

ColSec Rebellion Short Guide

ColSec Rebellion by Douglas Hill

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Contents

ColSec Rebellion Short Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Overview.....	3
About the Author.....	4
Setting.....	5
Social Sensitivity.....	6
Literary Qualities.....	7
Themes and Characters.....	8
Topics for Discussion.....	9
Ideas for Reports and Papers.....	10
For Further Reference.....	11
Related Titles.....	12
Copyright Information.....	13

Overview

ColSec Rebellion is a fast-paced science fiction adventure that addresses the issues of leadership, cooperation, and the meaning of freedom. The teenaged heroes, juvenile delinquents exiled to the planet Klydor, must learn to set aside their differences and work together to free their new home from the harsh rulers of Earth. While the book's futuristic plot and high-tech gadgetry make for imaginative reading, the author also takes on some more down-to-earth topics. His portrait of the future Earth is one of a corrupt society governed by the powerful few who exploit both their fellow human beings and the natural resources of many planets. Wealth, education, and freedom are unknown to the great masses of Earth's people, except for those who manage to build lives for themselves in the more remote and desolate areas of the world, or those who find some measure of freedom by joining the youth gangs that roam the decaying cities. Hill emphasizes the characteristics of a just society through the friendship and cooperation shared by the young rebels, in contrast to the greedy, selfish behavior of the rulers of Earth—an Earth which, at times, bears more than a passing resemblance to our present society.

About the Author

Douglas Arthur Hill was born on April 6, 1935 in Brandon, Manitoba and was raised in rural Canada in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. The jacket of one of his books quotes the writer as stating, "The backwoods of Canada were a great place to grow up in but a lousy place to be an adolescent." A self-described "dreamer," Hill began reading science fiction at an early age.

Staples of his reading diet included the Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers comic strips, whose influence can still be seen in his fast-paced futuristic adventure stories for young people.

Hill left home at the age of seventeen to attend the University of Saskatchewan at Saskatoon; he graduated and continued his studies at the University of Toronto. At age twenty-three he moved to London, England, where he still makes his home.

Hill's interest in science fiction has continued through his adult life. In 1963, he became a science fiction critic for the London Weekly Tribune, where he also spent several years as Literary and Arts editor. He has edited poetry and folklore anthologies, and he has written nonfiction books on mythology, the supernatural, and the history of Canada and England. He now spends most of his time writing young adult science fiction and fantasy. His books include the Last Legionary quintet, five books about a futuristic warrior named Keill Randor, and two Dungeons and Dragons-style fantasies: Blade of the Poisoner and Master of Fiends. Most of his books are installments in various science fiction and fantasy series. ColSec Rebellion is the last book of a trilogy, preceded by Exiles of ColSec and The Caves of Klydor.

Setting

The story is set in the future, first, on a planet called Klydor, where five young exiles have been sent as punishment for various crimes by the Colonization Section of Earth's tyrannical government, also known as ColSec. As the story opens, the young people manage to hijack an Earth spaceship with the help of Bren Lathan, a renegade pilot whose own ship has crashed and left him stranded on the planet surface.

With the young exiles aboard, Lathan takes the stolen ship to Earth with hopes of starting a rebellion that will eventually free the Earth colonies, like those on Klydor, from the tyrannical control of the Earth's government. The teen-agers are to go into the decaying inner cities of the Earth and recruit freedom fighters for the coming battle from the youth gangs that roam the streets. After gathering their small army, they plan to meet with Bren and the ship and fly on to a rebel base located on Klydor.

Social Sensitivity

In *ColSecRebellion*, Hill encourages racial harmony through the diversity of the heroes. Equality of the sexes is stressed by the active roles played by the girls, Heleth and Samella. The male characters are not stereotyped. Cord is a thoughtful hero who would rather resolve conflicts through reason than through fighting. The book does contain violence that younger readers may find disturbing. But Hill does not dwell on violence, and many readers will find his descriptions of battles merely realistic rather than excessive.

Literary Qualities

ColSec Rebellion is a fast-paced work that is exciting and fun to read. The characters, while not drawn in great depth, are engaging and believable.

The struggle against evil and tyranny, personified by the ColSec organization, is an important theme here, as it is in many works of Western literature. Hill writes in a style that reads quickly, with many colorful action verbs and skillful descriptions of settings and high-tech gadgetry. He displays humor through the characters and their relationships. Jeko and Heleth, for example, trade a number of friendly insults throughout the story, and Jeko occasionally makes ironic remarks on the heroes' situation.

Themes and Characters

The story's most important characters are the five teen-age heroes. Each of the youths has a different background and different talents. Cord MaKiy, the leader of the group, is the most well-developed character, and most of the story is told from his point of view. Raised in the wilds of the Scottish highlands, Cord has little knowledge of technology, but his independent spirit, sense of fairness, and keen abilities as a fighter make the other youths view him as their natural leader. Although Cord dislikes the idea of giving orders to other people, he accepts the responsibilities of leadership. Samella, a girl with telepathic receptivity and computer expertise, shares Cord's independent bent. The other three teens are former members of street gangs themselves and are accustomed to obeying the orders of leaders without question. The boys Jeko and Rontal are "Free Streeters," from the Chicago/Detroit urban complex, while a girl, Heleth, comes from the "Bunkers," remnants of London's decayed subways. These three are natural warriors with their street-fighting skills, and Heleth possesses excellent night vision as well, from spending a lifetime underground in the old subways. The teen-agers' ability to pool their varied skills is an important element of the story. Hill's books often feature ill-assorted groups of heroes.

The diversity among these characters helps to emphasize the theme of overcoming individual differences and utilizing them for the benefit of the group.

Hill also emphasizes the risks that his heroes are willing to take in their fight for freedom. Their search for potential freedom fighters takes Cord and his friends to the decayed heart of the Detroit/Chicago complex, where they meet Jeko and Rontal's gang, the Free Streeters. One of the gang members, a young man named Stele, is intrigued by the idea of seeking freedom on another world, but the leader of the Streeters, Tuller, refuses to believe Jeko and Rontal's tales of other planets. He imprisons Cord, Samella, and Heleth in an old cellar, and secretly offers them as prisoners to the government Civil Defenders in exchange for the "Cee Dees" promise to leave the Streeters alone. But Cord and the girls manage to escape. The remainder of the book is basically an extended chase, with the heroes trying to elude the Cee Dees.

Only when it is too late do Cord and his friends realize that they have been set up. The Civil Defenders have followed them to Bren Lathan's spaceship, and Lathan and the young rebels are arrested. But with luck and help from the Free Streeters, who have overthrown Tuller and taken Stele as their leader, they manage to escape once more, and to steal a ship that takes them to a rebel base on a nearby asteroid. They are pursued there by government troops and a climactic battle ensues. Hill emphasizes the bond of loyalty and friendship between his heroes, who choose to risk death together by fighting against the forces of Earth's Organization. Their courage is rewarded with a victory, and Cord and his friends look forward at the book's end to exploring new planets that will become the homes of free civilizations, rather than enslaved Earth colonies.



Topics for Discussion

1. Cord and his friends join the Streeters' feud with the Hatchetmen to win the gang's trust. What other strategies might they have tried to win over the Streeters? Would alternate strategies have worked? Why or why not?
2. In Chapter 10, Samella accuses Tuller of forbidding the Streeters to join the rebellion because he fears losing his own power over the gang members. Do you share her assessment? Are there any similarities between Tuller's attitudes and behavior and those of the ColSec officials? What are they?
3. What qualities do Stele and Cord possess that make them better leaders than Tuller?
4. The freedom fighters on the asteroid threaten to blow up their own base unless ColSec's forces surrender to them. Is this a wise or rational risk to take? Why or why not? Would you be willing to take such a risk if you were one of the asteroid defenders?
5. Are there any scenes or episodes in this book that the author could have developed in more detail? Is the ending satisfactory, for example? What details might have been added to it, or to other parts of the book?
6. Is it believable that ColSec would give in to the demands of the colonists so quickly? Why or why not?
7. Do you agree with Jeko's statement that action and adventure are addictive? If you had survived the adventures of Cord and his friends, would you want to explore more worlds, or settle on Klydor and live there in peace?

Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. How do Rontal, Samella, Heleth, Cord and Jeko each contribute to the success of their recruiting mission?

Give one example of behavior for each.

2. Early in the novel, ColSec Inspector Reema tells the young rebels that "Outer space belongs to ColSec! We are the masters of space! There is nowhere you can hide that ColSec can't find you!" What are some other instances in the book that show ColSec's belief in its own superiority? How does that sense of superiority make ColSec careless, and how do the heroes take advantage of that carelessness?

3. Compare this book with one of its predecessors, *Exiles of ColSec* or *The Caves of Klydor*. Which is the better book and why? Do the characters change from one adventure to the next?

If so, how? Give examples from the book to support your responses.

4. In Chapter 9, Samella is offended at Cord's concern for her, which she sees as demeaning to her own abilities as a fighter. Which character do you identify with in this situation and why? What do you think the author is saying about the attitudes and roles of men and women?

For Further Reference

Review. Booklist (September 15, 1985): 124-125. Praises Hill's "distinctly individualized" characters, and his gift for creating "brutal, almost visual fight scenes" that suit the story.

Review. Growing Point (January 1986): 45-44. Calls Hill's work an "absorbing tale," and praises the author's characterizations and serious theme.

Review. Junior Bookshelf (December 1985): 278. Praises ColSec Rebellion as a "rousing conclusion" to Hill's trilogy.

Review. School Librarian (December 1985): 355. The reviewer calls ColSec Rebellion a good "yarn," but finds it inferior to its predecessors, Exiles of ColSec and The Caves of Klydor, contending that those who read it for pure entertainment "will be well pleased, but I am left wondering about the more thoughtful reader."

Related Titles

The earlier adventures of Cord and his friends on the planet Klydor are related in *Exiles of ColSec*, which introduces the characters and their fight for survival on an alien world, and *The Caves of Klydor*, which continues their story as the teenagers struggle to protect their new home from being taken over by the Organization. In addition, *The Caves of Klydor* sets the stage for the conflict in *ColSec Rebellion* by introducing the character Bren Lathan and the ruthless ColSec government operatives.

Douglas Hill has also written a number of other books about the adventures of young people in futuristic worlds, including the *Last Legionary* series and the *Huntsman* trilogy.



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