

Rogue Queen Short Guide

Rogue Queen by L. Sprague de Camp

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.



Contents

Rogue Queen Short Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Characters.....	3
Social Concerns.....	4
Techniques.....	5
Themes.....	6
Key Questions.....	8
Literary Precedents.....	9
Related Titles.....	10
Copyright Information.....	11



Characters

Iroedh carries the burden of Rogue Queen's themes. The theme of love is developed through her as she grows from a repressed spirit that could be an emotional child forever to a fully resplendent, loving woman. One of the aspects of RogueQueen that elevates it above ordinary fiction is the well-rounded characterization of Iroedh. She is not an alien "creature," she is "human"—a word de Camp uses often to describe the Avtini.

At the beginning, she is already unusually independent for a "worker." She studies the ancient civilization of the preCommunitarian Avtini; and she carries on a close friendship with the drone Antis.

These interests are regarded as frivolous by other Elhamni, and she is already a bit of an outsider. By steadily increasing the pressure on Iroedh, the novel forces her to grow and to mature into a fully independent spirit. First, she learns to think for herself, and thereby figures out how to blackmail Bloch and save Antis from execution. Then she rides in Bloch's helicopter and overcomes her fear of flying in order to help Antis. Each time she thinks for herself she becomes freer; each time she overcomes her fears, her character matures and strengthens.

The other principal characters are welldrawn, except for Rhodh of Elham, who is the stereotypical bureaucrat— arrogant toward those beneath her social station and sycophantic toward those above her.

On the other hand, Winston Bloch and Barbe Dulac transcend their symbolic roles as examples of Earthly marital customs. Bloch is a shy scientist whose personality is revealed in several stressful situations. In some, he is courageous, particularly when Dulac is endangered.

Sometimes he panics and uses poor judgment; other times he is self-absorbed; at other moments he is sensitive to the feelings of those around him. Barbe Dulac takes longer to be individualized, but she eventually emerges as a patient woman with good sense, although she sometimes has trouble understanding the motives of men. By having independent personalities, and by bickering and loving, they form a couple that is at once representative and unique.

Antis' development as a man and as Iroedh's lover is less credible. A drone who was raised to be a sex machine, and who was kept isolated from worldly matters, he too rapidly becomes a canny leader and dominating male. Although he learns to absorb Iroedh's ideas as if they were his own, he does not learn enough from her to make his maturation believable. Even so, his good nature, passion for Iroedh, and ability to understand strange new concepts make him a credible mate for Iroedh by the novel's conclusion.

Social Concerns

The social themes of *Rogue Queen* are subordinate to its love theme. "We once had a sect or cult on Terra called Communists, who believed as you do that love of the Community should take precedence over all other," says the character Winston Bloch to the main character Iroedh. "But their collectivistic love seemed to involve such fanatical hatred of everybody else and such implacable determination to impose their system on the world that we had to exterminate them." Iroedh's communistic society oppresses the spirit, fights pointless wars, condones murder for the sake of social stability, and has been in a cultural decline ever since an ancient queen established the dietary laws and the beehivelike social structure that requires citizens to love the Community above all else. As in *Lest Darkness Fall* (1941), *Rogue Queen* emphasizes the importance to social progress of the free spirit.

Techniques

As in most of his fiction, de Camp entertains with humor as well as adventure. He invites his readers to laugh at themselves and uses his humor to comment on human relationships. For instance, Barbe Dulac remarks to Iroedh, "It is a curious feature of Terran culture that when the men do something of a stupidity they always blame their wives."

Humor and swift, violent action in exotic locales make *Rogue Queen* a good read.

Some fastidious readers would object to the novel's technical flaws. For example, de Camp ignores the problem a newly created host of fertile females would create if they had the reproductive capacity of queens, who must lay hundreds of eggs during their lives in order to maintain Communities the size of Elham.

The planet Ormazd would be overpopulated in just a few generations unless the reproductive capacity of the Avtini is significantly curbed. Small problems such as this are raced over without explanation.



Themes

Love is explored in detail in Rogue ROGUE QUEEN Novel 1951 Queen. At the start of the novel, love for the Community of Elham dominates Iroedh's life. Iroedh is an Avtini, a humanlike race on the planet Ormazd.

The Avtini are all divided into Communities. Each Community has one fertile female, the Queen, who lays the eggs from which the Avtini are hatched. Each Queen is serviced by twelve to sixteen drones, who are executed when they show signs of age. New-hatched males are also killed in order to restrict the number of adult drones to a dozen or so.

A community has about two hundred "workers," who are sexually undeveloped females. Iroedh is one of these.

Iroedh has come to love Antis, a drone who is near his turn to be killed during a "cleanup." Neither of them recognize their feelings as romantic love until late in the novel. So strong is Iroedh's attachment to Elham that she acknowledges to Antis that she might kill him should he try to escape from the Community. Into Iroedh's life come explorers from Earth, who introduce her to the concept of romantic love, which at first seems unappealing. Winston Bloch and his assistant Barbe Dulac are in love but are hounded by the jealous O'Mara who had been briefly engaged to Dulac. Iroedh witnesses Bloch and O'Mara fighting and O'Mara's consequent death in a fall over a precipice. No two members of the same Avtini Community would ever fight each other as Bloch and O'Mara did.

Therefore, Iroedh is confused by the love of Bloch and Dulac.

Her education begins with the passionate novel *A Girl of the Limberlost* by Gene Statton Porter (1909; see separate entry).

It introduces her to the notion that the love between a man and a woman can be greater than the love for a Community.

During her adventures, she runs great risks to save Antis and witnesses the normally timid Bloch battle a fearsome beast when his beloved Dulac is threatened. Romantic love, she learns, can inspire people to perform great feats.

Love appears in other ways, as well.

There is the selfish love of O'Mara, the emotionally empty sexual love between drone and queen, and the love of power exhibited by Queen Estir and the rogue drone Wythias. In addition, there is the love between friends that inspires the junior worker Vardh to violate her Community's most sacred taboos and save Iroedh's life by killing Queen Estir.



O'Mara's selfish love destroys him. The frigid sexual relationship between drones and their queen brought spiritual sterility to the heart of the Community. Queen Estir's love of power made her treacherous and contemptible, and it alienated all of her Community's potential allies.

Wythias' love of power made him deaf to reason and turned his followers against him. In the end, true friendship and romantic love triumph over all obstacles.

Full of danger and deep emotions, these two kinds of love have the power to liberate spirits—to inspire art, literature, and music, and to save a culture that was sinking into barbarism.



Key Questions

No writer knows better than de Camp how to show a reader a good time, and *Rogue Queen* is a good example of the mixture of ideas and adventure that makes his fiction appealing. At one time, the novel's allegorical portrait of the evils of communism might have been the best place to begin a discussion, but with the end of the Cold War, discussion members may find the topic less urgent than it was when the novel was written. Thus a discussion might best begin with other themes such as the relationship between the sexes, the value of literature as an educational tool (*A Girl of the Limberlost*), the dangers of giving to technologically primitive cultures technology far in advance of their own, and the challenges in space exploration created by a strict adherence to Einsteinian physical laws such as the speed of light being the ultimate speed for movement in the universe.

1. How odd do human beings appear to the Avtini?
2. What about human beings most alarms the Avtini?
3. Why would introducing something as simple as the machete be dangerous for the Avtini? Try to find all the aspects of the machete that would be new to the Avtini (for instance, the metal alloy) and examine how they could change Avtini life for good or ill.
4. Why is romantic passion both seductive and frightening in the novel?
5. Are the Avtini too much like human beings? How much of the humanness is dictated by the novel's themes (if the author wishes to use Avtini society to comment on an aspect of human affairs, he almost certainly has to make them at least a little humanlike or his audience might miss the commentary)?
6. How does Elham society resemble communism? Does de Camp devote too much space to condemning communism?
7. What are the adjustments space farers have to make because of the speed limit of light? Can you think of adjustments that would need to be made in addition to those mentioned in the novel?
8. Why would de Camp choose to make Brazil the dominant future culture on earth? Is he extrapolating from twentieth-century trends?
9. Is the rediscovery of romantic love good for the Avtini? By reintroducing romantic love, have the human beings wrongfully altered the balance of the Avtini culture? Why would the Avtini females have fought a war to eliminate romantic relationships and nearly exterminate all males?
10. How could a book such as *Girl of the Limberlost* change a culture? Besides passion, what else might Avtini readers learn from the book?

Literary Precedents

Earthmen have been meeting almosthuman beings on faraway planets at least since Edgar Rice Burroughs's "Barsoom" novels of adventures on Mars began appearing in 1912. Rogue Queen also owes much to the "sword-and-sorcery" subgenre of fantasy, typified by the Conan tales of Robert E. Howard, written in the 1930s. De Camp has written a biography, *The Misfit Barbarian*, about Howard and has written some Conan stories of his own.

Related Titles

Although *Rogue Queen* is the only story that takes place on Ormazd, the various tales are united by the theme of technologically advanced Earthmen visiting planets whose cultures approximate the technology of Earth's Bronze Age. Visitors to such planets are forbidden to introduce advanced technology into the backward cultures but nearly always do anyway, just as the machete is introduced to the Avtini. The books are brimful of unusual social customs and excitement.

Other titles are: *The Continent Makers and Other Tales of the Viagens* (1953), short stories; *Cosmic Manhunt* (1954), novel (also published as *A Planet Called Krishna* and as *The Queen of Zamba*); *The Tower of Zanid* (1958), novel; *The Search for Zei* (1962), novel (also published as *The Floating Continent*); *The Hand of Zei* (1963), novel; and *The Hostage of Zir* (1977) novel.

Copyright Information

Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults

Editor - Kirk H. Beetz, Ph.D.

Library of Congress
Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults

Includes bibliographical references.

Summary: A multi-volume compilation of analytical essays on and study activities for fiction, nonfiction, and biographies written for young adults.

Includes a short biography for the author of each analyzed work.

1. Young adults—Books and reading. 2. Young adult literature—History and criticism. 3.

Young adult literature—Bio-bibliography. 4. Biography—Bio-bibliography.

[1. Literature—History and criticism. 2. Literature—Bio-bibliography]

I. Beetz, Kirk H., 1952

Z1037.A1G85 1994 028.1'62 94-18048 ISBN 0-933833-32-6

Copyright ©, 1994, by Walton Beacham. All rights to this book are reserved. No part of this work may be used or reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or in any information or storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the copyright owner, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information, write the publisher, Beacham Publishing, Inc., 2100 "S" Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008.

Printed in the United States of America First Printing, November 1994