook

Lisa says

This is the short story that The Last Mimsy is based on. It is a great movie, and a great short story...though somewhat independent of each other.

Bartolomeu De Bensafrim says

A rare beautiful gem.

Very little of this tale is fantasy. Mostly, it is an unbelievably lucid journey to a different way of thinking and feeling. The possibilities suggested by this tale are a wonderful description of the sometimes elusive ways of the imagination – and how imagination can shape the world or create other worlds (as real as our own). Society puts up a great wall of logic and reason before us (Heliocentrism was once inconceivable and worthy of mockery). But why should we limit our imagination, standing in front of the boring wall of normality? Anyone capable of peeping beyond the wall will see this tale as a wonderful portal to something much greater than words – which in turn, like the title hints, is connected to another world filled with more portals, and so on and so on, in the infinite and sublime realm of imagination/life.

Oleksandr Zholud says

This is a novelette, first published in 1943, so it is eligible for Retro-Hugo this year.

In a far, far future, a sentient being experiments with time machine and sends their offspring toys to somewhere around XX century. Twice. Without response. They declare it a failure and move on. In the mid-20th century a boy finds the stuff and starts to play with it, giving it also to his younger sister. And as all good toys, those are educational.

One of popular at that time ideas, based presumably on behaviorist paradigm in psychology, that kids are tabula rasa and can be taught anything and become anyone. Here it even leads to quite surprising statements like: *"Babies, of course, are not human—they are animals, and have a very ancient and ramified culture, as cats have, and fishes, and even snakes; the same in kind as these, but much more complicated and vivid, since babies are, after all, one of the most developed species of the lower vertebrates. In short, babies have minds which work in terms and categories of their own, which cannot be translated into the terms and categories of the human mind."*

An interesting read of old school SF

Ashley says

I really enjoyed this story. From the title I knew that Alice in Wonderland had to be tied in somewhere so

when quotes from the book came into this short story, I was very happy. I thought that this was a very interesting read and I highly recommend it.

Mdutch says

My favorite SF short story of all time.

Kate says

My boyfriend's mom recommended the movie, and while I was doing research on the title, I came across this story and decided to read it first to see if I would enjoy it. The story is certainly sci-fi and ahead of its time. The story is heavily psychonalytical (a psychological and psychotherapeutic theory first laid out by Sigmund Freud in the 19th Century) and poses questions regarding children's development, in particular how they learn. I liked the symbology of the story and how "Through The Looking Glass" gave insight into this new learning style X, that is very different from the Euclid theory that all the adults in the story have been conditioned to. I am very interested in watching the movie to see how it's different from the original story, which I will report on later.

So, I finally got around to watching the movie and I wasn't really surprised that they changed the story line quite a bit from the original story, but it was a pretty good movie none the less. Basically, they "happied-up" the ending in true Hollywood fashion, added some environmental aspects, and changed the psychological aspects to mental/psychic abilities. However, I would recommend reading the original story and then watch the movie, as they both are great and interesting in their own unique ways.

Tim says

In case it's not obvious, the link up there in the description takes you to page where you can read the entire story for free. It's not very long and well worth your time.

Like all the best science fiction, this story is about ideas. Despite being nearly 70 years old, the story could easily be set in present day without changing it at all. The ideas feel fresh and develop wonderfully as the story goes along.

Recommended!

Christine Eaton says

So I spontaneously watched the movie The Last Mimzy with my friend. "Bizzare, but a decent movie," is the only way to describe it. But when we heard it was based on a short story written in 1942, I had to run off and read it. It's very different from the movie and I actually enjoyed reading the story. But what makes it so strange is because it turns into a Through the Looking Glass fanfiction of sorts at the end. It's a good piece of

science fiction.

Jakk Makk says

Scott's actions are forced: DNF.

Laur-Marian Mertea says

Great read.

The story is really fascinating and I would've loved to read a sequel or a collection of other related short stories).

Even though the story was originally published in the February 1943 issue of Astounding Science Fiction Magazine [You can read more about the story [here!](#)], I would still recommend this (even to a non science-fiction reader) because of:

1. the intriguing story;
2. the fact that the story was judged by the SFWA [Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America] to be among the best science fiction stories written prior to 1965 and included in the anthology "The Science Fiction Hall of Fame, Volume One, 1929–1964" The Science Fiction Hall of Fame 1, 1929-1964;
3. it's still enjoyable and relatable even though it was published more than 70 years ago.

4.5/5

(view spoiler)

Ambrosia says

What? Just what?! Amazing. Be prepared it's like nothing you could ever imagine.

Cambria says

sad ending, but very thought provoking and a great read!

Mollie says

What a weird little short story! I decided to read this as it is the basis of the movie "The Last Mimzy" which I thoroughly enjoyed! I found it in a collection of science fiction short stories and read it fairly quickly. Its only about 30 pages long so a quick read. I would say the film is very loosely based on this story. Still it was

interesting look at child psychology and brain development in 1943.

Dana Reynolds says

I am amused by some reviews that find this hard to fathom because of the 1940's point of view -- having grown up on classic sci-fi, it made me warmly nostalgic and it was not at all difficult to understand or get into. (Although I'm surprised I hadn't run across this one before.) If I mention how ahead of its time this was, am I also at fault for thinking less about the imagination of the past? Either way, this is a top-notch short story and I'd put it up against anything written today. It holds its own, with the slight exception of the 'know it all' psychologist/authority, a formula that feels a bit dated. It is deliciously creepy. I'll be talking and thinking about this one for a long time.

Snickerdoodle says

After watching the movie 'The Last Mimzy,' I'd wanted to see if there was a book and if so, how it compared. The book came out in 1943 vs 2007 for the movie.

Both begin in the far future with the purpose of explaining the toys. In the book, a scientist is experimenting with time travel, seeming to give it up after several failed attempts. In the movie, there is also more than one attempt - one sent to Alice (as in Alice in the looking glass) - but the attempts aren't mere curiosity. There is something genetically wrong with humans in the future that can only be fixed with DNA from the past. The problem is how to get it. Humans can't time travel. Things can but they need help getting back - so the toys somehow teach the children how to do that - and a child's tear accidentally falls on Mimsy and carries her DNA back to the future. How were they planning on collecting the DNA they needed?

The book spends a lot of time discussing how babies think differently than us till we train them otherwise. The younger the children, the easier it was to communicate with them, training them to an alternate way of thinking. In this case though, the children learned and then disappeared, presumably time traveling to when the toys were originally sent. Period, end of story, no explanation.

In the original story, there's no indication that the toys have been sent with a mission or that they've been altered in any way. They're just his sons old toys, something disposable that won't be missed if they're ruined or don't come back.

In the movie, they're specifically designed with the purpose of collecting DNA from the past in order to save the future. Past attempts have failed. This is the LAST Mimzy and it's communicating to Emma that the world is dying and this is their last chance to save it.

In both book and film, the futuristic toys were interesting to the untrained minds of young children. They were able to see and understand things the adults couldn't. This is where the original story went off into the concept that babies think in ways incomprehensible to mature humans. The concept is presented that what if a child's mind had not been trained in Euclidian thinking - what would the differences in our adult thinking be?

In the movie, the toys gave way to a wonderful range of visual fun. They could speak telepathically, the boy

could hear things others couldn't and could speak to spiders, the girl could transport sugar just by thinking it, they saw a geometric tube of a bridge between planets. They could've and should've used this much better. It was visually exciting but it seemed unrelated to sending Mimzy forward to the future with the old DNA to save the world. The movie also brought in fractals - ancient fractals, that the boy had been doodling - Tibet - palmistry.

I wouldn't be surprised to find that there's a lot I'm missing in the author's original intention. The movie didn't clarify it.
