



Time for the Stars

Robert A. Heinlein

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This is one of the classic titles originally known as the "Heinlein Juveniles," written in the 1950 and published for the young adult market. It has since been in print for 50 years in paperback, and now returns to hardcover for a new generation.

Travel to other planets is a reality, and with overpopulation stretching the resources of Earth, the necessity to find habitable worlds is growing ever more urgent. With no time to wait years for communication between slower-than-light spaceships and home, the Long Range Foundation explores an unlikely solution--human telepathy.

Identical twins Tom and Pat are enlisted to be the human radios that will keep the ships in contact with Earth. The only problem is that one of them has to stay behind, and that one will grow old while the other explores the depths of space. Always a master of insight into the human consequences of future technologies, this is one of Heinlein's triumphs.

Time for the Stars Details

Date : Published August 8th 2006 by Tor Books (first published August 1st 1956)

ISBN : 9780765314932

Author : Robert A. Heinlein

Format : Hardcover 256 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Young Adult

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From Reader Review Time for the Stars for online ebook

Jeff Yoak says

I had forgotten about this Heinlein juvenile completely thinking I was reading it for the first time, but part way in I realized that I had read it before. The human race has finally created a source of propulsion for ships that can offer constant boost and carry its fuel. That means it's "time for the stars." Population pressure and the sort of intrepid adventurousness Heinlein always so brilliantly portrays drives our heroes out in ships pushing the speed of light knowing that relativistic effects will have them return eventually to earth after many decades have passed leaving their world immeasurably changed.

As light years stack up, both transmission time and the energy required for transmitting become intractable. This provides a way to have our heroes cut off and return to strangeness. Instead, in *Time For The Stars*, Heinlein allows communication by positing telepathic abilities that are instantaneous between some identical twins. The Long Range Foundation pays high fees to incent twin pairs to split up, one going on ship and one staying home. This sets the scene for taking two teenage boys who are as close as any are likely to be and first putting a spike in the relationship by offering just one the dream of a lifetime, being among the first to get to explore the stars, provided the other stays home, and then have them linked and maintain their relationship over a few years for one and a long lifetime for the other. You get to see the relationship evolve as one member of the relationship lives out his teen years and the other has great-grandchildren.

It's a gripping story, full of action like all the Heinlein juveniles, but also has touching relationship components, sometimes missing from those stories. I enjoyed it thoroughly.

2015: The kids particularly enjoyed this one.

Clay Kallam says

Pop culture is often dismissed as simply low culture – in contrast to the high art of opera or classical music or abstract expressionism. And there's good reason: As long-ago scifi author Theodore Sturgeon once pointed out, "Ninety percent of everything is trash."

A simple tour through the cable channels, or spin of the radio dial, will prove Sturgeon right, and in the mass of modern pop culture it's much harder to filter out the signal from the noise. In classical music, for example, the bad symphonies simply never get played because time has winnowed the field to only the best.

But even if pop culture doesn't always deliver quality, it does have something else to offer: a window on the modern world. Though movies, books and music take time to work their way from inspiration to dissemination, they still have a relatively brief gestation, and taken as a whole, they reflect and amplify some oftentimes hidden aspects of our culture.

Since this is a science fiction and fantasy column, it's pretty obvious what the focus will be, but the same arguments apply across a much broader spectrum – and the same insights emerge.

Recently, publishers sent me a couple of books by writers from the so-called Golden Age (which shines

much more brightly because, like classical music, the trash has been forgotten). The first, “The Voyage of the Space Beagle” (Orb, \$14.95, 215 pages), by A.E. Van Vogt, holds up remarkably well, while Robert Heinlein’s “Time for the Stars” (Orb, \$14.95, 244 pages) shows its age. Nonetheless, both share a quality that is almost always missing from modern scifi: optimism.

In both books, there’s a sense that problems will be solved, both individually and collectively. The future is bright, human beings are capable (if not exceptional) and the triumph of progress (and thus the good) is inevitable. You can read far and wide in 21st century scifi (especially that with a serious intent) and not find much to bolster any of those beliefs.

Two other veterans who worked in the 1950s (“The Voyage of the Space Beagle” came out in 1950, “Time for the Stars” in 1956) combined for a new book, “The Last Theorem” (Ballantine Books, \$27, 299 pages). It’s not up to their best work, which is not surprising, but even so, that sense of optimism shines through. Human beings will still struggle and make mistakes but Arthur C. Clarke (who died recently) and Frederick Pohl not only acknowledge, but celebrate, humanity’s abilities.

Most writers whose careers are firmly rooted in the 21st century have little truck with such sunny outlooks. At a surface level, the books are full of blood and pain. Authors make sure that their heroes fight realistically – the crunch of bone, the burst of blood, the tide of pain, are always meticulously recounted. But beyond that, there is an underlying despair that humanity will ever get it right. If it’s not environmental disaster, it’s the inability to control technology; if it’s not escaped microbes gone wild, it’s war with civilization-destroying weapons.

And that, to this American who remembers when the United States did not invade foreign countries for no apparent reason (from Vietnam to Iraq), when the promise of technology was greater than the dangers of terrorism, when Mother Nature seemed to be kind rather than vengeful, is more than a little depressing. For if the light shone on modern culture by science fiction in particular and pop culture in general is so obscured by the grey fog of despair, does it mean that the 21st century world is on the way to giving up? If the heroes can’t solve the problems, or are turned into antiheroes who cannot find a way to glory without compromising their ideals and values, then who will stand up and lead? If these dark visions are correct, what will the world our children and grandchildren inherit really look like?

Of course, every older generation always thinks the world is going to hell in a hand basket – and the phrase itself gives the lie to its prediction. I don’t even know what a hand basket is, which reminds me that the pessimism of the elders does not necessarily doom the young ones. And in fact, there are some science fiction authors who still cling to the old tropes, the vision of humans as problem-solvers and not carriers of a culture-killing disease.

At the top of that list for me is John Scalzi, who has a new book out (“Zoe’s Tale” (Tor, \$24.95, 336 pages)) that brings a different narrator to some of the events from the satisfying “The Last Colony.” “Zoe’s Tale” isn’t completely successful, as its depiction of its female teen-age heroine seems to me – someone who has coached teen-age girls for more than 20 years – impossible to credit, but it is still a book in which problems are solved, and positive resolutions are reached.

The same is true Scalzi’s “Agent for the Stars” (Tor, \$14.95, 352 pages), which he wrote more than a decade ago but is just now getting widespread distribution. “Agent for the Stars” is also funny, and not in a dark, vein-slicing way, which is another rarity as the young century wears on.

A pair of writers – Gary K. Wolf and Archbishop John J. Myers – went all-out for the past with “Space

Vulture" (Tor, \$24.95, 333 pages), an unabashedly old-fashioned space opera with heroes, villains, coincidences, and all the trappings of old-time science fiction – and old-time westerns, as far as that goes. But simply re-working the old themes doesn't make this book more than just a diversion, while the Isaac Asimovs and Clifford D. Simaks of the '50s and '60s were reflecting the underlying positive attitudes of an entire culture.

Scalzi echoes that optimism, but the vision of most of the writers working in this pop culture field is generally darker, more depressing and seldom ends well. Even when the heroes win, the scars take long to heal, and there's no sense that the most serious problems will be solved, or that progress has been made. Usually, in fact, the protagonist is pretty much back where he started, after much pain and suffering, and more blows to any belief that the world can be made a better place.

Of course, it's not possible for scifi and fantasy writers, or anyone involved in pop culture, to truly shift the direction of the great mass of people, and if they are too far from the edge of the pack, they will simply be ignored. Nonetheless, the message that's being sent – that the future is dark and getting darker -- is not one that should be ignored, as it's just one more warning sign that the road the worldwide culture has been traveling does not appear to lead to many happy endings.

Flannery says

Slowly but surely, my obsession with young adult space stories will knock every Heinlein juvenile book off my to-read list. A month or two ago, I read *Podkayne of Mars* and while I did enjoy the audio format and the underlying world-building, the characters grated on me. I'd read and heard from several sources that Heinlein's treatment of his female characters can be a huge turnoff and he's two for two on that note for me thus far. I'm not going to go over why I felt the way I did about *Podkayne* but in *Time for the Stars*, though it was far less frustrating, I was still not satisfied with the female presence in the book. But I'm getting ahead of myself, what's the book actually about? It's a futuristic Earth setting where families are allowed only a certain number of children before they get taxed. Identical twins Tom and Pat are asked to come in for some testing by a huge research organization, one whose mission is to fund the projects that have projected results so far into the future that no one else will fund them. Through the testing, Tom and Pat find out they are telepathically connected. The foundation intends to explore the galaxies to find potential colony planets and uses telepathic pairs to communicate between ships and between ships and Earth when radio transmissions no longer work. I don't want to spoil which twin goes to space and which stays behind because I enjoyed that aspect of the story. I cannot think of another instance of a book where identical twins do not really get along. Heinlein adds in a realistic amount of sibling manipulation that rang true to life. ("Do your chores, Dad will be home soon." "Why? If I don't, I know you'll just do them for me." - Me and my sister)

The science and philosophy are very much present in this novel and some of it went over my head. Faster than light, simultaneity, time, relativism, the science of aging, and various equations and theories are all present and accounted for but never in a severe infodump kind of way. The book is set up as a diary written by the twin in space. I am not sure if it is broken up as such in the traditional book as I listened to the audiobook but the scientific conversations were usually just that--conversations between the twin and someone else on the ship. However, there is very little action to keep the book going. The interest lies in the world Heinlein has created and the scientific offshoots. I was fascinated by the idea that as one twin was aging "regularly" on Earth, the other was aging at a far slower rate, so much so that the twin in space had to do the telepathic work with several generations down the line. What action there is is backloaded. His books,

to me, feel like someone is writing about a fantastic futuristic world and then realizing halfway through that there's supposed to also be character building and plot movement.

On to the creep factor. There was just an episode of 30 Rock on television wherein Liz Lemon realizes that she is dating her third cousin. They say, "On the count of three, say how many cousins removed we'd have to be to try to make this work." He says fifth and she says never. I really think my answer is also never. There are several pubescent boy relationships in this book as well as adult relationships but there is one that relates to the 30 Rock episode I just spoke of. I won't ruin it for any potential readers but Heinlein basically glossed right over the relation aspect and it felt cut and dried in the most awkward way possible. I actually said, "Whaaaaaat? Dude." to my car stereo. You're going to marry your relation, no matter how distant? Ew.

Back to Heinlein's treatment of women. Here's the gist: If you want to read any of his books, just think to yourself, "Am I okay reading a book where no female character will ever be completely rational? One where she will never be seen as anything other than a gender stereotype or achieve life goals beyond society's expectations during the forties and fifties when these books were written?" If the answer is yes, then read away. As I've said, Heinlein creates some interesting scientific worlds and stories. However, if you're answer is no then these books will be a nightmare for you. There are entire conversations about the best way to tell a mother that her son/s are joining a space program but also how to manipulate her irrational emotions. A grown woman wants to join a specific mission and another character tells her to check with her husband. (who also tells her later that they will be moving back to Earth to raise their family and she will not be working anymore) The mission finds a planet and fights in a battle but both times women are excluded from the teams--until one planet is deemed "safe enough that even the women could go!" Being a woman in Heinlein's world just seems like it would be so depressing. Who wants to achieve their dreams of being independent and going into space? Not so fast, vaginas!

I believe this is the first audiobook I've listened to that is narrated by Barrett Whitener, and I enjoyed his narration for the most part. Though they are not coming to me at the moment, there were a few words he pronounced in a weird way (maybe alternate pronunciations?) and several of the characters sounded the same. At one point, I wasn't sure if the captain had an American, British, or Australian accent. He is a conversational narrator so his voice was/is well-suited to the diary-entry format of *Time for the Stars*.

As is the story with *Podkayne of Mars*, there is enough fun world-building present that I wish Heinlein would set more books in this world, perhaps even incorporate some of the same characters. I have a feeling my wish will come true with the rest of his young adult books. I anticipate each one will be a fun sciencey adventures/feminist's nightmare.

Also seen at The Readventurer.

Kat Hooper says

Originally posted at FanLit:
<http://www.fantasyliterature.com/reviews/time-for-the-stars/>

Time for the Stars is one of my favorite Heinlein Juveniles, and I like his juveniles better than his books for adults, so I guess that makes *Time of the Stars* one of my favorite Heinlein works. It's got everything that makes his stories so much fun to read, especially for kids. Likeable heroes, sweet relationships, real

emotions, a touch of romance, a bit of physics, spaceship travel and exploration of distant planets. (And also, as usual, there's a hint of incest — romance with a cousin — and a few complaints about taxes. It is a Heinlein novel, after all.)

In *Time for the Stars*, twins Tom and Pat join an experimental scientific study to see if telepathy might be a viable way for Earth to communicate with her exploring spaceships. It's thought that if telepathy could work for anyone, it would be identical twins. Tom and Pat are excited to be involved, but they know this means that one of them will get to explore space while the other one has to stay home to be the other end of the telepathic line. This fact has a lot of ramification for the brothers. First of all, the boys have to decide who gets to go. Second, the one who leaves will probably never see his family again. Third, the boys will now age at different rates because of relativity, so even if the one who leaves ever comes back, he will be much younger than his twin.

All of this gives *Time for the Stars* an emotional texture that makes this story feel weightier than your average YA SF adventure. Also, *Time for the Stars* is not just a story about exploring space — it's about family, friendship, loneliness, love, guilt, and the power of the human mind. In fact, I think Heinlein spends more time exploring the brain than exploring distant galaxies.

Time for the Stars is an entertaining and moving YA space adventure that will probably please most adults as well as kids. I listened to Barrett Whitener narrate Blackstone Audio's version. I thought his voice, tone, and cadence were perfect for this emotional story.

Heather says

Very dated, but still entertaining if you take the male point of view with a grain of salt, and see it for what it is...one of the first space travel books from the 1950s. This was the first Heinlein I read when I was a kid.

Lyn says

The Corsican Brothers go to space.

Or at least one of them.

First published in 1956, Heinlein's *Time for the Stars* is one of his Scribner's juvenile books, and one of the better ones, somewhat similar to *Starman Jones*. The Grandmaster tells the story of the first survey ships going out into deep space to look for suitable planets for humanity to colonize due to overpopulation on Earth. Needing a simultaneous communications system, the powers that be hire on groups of telepathic twins (or triplets) to provide real time coms between the ship and Earth. (Ten years before Ursula K. LeGuin's *ansible*, which was first described in her 1966 novel *Rocannon's World*.)

Central to the narrative is the accepted theory of special relativity, whereby a voyager on a spaceship traveling at close to light speed will experience a different time than a person on Earth. The protagonist aboard the Lewis and Clark remains relatively young while his telepathic twin on Earth grows old. This concept is also explored in Joe Haldeman's *The Forever War* and most notably in Poul Anderson's *Tau Zero*.

Heinlein also explores the concept of faster than light travel and these ideas may have been included in his notes for the novel that would be completed and published after his death by Spider Robinson in *Variable Star*.

A good friend of mine suggested that a reader who favors Heinlein's early / juvenile works over his middle works from the sixties and his later experiments with the tacky and wacky feels this way because that was the reader's first exposure to Heinlein's work. This could be true, as I have always liked his juveniles and these were my first books of his I read. In whichever camp one finds himself, *Time for the Stars* is one of his better novels.

My final point to make on this book is an unusual observation about Heinlein's work in general. According to Goodreads, *Time for the Stars* is my thirty-second Heinlein book. Bob mentions cannibalism in a lot of his works. Weird, creepy, unusual. By my recollection, I think he has mentioned cannibalism in each of the following works:

Orphans of the Sky
Stranger in a Strange Land
Time for the Stars
Farnham's Freehold
For Us, the Living: A Comedy of Customs
Methuselah's Children
The Cat Who Walks Through Walls
The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress
Starship Troopers

Brian Layman says

Heinlein at his very best! Though Spider Robinson may be "the new Robert A. Heinlein", there is no one like the original. This book is not quite completely in the juvenile Heinlein group and yet not in the adult Heinlein group. As one reviewer (Manny) put it: "an important novel, marking the transition from juvenile-Heinlein to proto-dirty-old-man-Heinlein." (Edit: There's nothing explicit in this book much beyond the noticing of bits and pieces and the desire they inspire.) It is a quick thoroughly enjoyable read.

This 1950's prediction of the impact of faster than light travel on society and individuals is thorough and personable. It's a fast moving character study with technological and psychological undertones. It's exactly the kind of book I like to read.

Mary JL says

The review above pretty much says it all. This book has been reprinted time and time again for over fifty years. It is one of Heinlein's better juveniles.

I recommend Heinlein's "juveniles" for every sf reader--I personally feel they represent some of his best

work. They can be read and enjoyed by adults; except for the age of the main characters, this book is as good as many adult novels published today.

Frank says

No spoilers here.

Another Heinlein juvenile. Have been trying to finish this run. Published in 1956, and certainly dated, although I find that not all of Heinlein's writings are.

The premise here is that spaceships are launched to search for habitable planets to colonize. Twins and triplets are found to possess telepathy between each other and a single one is a perfect passenger for these trips, so the book is centered on one set of twins. as one goes off and travels through space.

This book I would say is for Heinlein fans only, of which I am one.

Jonathan S. Harbour says

Marvelous early Heinlein published in the 50s but still highly readable and relevant today (with a few period-appropriate quips being the only downside). There are few sci-fi novels that can make such a claim. This is brilliant even today with the wit and humor of the master at his best.

This story is about Interstellar exploration and the relativity problems associated with that as people leave Earth, travel at near light speed, and time slows down, their families on Earth age dramatically. Identical twins with high ESP ability are recruited to use telepathy in order to stay in touch with Earth, since the mission is to explore strange new worlds for colonization. Its fascinating that, withholding all the modern sci-fi I've read and seen, that this story would entertain. But, that it did, and it inspired many writers too come. A very early pioneering work that founded many staple ideas in sci-fi.

Joan says

These days I suppose it would go YA. It was in the juvenile section when I was a kid. It likely isn't one of Heinlein's well known books. Actually, it is likely one of his less known works. Tom and Pat are twins, and telepathic. As a result of that discovery, they are to transmit info for the exploration Torch Ship "Lewis and Clark". Earth is overcrowded and they need new planets so that is their mission, to discover new planets for humanity. However, the ship encounters the issue of time going slowly for earth people and fast for the ship people. (Einstein's relativity playing havoc with the characters.) Soon Tom and Pat cannot link with each other. What to do now? Could Tom link up with his niece, Molly? Read and find out what happens.

It is Heinlein writing one of his "juveniles" and wonderful stuff. And it is far from his best! It might be more of a 3.5 for Heinlein. Very few others could have turned out such a book with great pacing, interesting characters and a great plot. This one I'm keeping, at least for now.

Nathaniel says

I actually find Heinlein's juveniles a lot more interesting than his later work these days.

For those not in the know, Heinlein wrote a lot, and his books can generally be divided into three periods (or maybe just two). First, he wrote an awful lot of juveniles, which would be considered young-adult today. They almost always feature young protagonists (still in school) and revolve around adventure and family. These books came out between 1947 and 1959.

The turning point for Heinlein was the (in)famous time-travel story *All You Zombies* in which--using both time travel and sex-change operations, a single person ends up being his/her own father/mother/son/daughter. It's quite dark--and a definite departure from the apple-pie family dynamics of the juveniles--but then again, the apple-pie family dynamics were never actually really that straight forward. (More on that in a bit).

Anyway, that story was written in 1958 (in a single day) and then published in 1959, which is the same year that *Starship Troopers* came out. According to Wikipedia, *Starship Troopers* is the last of his early novels, but I'd put it as the first of the middle period. It's transitional, though, so I can see the reasoning. It has the typical structure of one of his juveniles (e.g. a single, young, viewpoint protagonist) but also has a lot of the themes of his later work (e.g. overt politics that deviate from the mainstream). Wikipedia also tacks on a third phase of his writing (for novels from 1985 onwards) and I've read one of those: *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls*. I remember the ending brought tears to my eyes, even though Heinlein was being brazenly manipulative. He was always kind of a jerk that way, much like his alter-ego *Jubal Harshaw*. I don't really follow the division between the second and third period myself.

My point, however, is that as a kid doing research for a paper on sci-fi, I learned about the turning point in Heinlein's writing and I was only interested in the later, "serious" stuff, like *Starship Troopers*, *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, and *Stranger in a Strange Land*. So I read all those first, and never got around to the juveniles.

But now that I'm an Audible subscriber and Heinlein novels are often for sale for \$5 or less, I've worked my way through a lot of the early work. None of them have the impact of his later work, but in their own way their more interesting, because you can see the early manifestation of the nutso stuff before it came on full-force.

For example, there's the preoccupation with pushing sexual boundaries in general and incest in particular. In *Farnham's Freehold*--the painfully dated anti-racist screed--the incest is father/daughter. But that's well into his middle period (1964). In this book, the incest is much more remote: the main character marries his twin brother's grand-daughter, which is far enough to be "hardly related" as the character says at one point. The age gap is also less, since the main character spends about 60 Earth-years zooming around at near light speed, so that when she's 19 he's 23 or 24. Similarly, *Orphans of the Sky* pushes the boundaries as well with polygamy. (Wikipedia puts the book in his middle period because it came out in 1964, but it's a fix-up novel made from shorter works that were published in 1941, so it ought to be categorized in his first phase.)

But I think the thing that's most interesting is that--when he had to keep editors satisfied that his writing was largely kid-safe--he was just as stridently political. He just chose to be strident about acceptable topics. Thus his book is laced with pithy declaratives like, "I sometimes think 'good intentions' should be declared a capital crime," or "Learning isn't a means to an end; it is an end in itself," etc. Lots of manly, pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps stuff that wouldn't go amiss in the 1950s.

Then in his second phase, he started writing openly against racism (although, again, it doesn't read well to a 21st century ear) and preaching about free love and his odd mashup of totalitarian fascism and libertarianism. And so it just makes me wonder, as I'm going through the juvie stuff, how much of this apple-pie politics was sincere and how much an affectation to keep the editors satisfied while still scratching his itch to pontificate?

It's hard to say, but I'd hazard a guess that he basically believed every word he wrote, no matter how apparently contradictory. At least, I'm pretty sure that if he were still around and you pressed him, that's what he'd say.

Oh, but is it a good story? Look, it's a kids sci-fi book from the 1960s. You read this because you have a historical interest in sci-fi in general or Heinlein in particular. It's an enjoyable enough read, but if you're looking for sheer enjoyment there's lots of other stuff to read first. Thus, the three stars.

EDITED TO ADD: I almost forgot one interesting thing. There's a minor sequence in the middle of the book when the protagonist is bullied by a younger, smaller, smarter kid. I think it might be one of the only times in all of sci-fi when that happens, like a sort of anti-Ender's Game situation. It was interesting.

Bahia says

This was my first Heinlein novel. It probably deserves only 3 stars, but I'm giving it 4 because this novel showed me why Heinlein is one of the fathers of science fiction. The world-building of the future is done so well, especially in the case of the science and the explanation of it in ways that allowed me to suspend disbelief. The motivations behind why the characters in the book were sent to space made logical sense, and the exploration of what happens to time when you are traveling at the speed of light were fascinating. Additionally, as a coming of age novel I could imagine this resonating with young people (boys, in particular) as we get inside the narrator's head as he experiences his growth from adolescence to adulthood while in space.

Where this book loses stars is the dated feel to it. Though the science seems advanced, the social aspects of the world are clearly colored by the time that Heinlein wrote it. This is a future where women still defer to their husbands and hold domestic roles almost exclusively (with a few exceptions). The social relationships are what makes this book feel less futuristic than it might. Combine that with the fact that there only substantial character is the main character, the character building falls a bit short. Lastly, the end of this novel... wtf? I won't spoil it, but it seemed very strange.

Still, I will definitely read more Heinlein after this!

Manny says

- Good afternoon, may I talk with Professor Einstein?

- Speaking.

- Ah, I just wonder if I could have a few minutes of your time sir, this won't take long...

- And who are you, young man?

- Oh, I'm sorry, I should have said. My name's Bob Heinlein. You wouldn't have heard of me...

- On the contrary, I know exactly who you are. I bought a copy of your novel *Space Cadet* for my godson's eleventh birthday, and he was most complimentary. In fact, he said it was the best thing he'd ever read.

The rest of this review is available elsewhere (the location cannot be given for Goodreads policy reasons)

Gray says

"I don't like to be around twins, they make me think I'm seeing double."

Time for the Stars is one of the twelve 'Heinlein Juveniles' series of books the author wrote between 1947 and 1958. Wikipedia states that "*their intended readership was teenage boys*". They would probably fall under the YA category today. After a bit of research on the web, it would seem that these YA books by Heinlein are still rated and respected by a number of readers. But it should be remembered that these were written over sixty years ago and will obviously show some signs of their age.

Brief Summary

- This is an adventure story about telepathic twins Tom and Pat Bartlett.
- They take part in an experiment concerning telepathy and communication between spaceships.
- There are some imaginative scenes of space and planetary exploration.
- The book touches on the twin paradox regarding travel at the speed of light and aging.
- It also addresses family relationships and sibling rivalry.
- The ending is a bit of a "Wait! Did that just happen?...." moment.

I read this straight after *Starship Troopers*, and it felt like a breath of fresh air. This book is much lighter and funnier than Heinlein's most (in)famous work, but the didacticism is still extant. It contains some laugh-out-loud lines along with the author's token dismissive treatment of any female characters.

"She was awfully pretty, I decided, even though she was too old for it to matter ... at least thirty, maybe older."

"They were red-headed sisters, younger than we were but not too young – sixteen, maybe – and cute as Persian kittens."

Yes it does read like a YA story but it also reads like Heinlein enjoyed writing it. Despite the "juvenile" target audience there is a fair amount of science in the SF, specifically regarding the nature of time in relation to interstellar travel. I also enjoyed the way the author acknowledged the problems of long-distance communication between Earth and deep space.

Without being particularly special, this book has made me want to try a couple more of his works. I have been warned off some of Heinlein's later stories, but I'm open to suggestions for what anyone thinks is worth a read. I'm curious to see if I can discover why he is still so lauded over 60 years later.

<https://biginjapangrayman.wordpress.c...>

(Wait, what just happened at the end? He's going to ***** his *****?...)

Gr1972 says

4.5 out of 5

Mark Hodder says

This is probably the first science fiction book I ever read. Now, more than four decades later, I've revisited it and can fully understand why I so quickly formed a love for the genre. This tale of telepathic twins, one aboard a space vessel on an exploratory mission, the other left on Earth and rapidly ageing thanks to the laws of relativity, is tremendous. Heinlein was fast approaching his peak period when this was written—transitioning from juvenilia to more adult stories. This sort of spans both. It's not in any way groundbreaking, but it's an interesting story very, very well told.

John Bohnert says

This science-fiction novel was exactly what I was looking for at this time. It dealt with mankind's first exploration of planets outside our solar system. What I especially loved was the author did not burden the reader with tons of technical language. It was kept to a bare minimum. I'm so glad that I read TIME FOR THE STARS (1956) by Robert Heinlein.

Howard Brazee says

I haven't read this since it was new (written in 1956). It is still well written and holds up well. I was curious to see if I missed any discussion of the Special Theory of Relativity. Nope, just the General theory. It would have been easy to show both.

I expect most readers here are familiar with it - torch ships go to the nearest stars at relativistic speeds with the protagonist and his twin brother (left on Earth) as one of the telepathic instantaneous communicators.

Constance Burris says

I really enjoyed Stranger in a Strangeland when I read it a couple of years ago. Time for Stars was on sale at

Audible, so being a compulsive book buyer, I bought it. It was really good, and I am officially a big Heinlein fan now. I want more of his books!!! but I'm on a book-buying hiatus.

At the beginning, the book is about twins and telepathy, and then it branches into the realm of space travel (only lightly), finally it discusses what makes a planet habitable. Really great book. It wasn't action-y like most of the fantasy I read, but I was never bored.
