



The Pool of Fire

John Christopher

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Will Parker has managed to escape from the City of Gold and Lead, where he served as a slave to one of the Masters who rule the modern world. And He has not only discovered what lies behind the Tripods' power, but also how the Masters heartlessly plan to destroy the earth.

The Pool of Fire Details

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Author : John Christopher

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What I really like about these books is how far from perfect the protagonist is. Even in this third book, he is very much still growing up, learning to control his pride and his temper, finding out that he isn't always going to be the hero. It's a very attractive perspective to read, inundated as we are in more recently written books by near-perfect protagonists who always find a way to win the contest, save the day, be the center of attention.

Christopher wrote this book the year before the first moon landing. His emphasis on the wonders of science and the potential of humanity reflects a 1960s culture interested discipline and duty at both an individual and social level, a trust in the value of self-sacrifice, a suspicion of anything that could lead to tyranny, and a strong argument for young people to overcome the mistakes of their parent's generations and never again allow the world to descend to mass violence.

If only there were some women in it. But it was the 60s. You can't have everything.

Ron says

The third and final book of the original Tripods trilogy was something of a disappointment to me in a variety of ways. Again, this is a boy's adventure story from the late 60's and it was probably aimed at 10-12 year olds. I won't dwell on this too much but I thought it the weakest of the three novels. The story here is interesting and carries on right from the second book, "The City of Gold and Lead." The angle here is to capture one of the "Masters" to supposedly learn more about how they can be stopped. They are under a deadline however as in the second story it was revealed that a massive ship from the Master's homeworld would arrive in 4 years to begin the process of transforming the earth into a planet suitable for habitation by the Masters and that will result in death to all current life on earth.

So what really bugged me by the end of the story was how the earth survivors basically living at a middle ages subsistence level mount a challenge within this time frame. Secondly, I was really bothered by the lack in all three books of women characters in any position in this story - I guess that reinforces the "Middle ages" setting, but I can only remember vaguely, briefly, a boy's mother in the first novel as well as a young maiden at a tournament who could have developed as a significant character but instead had a rather unpleasant fate laid out for her, and at the beginning of the third book there is a brief mention of a woman who mothered one of the boy heroes here back to health after nearly dying of pneumonia. Otherwise one would not even know a woman existed on the planet anymore and they certainly don't exist in the resistance movement. Thirdly, the social and political framework of the earth survivors by the end of the story was a bit strange. Perhaps there is an allegory here lost on an American reader of this British science fiction adventure.

Overall this series was an enjoyable read but it strikes me as very dated.

Miriam says

Okay, but definitely the weakest of the trilogy. Felt more like a summary of how everything got resolved than its own story, and Will is increasingly hard to like. His heedlessness and sulking and self-absorption seem correct when he's thirteen; less understandable (or even believable) when he's in his late teens and chosen for special missions essential to the fate of all humanity.

As the characters grow older and interact with a wider range of the populace, the omission of women also becomes more glaring. Not only are no significant characters female, but there hardly even seem to be women in the towns they pass through. In the first book, a story of three boys escaping through the wilderness to freedom, it wasn't a big deal that they didn't meet or think about women, but when they're out recruiting dissidents -- and they explicitly don't recruit women, wtf is up with that?! -- it's a little unnatural. None of these young men ever think about girls? And the aliens are also sexist and only take male slaves

while females (view spoiler).

The alien-fighting plan was pretty dubious, too, I thought. But I guess it would be a crappy ending if the aliens won. Not that the ending was exactly upbeat. It's a sucky world, kids, and people are assholes! Don't get your hopes up too high. Enjoy some hunting and fishing while you have the chance, and avoid women and other aliens.

Tom Lee says

Sort of feels like the series deserves 3.5 or 4 for achieving its aims so fully but the individual books feel sleight and those aims are arguably too modest. As Becks said, it's interesting to read sort of proto YA. Makes me want to revisit the Narnia series too.

Christopher deserves credit for surprisingly good prose. I'd say the YA-ness shines through in two main ways. First, the characterizations, while unspooled with obvious skill, are broad and serve a sort of moralistic or instructive function for the (presumably) young reader. And second, the plot advances as linearly as possible. Christopher is clearly intent on getting from point a to point b quickly.

As for world building: there are some nice ideas here, particularly about alien culture. But there is also a kind of charmingly pervasive naivete about technology that feels one part deliberate, one part a product of the time this was written, and one part missed opportunity.

Alisha says

Absolutely fabulous end. I cannot believe it has taken me so long to reread this. I really recommend them.

mlady_rebecca says

Checked this one off the other day as read, but never got around to a review. I enjoyed this book, the whole trilogy. Kinda fun rereading a childhood favorite.

I've read a lot of discussion lately on protecting children from books, and I look back at books like this and I'm so glad I read them. The lessons they had about self-sacrifice, independence, the value of having your own mind and not living in easy complacency. They had a hand in forming who I am today. Would I be the same person if I'd picked up a different book or, worse yet, failed to pick up a book at all?

This was a child friendly dystopia. A cautionary tale of what could happen. And, in child-friendly fashion, there is a bit of a happy ending. Although, like all good stories, the end is only the beginning of the next story (unwritten). They freed the earth, but had to go back and find a way to reunite humanity in peace, as they were in war.

X-posted reviews of the full trilogy in LJ.

Kelly says

Now that I'm at the end of this trilogy, the parallels drawn between the author, in the 1960s, and the world wars, which had ended 20 years prior, are clear and strong. Will, Beanpole, Henry and Fritz's world of the Tripods is a world in which mankind has been defeated by an alien delegation, and forced into servitude. It's an allegorical series about rebellion and freedom; war and peace; and human nature; and it works very well on many levels.

Neither book 2 ("The City of Gold and Lead") nor book 3 ("The Pool of Fire") come close to the emotional strength of book 1 ("The White Mountains"), as we see this world through Will's eyes as the wool is slowly pulled away and the Tripods revealed for what they truly are. However, overall, the series is powerful, the writing is precise, and the world is well-imagined and unafraid to tackle adult themes, though this series is appropriate for young readers.

And thanks again to my fifth grade teacher, Mr. Kribbs, for being the first to introduce me to the Tripods and the Capped, as he read the books aloud to our class.

Farnaz Ps says

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Space says

The third in the White Mountains trilogy, this was the last book I read on the Tripods. Apparently now there is a fourth, but as far as I knew at the end of this book, the good guys won, and there were no more tripods or aliens. I will someday go back and read the fourth, but for now, I've read this trilogy many times. It still holds that nostalgic feeling for me, as I was introduced to the series as a child. I can't recommend it enough, and hope everyone who has kids keeps this story alive for generations to come.

George K. says

"Η Λήμνη της Φωτις", εκδόσεις Σμωσι.

Τρ?το και τελευτα?ο βιβλ?ο της νεανικ?ς σειρ?ς επιστημονικ?ς φαντασ?ας "Οι Τρ?ποδες", που αποτελε?ται απ? τρ?α βασικ? βιβλ?α (αυτ? που δι?βασα δηλαδ?) και ?να πρ?κουελ με τον τ?τλο "When the Tripods Came", το οπο?ο μας δε?χνει πως οι εξωγ?ινοι κατ?κτησαν την Γη (δυστυχ?ς το συγκεκριμ?νο δεν ?χει μεταφραστε? στα ελληνικ?). Νομ?ζω ?τι η σειρ? κλε?νει ικανοποιητικ? με το τρ?το αυτ? βιβλ?ο.

Η ιστορ?α αρχ?ζει ακριβ?ς απ? το σημει?ο που τελει?ωσε η ιστορ?α του δε?τερου βιβλ?ου, με τον

νεαρ? Γου?λ Π?ρκερ να γυρ?ζει στο κρησφ?γετο των συμμαχητ?ν του με σημαντικ?τατες πληροφορ?ες γ?ρω απ? τις π?λεις των εξωγ?ινων, την λειτουργ?α τους, τον τρ?πο σκ?ψης τους, τα μειονεκτ?ματ? τους κλπ. ?τσι, υπ?ρχουν περισσ?τερες ελπ?δες για τους ανθρ?πους ?στε να ανατρ?ψουν και να αφαν?σουν τους εξωγ?ινους, πριν να ε?ναι αργ? για την Γη... Τα πρ?γματα δεν αλλ?ζουν ?σον αφορ? την πλοκ?, την ποσ?τητα της δρ?σης και την γραφ?, ?λα παραμ?νουν στο ?διο καλ? επ?πεδο με τα δυο προηγ?μενα βιβλ?α. ?τσι και αυτ? προσφ?ρει την ?δια ψυχαγωγ?α στον αναγν?στη. Απλ? μου φ?νηκε λιγ?κι κατ?τερο σε σχ?ση με το δε?τερο βιβλ?, το οπο?ο θα ?λεγα ?τι ε?ναι και το καλ?τερο και πιο ενδιαφ?ρον της τριλογ?ας (με μικρ? διαφορ? π?ντως).

Εν κατακλε?δι, πρ?κειται για ?να ικανοποιητικ? τ?λος μιας ωρα?ας και διασκεδαστικ?ς σειρ?ς επιστημονικ?ς φαντασ?ας. Φυσικ? η σειρ? απευθ?νεται κατ? κ?ριο λ?γο σε ν?α παιδι? (με ?,τι συνεπ?γεται αυτ? στις λεπτομ?ρειες της κοσμοπλασ?ας, την γραφ? κλπ), ?μως νομ?ζω ?τι μπορε? να διαβαστε? πολ? ευχ?ριστα και απ? πιο ?μπειρους αναγν?στες στο ε?δος. Εγ? χ?ρηκα που την δι?βασα.

???? says

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Philippa Dowling says

Still pretty enjoyable, but my least favourite of the 3 books. It felt a little hurried perhaps, or maybe a little predictable. This story is the one I remember least from reading it as a child, so maybe it didn't make as huge an impression on me as the first two did then either. Still, the description of the balloon attack is interesting, and traversing the Panama canal by balloon is pretty cool. The ending definitely felt hurried, as they try to set up a United Nations in about 4 pages. Also the sexism was starting to get to me by this third book. Not a single female character in this book, or the second one (except dead ones in a particularly chilling scene), so that was starting to grate on me as I got near the end, a definite weakness of the trilogy. There were women in the French Resistance, right, so the author really overlooked an important precedent set by women resistance fighters.

Something else that occurred to me is this: apparently only 100 years passed since the Masters took over the planet. That's only 3 generations, and presumably there would have been free-thinking uncapped hiding out somewhere on the planet for those 100 years. Why then can no one remember what electricity was, or airplanes, or television? Maybe they can't remember how to make it work, but the story of those things would still be alive in the world, wouldn't they? We still know about silver screen stars and World War 1 for instance, 100 years later.

But ... all those quibbles aside, it's still a really good series for middle-grade readers who are interested in science fiction, dystopia and near-future worlds. A 4.5 star series for sure!

Here's my review of book two, *The City of Gold and Lead*: <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

And book one, *The White Mountains*: <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Paul says

[
One measure of not shying away from darkness is that Christopher seems

Laura says

While I can't say that I was disappointed by this final chapter to the Tripods Trilogy, I have to admit that was just slightly below the first and second books in the series (*The White Mountains* and *The City of Gold and Lead*, respectively). The story takes off from where we were left, at the end of *The City of Gold and Lead*-In a world where alien Masters control all of mankind through strange, mandatory metal caps, only one small group of free men survive, hidden in a remote camp. Will, our story's hero, has escaped the city of the alien Masters and has returned to the last surviving free men to report back everything he has learned, most importantly the deadly plan of the Masters to covert the Earth's air into a breathable atmosphere for themselves, killing every other living creature on earth. Now, humans are forced to take action and strike down the Masters before it is too late.

While I assure readers that Christopher delivers another action packed, adventurous book, it is noted that *The Pool of Fire* is slightly off pace; it begins to feel episodic, with periods of thrill followed by periods of drag, towards the end. Of course, maybe this isn't fair to Christopher-he had to wrap up the epic struggle that he created and he does so with a satisfying conclusion. Even with the pacing issues of the final book, I am still thoroughly satisfied with the trilogy as a whole. I would recommend the trilogy to children and tweens seeking an adventure or science fiction series. One thing that I liked a lot about this series is the fact that it has a wide appeal due to its action packed plot that plays nicely with its more thoughtful elements that contemplate concepts of humanity and freedom.

Jennifer Wardrip says

Reviewed by Kira M for TeensReadToo.com

After discovering the Tripods' plot to destroy mankind, Will rushes back to the White Mountains to tell the other uncapped humans. With a race against time to overthrow the Tripods, Will and his friends must go across the globe recruiting massive amounts of youth to deal the final blow to the aliens.

After capturing a Tripod, they discover that alcohol has a sleep-inducing effect on the aliens. Armed with this new knowledge, will the resistance be able to take back Earth. What will happen if the Tripods catch on to the humans' plan?

This is an adventure filled with action, suspense, and right vs. wrong. The well-developed characters seem to step up to the plate and shine in this book, and the plot is fast-paced. Readers who like fantasy, science fiction, adventure, and action-filled books will enjoy reading THE POOL OF FIRE.

Scott Anderson says

The third in the Tripods series, this book tells the story of how the humans eventually overcame the Masters and freed themselves and the earth.

A fitting conclusion, just as good as all the rest of the books. It involves a lot of danger and action as always, and the human characters make the story seem believable. This is one of the first every dystopia novels for young adults, and it has set the standard ever since.

Lowden says

An amazing dialogue from the human side of a war of men versus aliens.

Jackie "the Librarian" says

The last book in the Tripods series. Can the resistance group defeat the Tripods, and free humans from their mental control?
