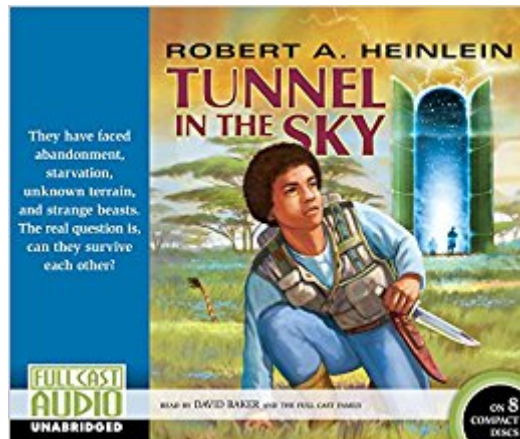




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Tunnel In The Sky



Synopsis

When Rod Walker decides to take the final test for “Deacon” Matson’s interplanetary survival course, he knows he will be facing life-or-death situations on an unsettled planet. What he doesn’t expect is that something will go wrong with the “Tunnel in the Sky” and he and his fellow students will not be able to return to Terra. Stranded on a hostile planet, Rod and his friends are faced with the challenge of carving a civilization out of the wilderness. They must deal with hunger, deprivation, and strangely savage beasts. But the bigger question is, can they survive each other? This science fiction classic pits a savage world against the most untameable beast of all: the human animal. Chock full of high adventure, futuristic speculation, witty repartee, and profound philosophy, Tunnel in the Sky represents the greatest SF writer of all time at his peak.

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Customer Reviews

Like many people, I go way, way back with Heinlein. My very favorite book (and one that stands out in my mind--and with much affection--to this day) is Tunnel in the Sky. I really, really wanted to go off to explore new worlds with a covered wagon and horses, like the hero does at the very end of the book. But one of the nice things about Robert Heinlein is that he’s got something for everyone.

One of my best friends has a different favorite: Podkayne of Mars. Go

figure. --Shelly Shapiro, Executive Editor --This text refers to an out of print or

unavailable edition of this title.

It was just a test . . . But something had gone wrong. Terribly wrong. What was to have been a standard ten-day survival test had suddenly become an indefinite life-or-death nightmare. Now they were stranded somewhere in the universe, beyond contact with Earth . . . at the other end of a tunnel in the sky. This small group of young men and women, divested of all civilized luxuries and laws, were being forced to forge a future of their own . . . a strange future in a strange land where sometimes not even the fittest could survive!" . . . fascinating . . . ingenious . . . this a book in the grand tradition of high literature!"-- The New York Times

From the Paperback edition. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I am beginning to think that a selection of Robert Heinlein's juvenile science fiction books should be required reading in every Middle School class. Even though the science in these stories is outdated, in some cases badly so, and the social mores reflect the period in which they were published, the 1950's, although that may not actually be a bad thing, I think the young reader can still learn a lot from Heinlein's stories. They may not be able to learn much about science or space travel. Events have overtaken Mr. Heinlein in that respect. They will, however, learn quite a lot about virtues that will never go out of date. They will learn from Heinlein's heroes the importance of self-reliance, honor, courage and rational thinking. They will learn that doing the right thing, even at the risk of their lives is better in the long run. Reading Heinlein may even help young readers to resist the politically correct brain washing and mediocrity they are exposed to in our public schools. I can imagine one of Heinlein's older, wiser instructors telling a contemporary student that the universe does not care about his fragile self-esteem and that it does not hand out ribbons just for showing up.

Tunnel in the Sky, published in 1955, is typical of Heinlein's juveniles. It features a strong, intelligent young man, Rod Walker, as the protagonist. Rod wants to join the movement to colonize other planets, accessed through gateways that transport travelers instantly across the galaxy. In order to be a colonist, Rod must take and pass a class on survival taught by the famous explorer "Deacon" Matson. For the final exam, the class, along with similar classes from other schools, is to be dropped on an uninhabited planet for ten to fourteen days. Whoever manages to survive passes. Unfortunately, something disrupts the gate and the students are stranded. They must manage to survive for far longer than they had expected. This may be Heinlein's response to *Lord of the Flies* published the previous year. Unlike the younger children in William Golding's tale, the high school and college age youths do not descend into savagery. They build a colony with a government. They attempt to recreate modern technology as much as possible and by the time they are rescued they have begun to smelt iron and to domesticate the native plants and animals. The young colonists do

have trouble with students who refuse to do their share of the work and with dangerous animals, but they manage to overcome their difficulties. After their settlement is destroyed and their first mayor is killed by migrating animals, Rod becomes the new mayor. There is some talk of moving to a safer location that Rod had discovered earlier but he refuses to consider it, stating that they are men and they will not be moved by a bunch of dumb animals. Instead, they develop ways to defend their settlement by the time of the next migration. I should say something about Heinlein's supposed racism in this book. At the beginning of the story, Rod visits a gateway to watch pioneers going out to colonize new planets. First, there is a long line of Asians, poverty-stricken refugees being forced by their authoritarian government to travel to a new world. They are followed by proud pioneers from North America. I do not believe that Heinlein intended to make any sort of statement about the relative merits of Asians and Americans but was extrapolating a likely future based on circumstances at the time of publication. In 1955, most of Asia was desperately poor and overcrowded and it seemed likely to remain so for generations. I should note that it is hinted throughout the book that Rod is African-American, though at the time of publication Heinlein was unable to say so outright. I enjoyed reading *Tunnel in the Sky* when I was in fifth grade and enjoyed it no less rereading it as an adult. Robert Heinlein knew how to keep his readers interested.

I first read this book when I was around the age of 10 and it's been one I revisit every few years. For more detailed info, check out the other reviews. Normally, I'd rate this title higher. However, I cannot give the current Kindle version a full five stars because it is painfully obvious that no one has taken the time to give this version an ounce of quality control. Problems include:- missing words: In several places, sentences and paragraphs end mid-statement. Readers are able to draw a conclusion as to what is missing and what was being said but it does disturb the immersion.- missing punctuation: A lot of sentences, particularly ones at the end of paragraphs, had missing punctuation. Dialogue was often missing quotation marks.- misspelled words: The OCR software that was used did a poor job of word recognition in places. For instance, I remember a paragraph that started with "111". After looking at what the context was, I was able to discern that the intended word was "I'll"-formatting errors: As one reads through this, be prepared to have line breaks in the middle of sentences, paragraphs that run into one another and other odd formatting. I know the above seems hyper-critical but this poor level of conversion is something I'd expect from self-published authors and many of the \$0.99 deals. I really do expect better from publishers, Especially when charging full price.

I love all Robert A Heinlein books, and this one is very enjoyable, as always, although I love some of his books even more, hence the four star rating. As Heinlein does with books in the juvenile series, sex isn't mentioned; people get "married" and have babies, with no mention of details. I love the twist on Lord of the Flies premise, with children of being lost in space because of a super nova and having to survive on an unknown planet, the culture shock at the end when the protagonist returns to "civilization"..a detail many might not of considered.

Overall I give this book a 4.5 out of 5 rating and I would recommend this to any teen today. Why? Because it captures the awkwardness of being an older teen, you're not a child but you're not an adult (see this statement by the Deacon in the book). I caught only part of it the first time around, and more fully the second as I remembered this age more vividly. I also more clearly this time agreed with Heinlein that man is the most dangerous animal around having experienced first hand someone who for years was docile and then turned deadly. Why the 4.5, well because...I read this story back in the late 60's as a teen and remembered it as a trilling story. I've been waiting for it to come out on the kindle and bought it as soon as I saw it was available. The story is much as I remember it, but it was different than I remembered. There was less character development than I remembered, and this was disappointing. The other thing I didn't remember was the jump from the planet they were stranded on to end, it left me wandering what happened in between. I guess back then the story flowed more smoothly because I filled in the gaps with what I expected Rod/me to do in the same situation, something now I see as not the only choice. Would I buy it again? You bet I love anything Heinlein, especially the early Heinleins because he hides his sermon behind a seemingly pretty picture. Some people say there is two Heinleins, the early one of the 40's and 50's and the late one of the 60's and 70's; I say they are one and the same it's the editors who are different and you just have to know what he said later to see it in the earlier books. I also agree with others that Heinlein's books are ageless, yes there are things that date it but if you take out the dates it all still applies to today, something that few books of that era can say.

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