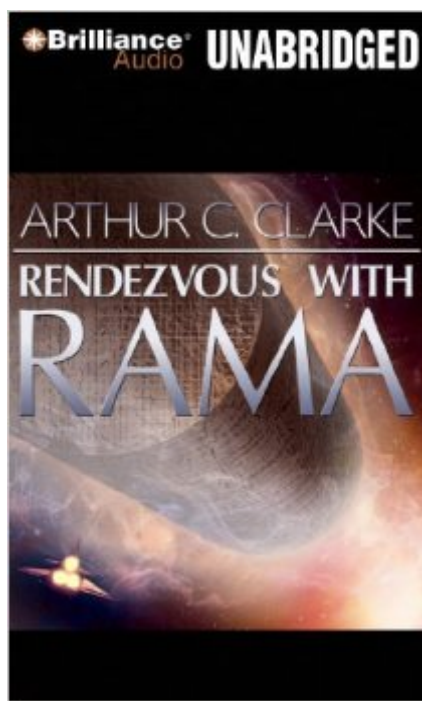


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Rendezvous With Rama



Synopsis

At first, only a few things are known about the celestial object that astronomers dub Rama. It is huge, weighing more than ten trillion tons. And it is hurtling through the solar system at inconceivable speed. Then a space probe confirms the unthinkable: Rama is no natural object. It is, incredibly, an interstellar spacecraft. Space explorers and planet-bound scientists alike prepare for mankind's first encounter with alien intelligence. It will kindle their wildest dreams and fan their darkest fears. For no one knows who the Ramans are or why they have come. And now the moment of rendezvous awaits - just behind a Raman airlock door. Includes an exclusive introduction by Hugo Award-winning author Robert J. Sawyer

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Customer Reviews

In my youth, when I started reading SF, I was never a major devotee of Arthur C. Clarke; I was mostly into Heinlein and Asimov. But I read this one when it was first published (1973) and I liked it so well I kept the hardback for years and years. I'm not sure what finally happened to it, but at any rate I've just recently gotten around to replacing it. And the story is still as great a read as it was when it was new. I can't claim to have read everything Clarke ever wrote, but this is certainly the best of his works that I have read. Other reviewers have pointed out, entirely correctly, that this isn't a book to read for character development. That's true of Clarke's books in general, I think, but it's especially apt here, where the 'star' of the book is an artifact of an alien civilization. In fact, even the 'star' doesn't get a lot of development, since in the end it remains deeply mysterious. (I don't know what happens in the sequels; I haven't read them and I haven't heard good things about them.

I'm treating this as a standalone work.) But man, if you want to read a gripping, haunting story about the first human exploration of a space probe (or something) from an extraterrestrial civilization -- and if you want to watch the exploration process unfold and feel as though you're participating in the discovery yourself -- then this is a book for you. This is what Clarke does best: when you read a story through his eyes, you're looking outward at the objects of scientific investigation, and helping yourself to a chunk of the intellectual wonder and joy that goes with such investigation. The excitement here is the excitement of hard science, not of character development. If that's what you want, you'll probably love this book.

Briefly; a very large cylinder appears in our solar system and an expedition is sent out to investigate what obviously is an extraterrestrial object. They are able to enter the cylinder and watch it slowly "wake up" from the inside. The alien technology they encounter is highly advanced and awe inspiring but still possible to understand. The story develops in a fairly slow pace, but it is full of suspense and mystery. The discoveries that the astronauts make are so fantastic and described with such lucid imagination that all I could feel while reading this book was anticipation and awe. Furthermore, the more the astronauts explore and discover the deeper the mysteries seem to grow. One thing I really like about Arthur C. Clarke is that his descriptions are scientifically plausible and still very imaginative. I highly recommend this Sci-Fi novel. Arthur C. Clarke is my favorite Science Fiction author and *Rendezvous with Rama* is one of my favorites. It was a collection of short stories that included my all time favorite short story "The wall of darkness" that originally got me hooked on Arthur C. Clarke (review coming). Arthur C. Clarke will never be forgotten.

First of all: thanks to the Scandinavian parts of Texas for pointing me to A. Clarke, whom I had previously known only on a 'no name basis' as the writer of *2001 Space Odyssey*. I have high respect and liking for the SF genre, but not much knowledge of it, apart from one or the other Verne, Wells, Samjatin, Huxley, Orwell, Bradbury, Asimov, Lem... Of course not counting Douglas Adams, who played another ball game, didn't he? *Rama* is a worth while experience. Good Science Fiction is usually also about 'science', but if it is good, it is much about society, about history, usually in the future. The evil cliché term of the paradigm comes to practical use when you read good SF. (The word was invented by evil consultants who needed excuses for the havoc they caused.) SF is about changing paradigms. There is lots of that going on here. In the 22nd century, the United Planets, which seem to be essentially Earth, Mercury and Mars (which are Earthling colonies) plus some moons are confronted with a scary phenomenon: a huge artificial space body travelling with high

speed near the Earth. Luckily the initially silly Star Wars technology had later been developed to the advantage of peaceful purposes and helps arranging a 'rendezvous' with the alien craft, named Rama because the Roman and Greek mythologies have been exhausted in the process of naming space. The process of exploring the strange space body and of thinking through its implications is the actual plot. Go for it!

A mysterious object dubbed Rama is found entering the Solar System. A team of cosmonauts set out to intercept the craft, only to discover an environment so alien yet strangely human that debates over the purpose the craft become wildly out of control. Perhaps one of Clarke's best writings, he focuses on mankind's eventual transcendence, a second coming, a return to the garden of Eden, and human nature. He believes that human nature is fundamentally good, yet as humans, we have to overcome prejudices to survive. Not only does this book make one think about mankind's role in the universe and if there are intelligent speices out there, it also evokes fantastic imagery. Imagine gigantic bio-metallic crab creatures, a sea that curves overhead, and a waterfall that moves in a spiral. This book is a great read.

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