

The Land That Time Forgot Short Guide

The Land That Time Forgot by Edgar Rice Burroughs

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Overview

Many literary critics regard *The Land That Time Forgot* as Burroughs's best work. The book's three novellas—"The Land That Time Forgot," "The People That Time Forgot," and "Out of Time's Abyss"—tell the stories of three different men who become trapped in the strange land of Caspak, which is filled with voracious carnivores and hostile primitive tribesmen. Each novella is a tale of high adventure and suspense played out against the backdrop of an intricately developed fantasy world.

Many elements are standard fare for a Burroughs adventure. Coincidences appear frequently, whenever the plot is in danger of hitting a snag, and romantic entanglements—frequently between people of different cultural backgrounds—also add spark to the plot.

About the Author

Edgar Rice Burroughs was born on September 1, 1875, in Chicago, Illinois. He attended the Michigan Military Academy from 1892 to 1895 and served in the United States Cavalry from 1896 to 1897. He was married twice: first in 1900 to Emma Centennia Hulbert, whom he divorced in 1934, and later in 1934 to Florence Dearholt, whom he divorced in 1942. Before becoming a writer, Burroughs drifted through a range of occupations, including cowboy, stationery store owner, factory clerk, miner, and railroad policeman. At age thirty-five, unstimulated by his current job of selling pencil sharpeners—and unimpressed by the quality of writing in popular magazines of the time—Burroughs decided to try his hand at writing fiction. He submitted his first effort, *Dejah Thoris, Martian Princess*, to *All-Story* magazine. Accepted for publication and serialized in *All-Story* as *Under the Moons of Mars* in 1912, Burroughs's novel was later published in book form in 1917 under the title *A Princess of Mars*. This volume was the first of Burroughs's Mars books, also called the Barsoom series.

In October 1912, *All-Story* published *Tarzan of the Apes*, which became a popular sensation and launched Burroughs into the forefront of his profession. Tarzan has since become one of the best-known characters in twentieth century literature; innumerable radio shows, television programs, comic strips, and motion pictures have featured Tarzan.

Burroughs always insisted that he wrote primarily to earn money, not to produce works of art. Although his writing is seldom sophisticated, many of his science fiction and fantasy books remain among the most memorable adventure novels of all time. Burroughs incorporated himself in 1923, controlling the copyrights to his books, and in 1931 founded his own publishing company. He invested some of his earnings in southern California real estate; the land he bought eventually became the city of Tarzana, which still flourishes. At his death on March 19, 1950, in Encino, California, Burroughs had made over ten million dollars and had written more than seventy books. During the 1950s, the growing paperback book trade opened up even larger markets for Burroughs's writings, and his books continue to fascinate both young adult and older readers today.



Characters

The three novellas of *The Land That Time Forgot* have three different main characters. In "The Land That Time Forgot," the main character is Bowen J. Tyler, Jr., son of a California ship builder. In "The People That Time Forgot," the main character is Thomas Billings, who as a former cowboy who became the secretary to Tyler's father, seems to resemble Burroughs himself.

In "Out of Time's Abyss," the main character is the tersely spoken sailor Lieutenant Bradley. Typical of Burroughs's characterizations, none of these men is fleshed out much beyond the details necessary for explaining why they end up in Caspak.

Burroughs unabashedly presents incredible coincidences in his fiction, and Tyler is an example of this. He is the son of a shipbuilding magnate.

Eager to fight for the Allies in World War I, he is on his way to try out for the Lafayette Escadrille (an air corps of Americans flying for the French) when his ship is torpedoed by a U-boat. He rescues a beautiful young woman, Lys La Rue, and they are picked up by a British tugboat. Then they encounter the submarine that sank their ship; in a bold ruse, the tugboat crew pretends to surrender to the U-boat, then rams it.

In hand-to-hand combat, the British seamen overcome the Germans and seize control of the submarine. By coincidence, the U-boat was manufactured by Tyler's company, and Tyler knows all about running it. In another coincidence, the U-boat's captain, Baron von Schoenvorts turns out to be Lys La Rue's fiancé. Tyler, who has fallen in love with Lys, wrestles with jealousy, which turns into suspicion when sabotage ruins the U-boat's navigation equipment.

Tyler turns out to be a natural leader who organizes a truce between the British crewmen and the German ones.

He becomes the captain of the ship, and he directs the submarine's journey into Caspak. Once in Caspak, he organizes the building of a stone fort for protection against dinosaurs and apemen, he leads expeditions for food, and he sends his second in command Bradley and some of the crew on explorations of the strange land, in hope that a way over or through the cliffs that surround the island may be found.

Eventually he and his men are betrayed by Baron von Schoenvorts, who processes some crude oil found bubbling out of the ground into fuel for the submarine and then bombards the fort with a shell before sailing out the way they had come in. Tyler's ingenuity is then put to further tests; Bradley is overdue back from a trip to the island's rim, and Lys is kidnapped. He pursues her, saves her, and then must cope with Caspak's strange evolutionary chain of peoples, each group deadly enemies, yet each related to the others because some individual men and woman eventually change into a higher evolutionary type of human.



The people of Caspak are an interesting mixture of savagery and civilization. The apemen are called the "Alu," who are at the bottom of the evolutionary chain of humans; they fight with clubs. Like all the human groups in Caspak, their society is dominated by the males, and like all the other groups save for the Galus, they envy the more evolutionarily advanced peoples. The males seem especially covetous of the females of the more advanced societies.

The Alu live in the south, which in the Caspakian tongue is called the "beginning," because it is where human evolution begins. There is a large sea in the middle of Caspak, and the evolutionary chain works its way to the north along both the east and west sides of it, so that, for instance, there are two tribes — one on the east side and one on the west — of the Sto-lu, the next evolutionary stage after the Alu. The "Sto" in Sto-lu signifies the weapon they use, a hatchet. They live in caves and speak the most primitive version of the Caspakian language, the Alu being the "speechless ones." The Band-lu speak a more sophisticated version of the language, and the Kro-lu speak an even more complex version.

The "Band" in Band-lu indicates their use of knives in hunting and warfare.

They also wear crude clothes made out of animal skins. After the Band-lu come the Kro-lu, who use spears. They are a handsome race, resembling CroMagnons. After the Kro-lu come the Galu. Most of the Galu have evolved their way through the great life cycle of Caspak but a few are born the same way human beings in the outer world are born. They are "no-egg-men," the Cos-ata-lu. These various kinds of humans are the people Tyler and Lys must deal with as they try to stay alive in a very hostile world.

Tyler confesses that he is always tongue-tied when speaking to women, and his relationship is further complicated by his prudery. He has the love of a fine woman, and instead of expressing his love in return, he spends too much of his time worried about being too forward. An intelligent and courageous person, Lys is understandably angry with Tyler for his suspecting her of sabotaging the U-boat's navigation equipment and for his reluctance to commit himself to loving her. Small, lithe, and beautiful, she adapts to the Caspakian societies better than does Tyler, and she does not waste her time worrying about the unavoidable nudity she and Tyler must endure because of the rigors of their adventures.

The villains in the novella "The Land That Time Forgot" include a traitor, Benson, Baron von Schoenvorts, and a few of the Caspakians who want to kill Tyler and Lys because they look like Galus or who want to seize Lys as their mate. Of these villains, Benson is the most well rounded, although he is not particularly subtle. Most readers will know long before Tyler gets it through his thick skull that Benson is the person sabotaging the submarine and sowing dissension among the British sailors. He has had a long-standing grudge against Tyler's family because he was kicked out of their shipyard, and he has become a German agent because he hates Americans in general.

He very nearly succeeds in killing Tyler and the British sailors and in turning the submarine's command back over to the Germans. In contrast to Benson is Baron von



Schoenvorts, who is a stereotypical Prussian officer who is given none of the motivation that is provided for Benson's characterization.

The Baron does not even seem upset at discovering his fiancée in the hands of his enemies or at her rejection of him because of his cruel sinking of a passenger ship. He beats his men and curses at them, betrays all trust put in him, and meets a suitably ignominious death when a couple of his sailors refuse to fight against the British for him.

The novella "The Land That Time Forgot" is told in the first person by Tyler, which means that readers spend a great deal of time getting to know him and sharing his experiences. "The People That Time Forgot" is also told in the first person, in this case by Thomas Billings, personal secretary to Tyler's father and a born man of action.

He leads the expedition to find Tyler after Tyler's manuscript account of Caspak has been recovered, letting the outside world know of what became of him. Billings flies a biplane over Caspak, fights a giant pterodactyl, and crashes near where a young woman is fleeing a group of primitive men. She turns out to be Ajor, the daughter of the chief of the Galu, and she has already had a harrowing time, having been kidnapped by the Wieroo, then dropped in the south, far from her home. She is a Cos-ata-lu, which means that she can bear children to Wieroo fathers, as well as to human beings.

Courageous, resourceful, and beautiful, she is an adventurer herself — a good match for Billings, who falls in love with her the moment he sees her. Under her dirt and tattered clothes he recognizes a strong-hearted woman.

This speaks well of Billings, whose judgment of the character of people is usually sound. As the personal secretary to Tyler, Sr., he is a well-spoken and literate man whose account of his adventures is well written. As a former cowboy, he brings a fearless love of physical adventure to his efforts to save Ajor and himself from the many dangers that surround them. His background as a cowboy serves him in good stead; not only is he a crack shot with a rifle, but he is able to break and ride a wild horse.

The third novella of *The Land That Time Forgot* is written in the third person. The main character of "Out of Time's Abyss" is Bradley, whose tersely understated prose was featured briefly in the first novella. Burroughs may have written himself into a corner with Bradley; having shown Bradley to be a colorless and un-descriptive writer in "The Land That Time Forgot," Burroughs would not have been able to convincingly turn Bradley into an exciting writer for "Out of Time's Abyss."

Much of the immediacy of an adventure shared by the protagonist and the audience is lost in this third novella because of the shift in point of view.

On the other hand, the plot of this story is more tightly focused than the others. Like the others, it provides a theme of romantic love.

Romantic love as a motivation for the actions of the principal characters in *The Land That Time Forgot* is effectively presented in each novella. Much of the suspense of "The Land That Time Forgot" is provided by the question of whether Lys will let go of her



pride and Tyler will overcome his shyness to finally admit that they love each other. Burroughs is adept at leading up to an ideal opportunity for Lys and Tyler to surrender to each other and then snatching away that opportunity with some new complication, such as when Lys is kidnapped from the fort. In "The People That Time Forgot," both Billings and Ajor seem fairly sure of their love for each other. The complication in their relationship is Billings's arrogant assumption that he is a civilized man and that Ajor is too primitive for him. Their relationship remains suspenseful until the end of the novella, when Billings finally concedes to his own judgment that Ajor is a better woman than any of the more civilized ones he had known in California. But of the three protagonists of the novellas, Bradley is given the greatest opportunity to enjoy a satisfying love relationship.

When he and his men were sent off to explore Caspak by Tyler in "The Land That Time Forgot," they were attacked at night by flying Wieroo, who can see well in the dark. His men are filled with fear, superstitiously thinking the Wieroo are spirits of the dead. The unrelenting danger of Caspak has shaken all of them, and the Wieroo are too much for them. Two give up on living and are killed by the island's voracious predators. When Bradley goes on guard one night, he is attacked by two Wieroo, one distracting him while the other seizes him. He is carried off to the island of Oo-oh and deposited in a room atop a fantastic city. The Wieroo collect skulls, both their own and those of the Galu that they kill. These skulls form part of the building materials of their cities, lining walls, doorways, and pillars. Being flying creatures, the Wieroo have little need of ground-level streets, so each home has a hole in the roof for the Wieroo to enter, but few buildings have ground-level entries, although the dining area that Bradley uses has its entryway at the bottom of a tall building. The Wieroo are not a technologically sophisticated people, so they fail to recognize Bradley's pistol as a threat, and they let him keep it.

It does not take Bradley long to get himself into more trouble than he is already in. When some Wieroo crowd him, he strikes out at them. Although the Wieroo themselves are allowed to harm each other, no outsider is allowed to touch them. Thus Bradley's captor is in a terrible rage and attacks him for his insubordination; Bradley kills the Wieroo. While trying to escape, Bradley comes across a Galu woman who has been kidnapped to become the mate of Him Who Speaks for Luata. Her fate is to be an unpleasant one.

Later in the novella, Bradley comes across a nursery, where Cos-ata-lo Galu women are imprisoned with their Wieroo young; they live underground in small quarters.

A resourceful man who never gives up a fight, Bradley escapes from a particularly nasty prison, and in another of Burroughs's coincidences, finds the girl in the city's temple. Her name is Co-Tan, and she is willing to dare anything to escape the horrible fate of becoming a breeder for the Wieroo. Bradley is a practical man; his levelheaded behavior in a fight is matched by his willingness to leave well enough alone when not threatened. When he and Co-Tan find a haven at the head of a river, sheltered from the Wieroo, they enjoy some loving bliss. Eventually, they, like the lovers in the other novellas, acknowledge their love for each other. Although limited in her view of the world



— thinking that Caspak is everything — Co-Tan willingly leaves with Bradley when he is rescued; Ajar too chooses to leave with the man she loves. This makes them poignant figures at the end of "Out of Time's Abyss"; they both leave their families for an outside world that they only half believe exists.

Setting

The first novella, "The Land That Time Forgot," opens after the outbreak of World War I but before the United States has entered the conflict. Bowen J. Tyler, Jr., an American, is sailing by passenger ship to France in order to join the fight against Germany. When his ship is torpedoed by a German U-boat, Tyler and the woman passenger he saves, Lys La Rue, are rescued by a British tugboat.

They and the crew soon seize control of the U-boat, which, after much shipboard intrigue, ends up near Antarctica.

Short of fuel, food, and water, the crew sights a mysterious island surrounded by high cliffs, and sails the submarine through an underground river into the fantastic world of Caspak.

All three novellas are set in Caspak, a land where evolution occurs at a rapid pace. There is a large sea in the middle of Caspak, and the evolutionary chain works its way north along both the east and west sides. At the southern end of this interior sea are primitive creatures, while at the northern are Caspak's most advanced forms of life: human beings called "Galu" and hideous winged creatures called "Wieroo." These two species represent alternative courses of civilization and are mutually hostile.

Tyler at first notes only that the further north he travels, the more advanced are the animals and people. Only later does he learn the underlying principle of human evolution in Caspak. It turns out that women are oviparous; that is, they produce fertilized eggs that develop outside their bodies. When they bathe in a warm stream, their eggs are carried south, to the evolutionary beginnings of Caspak. Once there, the eggs develop through all stages of evolution, slowly changing from fish to amphibians to dinosaurs, and so on. Many of the developing young are killed by fierce predators; others reach their individual capacity for evolution at an intermediate level; but a few pass through all stages of animal and human development to become either Galu or Wieroo. Like lower-level creatures, the Galu women are oviparous, with an exception: any woman whose mother was at least a seventh-generation Galu—meaning that seven previous generations of ancestors matured to Galu—can bear children inside her womb, the way human beings in the outside world do.



Social Concerns

In his depiction of the Wieroo in "Out of Time's Abyss," the third novella of *The Land That Time Forgot*, Burroughs seems to attack the concept of eugenics, an idea that would later be discredited by the Nazis' hideous abuse of it during World War II, but which has made a comeback in serious social and scientific discussions since the advent of gene splicing and the possibility of scientists being able to genetically alter people. Some people broadly use the term eugenics to refer to any kind of selective breeding, such as the breeding of cattle to produce more and better milk, but strictly speaking, eugenics applies to improving humanity through genetic control, either by selective breeding or altering genes. The Wieroos are practitioners of eugenics; their whole society is a fierce competition designed for only the strong to survive. They have advantages over the Galus, who are human beings. The Wieroo have wings and can fly, and they have control over their environment, having driven the predators from their island of Oo-oh and having populated the island with creatures that are good to eat. On the other hand, they are without conscience; they use murder for advancement. Their laws restrict them somewhat — they cannot legally kill members of a caste above them, although they can rise to a higher caste if they murder enough of their fellows. It is not stretching the analysis too far to say that Burroughs is making a statement about eugenics; he makes a blunt attack on vivisection in *At the Earth's Core* (1922), and he shows similar interests in others of his books. In *The Land That Time Forgot*, he shows the advocates of eugenics to be in some ways more "civilized" than their evolutionary rivals, the Galu, but they are morally bankrupt, a dead end of evolution and society. The Galu, although living somewhat more primitive lives, are much more enlightened people.

Social Sensitivity

Evolution was a hot topic when Burroughs wrote *The Land That Time Forgot* in 1924. During the early part of the century, many states banned the teaching of scientific evolution, insisting on a biblical account of creation. In 1925, a high school teacher in Tennessee, John Thomas Scopes, was arrested and tried for teaching evolutionary theory, his case—referred to as the "Monkey Trial"—attracting worldwide attention.

Now, more than half a century later, the issue remains unsettled, although the law currently protects the teaching of Darwinian theory.

Burroughs's depiction of evolution in *The Land That Time Forgot* is in some ways a naive one. Evolution in Caspak is founded on the basic idea that primitive organisms evolved into fish, which evolved into reptiles, which evolved into mammals and birds—but the mechanism for this process is not described. Natural selection seems to have little to do with the transformation of primitive Caspakian species into advanced ones, even though natural selection was the mechanism that Charles Darwin credited for the diversity of life on earth. Traditional religion plays no overt role in Burroughs's depiction of life in Caspak, but throughout the work he refrains from coming out decisively on the side of natural selection.

In his depiction of the Wieroo, Burroughs explores the issue of eugenics.

Although some people refer to any kind of selective breeding—such as the breeding of cattle to produce more and better milk—as eugenics, strictly speaking the term applies to improving the human race through genetic control, either by selective breeding or by altering genes. The idea of genetic engineering, discredited by the hideous abuses perpetuated by the Nazis during World War II, has reentered the arena of serious social and scientific discussion as a result of technological advances.

Fairly recent events such as the advent of gene splicing and the increased sophistication of prenatal testing for fetal abnormalities serve to focus attention on a unique relationship—that of humanity to its own gene pool.

The Wieroos practice eugenics; their society is one of fierce competition in which weak individuals are deliberately destroyed. Because they can fly, the Wieroos have several advantages over the Galu, and Burroughs portrays these advocates of eugenics as in some ways more "civilized" than their evolutionary rivals. On the other hand, the Wieroo are without conscience and are morally bankrupt—they use murder for selfadvancement, and represent a dead end of evolution and society. The Galu, although living somewhat more primitive lives, are a much more enlightened race.

Despite Burroughs's foray into issues of ethical concern, most readers are likely to read *The Land That Time Forgot* simply for entertainment. The stories are violent, but none of the protagonists is depicted as bloodthirsty, and all would just as soon avoid conflict whenever possible. The nudity in the work is just about as chaste as nudity can be—

the women are physically fit and the men are easily embarrassed. Overall, the book shows civilized people coping humorously with a savage and wild environment.



Techniques

Some literary critics rank the first novella "The Land That Time Forgot" as Burroughs's best work. It has at its center an ingenious concept — that of a world in which the outside world's evolutionary history is lived through from beginning to end by individual people. Burroughs takes care to develop this idea fully, making it a satisfying mystery to be uncovered by the unwilling explorers from the U-boat.

Other elements are standard fare for one of Burroughs's adventures. Coincidences appear whenever they will help the plot move forward, and Burroughs seldom offers explanations for them. A love story helps keep the novella well focused, and provides much of its sense of direction. Tyler is a typical Burroughs hero; he is somewhat bland but gifted with leadership qualities that make those around him willing to follow wherever he leads. He is a bit prudish, which seems to add emphasis to the casual nudity of the Caspakians, who have no sense of physical modesty. This makes the Caspakians somewhat more attractive people than the hero, whose self-centered views about the proper behavior of men and women toward each other are silly under the circumstances. Lys starts the novella as a fairly stereotypical Burroughs heroine; she is beautiful, fair, and in need of the hero's protection. However, as the plot advances, she grows, becoming another standard sort of Burroughs heroine, the strong, capable woman who only accepts her lover on her own terms. This growth in her character is an asset that helps elevate "The Land That Time Forgot" above the standard adventure yarn.

The adventures of Burroughs are sometimes compared by critics to daydreams, noting how the stories seem to be wish fulfillments. The protagonists almost inevitably become leaders of primitive peoples, they nearly always find wonderful lovers, and they enjoy marvelous adventures, in which the wicked are very evil indeed, and the side of the right is easy to identify. The weird settings, the heroic violence, and the nudity all fit in with the idea that Burroughs created daydreams for his audience to enjoy. All three novellas of *The Land That Time Forgot* have these qualities, and their frequent coincidences lend credence to the daydream idea because they make the stories seem to wander like idle daydreams.

On the other hand, "Out of Time's Abyss" does not meander the way the other novellas do. It is well focused on a conflict between Bradley and Wieroo, from the Wieroo attacks on him and his exploration party to his escape from Oo-oh. The Wieroo are the villains of the piece, and they do not have to share their role as antagonists with other figures. In "The Land That Time Forgot" there seems to be a new villain every few pages. Yet, in spite of its tighter plot and more thorough development of a conflict between hero and villains, "Out of Time's Abyss" is less satisfying reading than the previous two novellas.

"The Land That Time Forgot" and "The People That Time Forgot" both have the compelling mystery of Caspak's evolution to unify them. By the time "Out of Time's Abyss" begins, this mystery has been thoroughly explained. Tyler has worked out much of the general outline of the solution to the mystery, and Bradley has followed its effects



step-by-step through the human tribes of Caspak. Further, each of the first two novellas concludes with a tone of having been on a great journey; Tyler and Billings have seen a multitude of wonders. The detailed working out of the Wieroo city is no mean achievement; it is a vividly realized place. Yet, "The Land That Time Forgot" and "The People That Time Forgot" also depict many amazing places, enhancing their sense of grand adventure.

Literary Qualities

Strong characterizations help elevate *The Land That Time Forgot* above the standard adventure yarn. Tyler, the protagonist of the first novella, is a typical Burroughs hero; he is somewhat bland, but gifted with leadership qualities that make those around him willing to follow wherever he leads. A bit prudish, he finds it difficult to accept the Caspakians' casual nudity. It is not Tyler's value system that Burroughs calls into question, but rather the rigidity of his outlook; under the circumstances—a land where men and women run around without any clothes on as a matter of course—Tyler's opinions about proper behavior are impractical and silly.

Lys starts the novella as a fairly stereotypical Burroughs heroine; she is beautiful, fair, and in need of the hero's protection. However, as the plot advances, she grows into another standard Burroughs type—the strong, capable woman who only accepts her lover on her own terms. Both Ajour in "The People That Time Forgot" and Co-Tan in "Out of Time's Abyss" are also strong female characters, capable of standing up to their male counterparts. Burroughs's males are always at their best when paired with a female. Alone, they frequently display character flaws such as extreme pride or stubbornness; in order to secure romantic love, however, they are forced to reexamine their values and to grow as characters.

Critics often label Burroughs novels as wish-fulfillment fantasies. The protagonists almost inevitably become leaders of primitive peoples, find wonderful lovers, and enjoy marvelous adventures.

The wicked are always very evil indeed, but the side of the right always triumphs. The exotic settings, the heroism, and the nudity prevalent in the novels all support the idea that Burroughs was in the business of manufacturing daydreams for his audience. The author's frequent use of coincidence as a means of moving the plot forward is another fantasy element; despite the darkest omens, a hero is never truly doomed, and there is seldom a character in a Burroughs novel who does not eventually marry, murder, or turn out to be a long-lost friend or sworn enemy of another.



Themes

Many literary critics regard *The Land That Time Forgot* to be Burroughs's best work because it has a strong central idea that is carefully worked out in detail and has an imaginary world, Caspak, that is fully developed. The book's novellas tell the stories of three different men who become trapped in the wildly strange land of Caspak, which is filled with voracious carnivores and hostile primitive tribesmen.

Each novella is a tale of high adventure and suspense; they are page-turners that can keep their readers riveted from beginning to end.

The novella "The Land That Time Forgot" opens with its main character, Bowen J. Tyler, Jr., sailing to France to join the fight against Germany. World War I is well underway, but the United States has not yet entered the war, so Tyler is voyaging across the Atlantic Ocean on a passenger ship. This ship is torpedoed by a German U-boat. Events then move swiftly as Tyler and the woman passenger he saves, Lys La Rue, end up on a British seagoing tugboat; then they and the tugboat's crew seize control of the U-boat. The U-boat turns out to have been manufactured before the war at the shipyards of Tyler's father, and Tyler, Jr., is very familiar with its workings.

All this would seem to be plenty of action for a story, but it is only part of the prelude to the main plot. After much shipboard intrigue and treachery, the U-boat ends up near Antarctica.

Short of fuel, food, and water, the people on the U-boat are desperate when they encounter a great mysterious island that is surrounded by high cliffs. Finding an underground river that flows into the ocean, they sail their submarine into the fantastic world of Caspak.

At first, they have to fight off dinosaurs that want to eat them. Later, they meet hostile ape-men and wild animals that are more advanced on the evolutionary scale than the dinosaurs. Tyler has stumbled into a great mystery — a land in which evolution is at work at a ceaselessly rapid pace. At one end of its interior sea are very primitive forms of life; at the other are Caspak's most advanced forms of life: human beings called the "Galu" and hideous winged creatures called the "Wieroo." These two species represent alternative courses of civilization and are mutually hostile.

Tyler notes that the further north he travels, the more advanced the animals and people seem to be, with the latter changing from ape-men to neanderthals to Cro-Magnons and eventually to fully modern people. It is only when he is well into his adventures that he learns of the underlying principal of human evolution in Caspak. It turns out that the women of the various tribes are oviparous; that is, they produce fertilized eggs that develop outside their bodies. When they bathe in a warm stream, their eggs are carried south, to the evolutionary beginning of Caspak. Once there, the eggs develop through all the stages of evolution, slowly changing from fish to amphibian, then to dinosaur, and so on. Many of the developing young are killed by the multitude of fierce predators of



Caspak, and many others reach their individual maximum evolutionary development, perhaps stopping at the dinosaur level, or if they have made it to the human level, at any of the intermediate human levels, such as neanderthal. A few of the people of Caspak make it all the way to Galu. The Galu women produce progeny the same way the women of the lower evolutionary levels do with this exception: the Galu whose mother was the seventh generation Galu — meaning that she and her ancestors went through seven cycles of maturing all the way to Galu — can bear children the way human beings in the outside world do. This unusual idea of Burroughs gives his three novellas a strong depth of meaning; everywhere in Caspak, the adventurers are seeing evolution at work.

The central theme of the three novellas that make up *The Land That Time Forgot* is evolution, and the land of Caspak is a miniature example of the vast evolutionary forces that have shaped life on earth, with each individual creature and human in Caspak living out the basic evolution of primitive species changing into more advanced species. This complex world of rampant evolution provides a wonderful background for exotic adventures, but Burroughs enriches his theme of evolution by portraying the Wieroo in "Out of Time's Abyss."

The Wieroo have for ages practiced eugenics, killing off what they deem to be inferior members of their species.

This is a practice abhorred by the Galu, the full human beings of Caspak, and over time the Wieroo and the Galu have become bitter enemies. The result of the Wieroo's eugenics is that they have become a winged species with humanlike bodies and skulllike heads.

They are hideous to look upon, and they are regarded with immense fear by the seventh-cycle Galu women. The Wieroo are unable to father females of their own, so they seize the seventhcycle women because these women can bear babies. The Wieroo reproduce themselves by mating with Galu women, whom they keep captive in their cities on the island of Oo-oh. Ages of eugenic breeding has created an unnatural species that cannot properly reproduce itself, whereas the Galu, who let nature take its course, have evolved into a fully developed species that can reproduce itself without outside help.

The Wieroo are a cruel race; their belief in eugenics has made them into treacherous beings. They advance in rank in their society by murdering others of their kind. Their high rulers live in constant fear of death at the hands of one of their subjects. Burroughs seems to suggest by his portrait of the Wieroo that natural processes of human development are better than unnatural ones; that social engineering in which those people who are thought to be inferior are not helped or even killed is cruel and will breed cruel people.

Burroughs's depiction of evolution is in some ways a naive one. In *The Land That Time Forgot*, the process of natural selection seems to have little to do with the formation of advanced species from primitive ones, although natural selection was the mechanism



Charles Darwin argued created the world's diversity of life. On the other hand, the evolution of Caspak is founded on the basic ideas of modern biological science, that fish evolved into reptiles, which evolved into mammals and birds, and so on, but the mechanism for this is not described. Burroughs enriches his account by introducing the Wieroo and thereby suggesting that evolution could have taken another course than developing into human beings; humanity is not necessarily the inevitable result of evolution. The concept of a world that is continuously living out the progress of evolution is a fascinating one, and it serves as a powerful unifying theme for *The Land That Time Forgot*.

Adaptations

The first novella of *The Land That Time Forgot* was made into a motion picture in 1974. The picture is also titled *The Land That Time Forgot*. Released by American International and produced by Samuel Z. Arkoff, it stars Doug McClure as Bowen Tyler, Susan Penhaligon as Lisa Clayton (the love interest), and John McEnery as von Schoenvorts. The screenplay is by James Cawthorne and Michael Moorcock. It is directed by Kevin Connor.

The special effects are sometimes sloppy, and the performances sometimes unintentionally funny, but the movie is delightfully silly and will please members of the audience who are not fussy about technical perfection and will displease others who may measure the movie's cinematic effects against those of *Star Wars* (1977). McClure does a creditable job of portraying Tyler as a capable leader.

The second novella of *The Land That Time Forgot* was also made into a motion picture. *The People That Time Forgot* was released by American International in 1977. It is produced by Max J. Rosenberg and is directed by Kevin Connor. It takes greater liberties with its novella than does its predecessor, with only Ajour (played by Dana Gillespie) as a recognizable character. It is not as good as the movie *The Land That Time Forgot*, but it makes for a pleasant viewing. Both pictures are violent, with voracious dinosaurs dining on various minor characters, but the nudity is only slightly suggested.



Key Questions

1. Can Ajour and Co-Tan be happy in the world outside of Caspak? What problems might they encounter? How well would they deal with the problems?
2. What effect does the change in point of view from first person to third person in "Out of Time's Abyss" have on you?
3. Why does Burroughs have "The Land That Time Forgot" begin with the narration by the man who found Tyler's manuscript? Why does he explain why he was where he was when he found it?
4. The ending of "Out of Time's Abyss" seems contrived, with the men all wanting to leave Caspak with their wives, rather than staying. Why would Burroughs choose such a trite and unoriginal ending to his otherwise innovative stories? Did he do it to please some part of his audience? How would you end The Land That Time Forgot?
5. Some literary critics call the writings of Burroughs daydreams. Do the novellas of The Land That Time Forgot seem like daydreams? What are the qualities that they have that make them like daydreams? What qualities make them unlike daydreams?
6. In The Land That Time Forgot Burroughs creates a unique world. Does he tell you enough about it? What would you like to know that he does not tell you? What are the best parts about Caspak?
7. The Land That Time Forgot is populated with many fantastic monsters. Which are the best ones? Why are they the best?
8. Why are the Wieroo such vicious beings? How has their species survived if it is constantly murdering itself? Is Burroughs trying to make a point with his portrait of the Wieroo?
9. Would you like to visit Caspak? How would you go about visiting it? What would you take with you?
10. Modern satellite photography has revealed no place like Caspak near Antarctica. Does this have any effect on how you enjoy The Land That Time Forgot?
11. How interesting is the central theme of The Land That Time Forgot, the continuous evolution of life in Caspak?
12. Is "The Land That Time Forgot" really Burroughs's best work as some literary critics contend? What makes it superior to the other writings of Burroughs? Are any of the other writings better than "The Land That Time Forgot"?



13. How scientific is the depiction of evolution in *The Land That Time Forgot*? How close is it to the scientific thought of Burroughs's day? How close is it to modern scientific views? Is the depiction of the Wieroos consistent with the possibilities of evolution?

14. Many other writers have revived dinosaurs in one way or another in their books; *The Lost World* (1912) by Arthur Conan Doyle is an example of a tale in which dinosaurs survive in the modern world. What are some of the ways modern authors have used to present dinosaurs in the present or near future? Which of these stories is the best? How does *The Land That Time Forgot* measure up against these other writings?

15. Should *The Land That Time Forgot* be banned from schools? It depicts evolution; is that a reason to ban it? It shows people and dinosaurs and other modern and extinct beasts all living together at the same time, which some Creationist scientists contend was the way it was in the ancient past; should the book be banned for seeming to support a modern religious view, Creationism? It has naked people in it; does this corrupt young readers? Should *The Land That Time Forgot* be banned for its nudity? Should it be banned because in it people who are in love declare themselves married without benefit of a legal or religious ceremony?

16. Just how much literary merit does *The Land That Time Forgot* have? Some literary critics dismiss the novellas of the book, and the writings of Burroughs in general, as shallow and without merit. Do you agree? What evidence is there in *The Land That Time Forgot* to support your view?



Topics for Discussion

1. Can Ajour and Co-Tan ever be happy in the world outside of Caspak? What problems might they encounter?
2. What is the narrative effect of the changed point of view—from first person to third person—in "Out of Time's Abyss"?
3. Why does Burroughs begin "The Land That Time Forgot" with the narration of the man who found Tyler's manuscript?
4. At the end of "Out of Time's Abyss," all of the couples opt to leave Caspak rather than stay behind. Do you find this ending satisfying or contrived? Why? How else might you have ended The Land That Time Forgot?
5. Which of the heroes or heroines do you like best? Which do you like the least? Which qualities in these characters influenced your decision?
6. What would you like to know about the imaginary world of Caspak that Burroughs does not tell you in The Land That Time Forgot?
7. The Land That Time Forgot is populated with many fantastic monsters. Which are your favorites? Why?
8. Why are the Wieroo so vicious? How has the species survived if it is constantly murdering itself? What points is Burroughs trying to make in his depiction of the Wieroo?
9. Do the love themes enhance or detract from the success of the novellas?



Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Write your own adventure in the land of Caspak, keeping the setting consistent with the world as Burroughs describes it.
2. How convincing is Burroughs's depiction of evolution in *The Land That Time Forgot*? How does it compare to the scientific thought of the 1920s? How does it compare to modern scientific views? How does it compare to what you have learned in school about evolution? Is his depiction of the Wieroos consistent with the possibilities of evolution?
3. Many other writers have, in one way or another, revived dinosaurs in their books; *The Lost World* (1912) by Arthur Conan Doyle is an example of a tale in which dinosaurs survive in the modern world. Read this book or another that depicts dinosaurs living in the present or near future, and compare it to *The Land That Time Forgot*. Which is more believable?
4. Some literary critics mention that the writings of Burroughs resemble daydreams, and they cite the psychological theories of Carl Gustav Jung to explain the appeal of these dreamy stories. Research Jung's theories about dreams, and evaluate their applicability to Burroughs's writing.
5. Some literary critics dismiss *The Land That Time Forgot*, and Burroughs's writing in general, as shallow and without merit. Do you agree or disagree? Read at least one other of Burroughs's novels, and make your own literary evaluation based on that book and *The Land That Time Forgot*.

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Related Titles

Burroughs's Tarzan books have given rise to many motion pictures and other adaptations, and they are constantly being reprinted in paperback, finding a ready readership among young and old. Tarzan is a far more vivid figure than any of the characters in *The Land That Time Forgot* and has become so well known that even people who have never read a Tarzan book know who he is. He has become a fundamental part of modern culture. The books about Pellucidar, the world in the center of the earth, have much in common with *The Land That Time Forgot*. This series features first-person narrators, a wild and savage world, a variety of human races, monstrous beasts unique to it, and creatures recognizable from the surface world's past, such as dinosaurs.

Evolution is again a theme in the Pellucidar books, because the world within the earth has followed a path of development similar to that of the outer world. The Barsoom series of books also feature high adventure in a wild and dangerous world, but it varies in many respects from *The Land That Time Forgot* by featuring a theme of mysticism to explain John Carter's traveling to Mars and by featuring a civilized world in decay, rather than one that is savage because of its lack of development.



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