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*Delos W. Lovelace , Edgar Wallace (Story) , Merian C. Cooper (Story) , Greg Bear (Introduction)*

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Introduction by Greg Bear

Preface by Mark Cotta Vaz

The giant prehistoric gorilla King Kong is one of the most recognized images in our culture. So great is the mighty Kong's hold on the popular imagination that his story—a gripping yarn of man versus nature, coupled with a fantastical update of the Beauty and the Beast legend—has been thrice made into a motion picture (most recently in 2005) and referenced endlessly in every medium, from books to prime-time sitcoms.

Beneath King Kong's cultural significance, however, is a tense and surprisingly tender story. One cannot help but be frightened by Kong's uncontrollable fury, be saddened over the giant's capture, mistreatment, and exploitation by venal showmen, or sympathize with the beast's ill-fated affection for the down-on-her-luck starlet Ann Darrow.

This Modern Library edition of a true colossus among adventure stories is reprinted from the original 1932 novelization of the movie script, and includes a Preface by Mark Cotta Vaz, the preeminent biographer of Merian C. Cooper, producer of the original 1933 classic film.

*From the Trade Paperback edition.*

## King Kong Details

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Author : Delos W. Lovelace , Edgar Wallace (Story) , Merian C. Cooper (Story) , Greg Bear (Introduction)

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## From Reader Review King Kong for online ebook

### Ruben Vanmaelsaeke says

Ik zal eerlijk zijn en zeggen dat ik de herfilming van King Kong veel leuker vond dan dit boek. Het verhaal in de herfilming vond ik veel passender dan dit. Toch bleef het boek leuk om te lezen, daarom gaf ik het toch nog 3/5. De schrijfstijl van de vertaling van Edgar's werk vond ik soms niet op alle momenten even geslaagd, maar ik heb al veel erger gelezen ;) Het boek is zeker niet langdradig, er is genoeg variatie bij de gebeurtenissen.

Dit boek valt natuurlijk onder het thema sciencefiction, maar heeft ook andere subthema's die andere boekliefhebbers zeker zullen bekoren, zoals liefde, geweld, drama, enz. De auteur weet hoe hij de omgeving moet omschrijven op een manier dat de lezer het voor zich ziet. Er worden zo vaak pauze's gebruikt om uitvoerig zaken te beschrijven, wat natuurlijk charme geeft aan het verhaal. Zo krijgen we toch nog dat filmgevoel bij het lezen van het verhaal.

Zoals ik hierboven al vermeldde, vond ik het verhaal uit de film leuker, dit vooral bij de relatie tussen het personage Ann Darrow en Kong zelf. In de film staan zij dicht bij elkaar dan in het boek. In het boek wilt Ann niets anders dan terugkeren naar de mensen en geeft er niets om als Kong gewond raakt, wat zeker het geval niet is in de film. Hier voelt zij een connectie met hem en geeft erom.

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### K.T. Katzmann says

It's money and adventure and fame! It's the thrill of a lifetime and a long sea voyage and . . .

...some uncomfortable racism?

Okay, King Kong should be pretty well spoilerized by now. Its ending is one of the most iconic scenes in cinema; I just saw it re-enacted in the Cars music video my daughter was watching. If you're reading this, and you haven't seen Kong... go see the 1933 Kong. The only excuse to read the novel first is for the people back in 1932.

So. Kong. Big ape on an island fights dinosaurs, 8th Wonder of the World, the Airplanes got 'em, Beauty killed the Beast, roll credits. Or, as Slate so elegantly said...

Generally, unlike Campbell's Creature From The Black Lagoon adaptation, the novel's the same except for a single big difference.

People. Kong is *black*.

Yeah, I know, you can probably guess that from endless gorilla documentaries, but I really mean black. The book **really** wants you to know that Kong is black. "Black paw," "black shape," "black beast-god," yadda yadda yadda. Our heroine's whiteness and bloneness are equally played up.

So, as I did as a kid, you may be able to watch the original Kong and ignore the undertone of "savage jungle male wants white female." It's there, but not as played up as in other examples of the time in film and literature.

Here, it's played up to the point that the story completely changes tones. The 2005 version had a very sympathetic Kong, but even the '33 film had moments where you cheered for Kong. King Kong is renowned as one of the most sympathetic movie monsters in cinema. People feel bad when the big lug falls.

Here? Not so much. As well as ratcheting up the dial of the subtext, the author also takes away any of those moments where Kong endears himself to us. Gone is any empathy with our poor furry schlub, once so much more relatable than the Rhendosaurus or the '54 Gojira. It's much more of a straight two-fisted pulp adventure with a standard 50's American kaiju.

There's a little more of the racism against the native played up too. Okay, the movie has cringeworthy blackface, I know. Still, I don't remember the whole tribe running when the aging ship captain grabs the strong chief's spear and buttstrokes him into unconsciousness with one blow. It would have been a fist-pump moment for many white readers in the thirties, but with the cumulative effect here is just.. ugh.

The writing is good, and it crackles through briskly. In two paragraphs, we get totally logical and concise backstories for Ann and Driscoll. The hellish nature of Skull Island comes through on all cylinders. The New York part is brisk but wonderfully flavorful.

Also, the introduction on the creation of Kong is worth the price of admission.

Verdict? If you love siding with the ape, you may be disappointed, but it's a great action read as long as you can ignore the barely-subtext from the time it was penned.

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## Michael Fierce says

The most awesome cover of the many editions of King Kong.

I picked up this paperback earlier in the year and probably have the finest quality edition in the world.

And I paid less than \$4 for it!

Art by the great Frank Frazetta and a nice version of the story of **Kong**.

Here's a cool variation of the cover.

And another!

And a wonderful tribute by Frank Cho!

And one more by Frank Cho!

And one last one by an unknown artist for the Bonga comic book!

I guess Frank Frazetta must have been in love with Ann Darrow!

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## **Ian Casey says**

First of all, a note on editions. I have a slightly torn and worn copy of the 1976 hardcover released to coincide with the De Laurentiis film remake. It features a number of new black and white illustrations (the artist's name is not given), which have a hand-drawn, pen-and-paper feel though they're rather primitively printed. Frankly they're a bit rubbish but they add some interest at least.

I also have an abysmally awful 2014 ebook version from 'Perfect Commando Productions' which at time of writing is the only one available through the Kobo store. The thing is packed to the gunnels with typos, as if someone has re-typed it as quickly as possible with a print edition in front of them, then done no editing whatsoever. Plus it features hideous illustrations which wouldn't rate as promising of talent in a primary schooler. This version is also apparently available in paperback, which I imagine would be similarly shoddy.

But, back to late 1932. Delos W. Lovelace was brought in to adapt the screenplay in an exceptionally short space of time as the film was wrapping production and about to launch. I am unsure how much if any of the film he'd seen, but he must have had at least had some visual reference points to work from. Iconic imagery aside, the written King Kong is squarely in the tradition of rollicking pulp adventure yarns of its time.

The prose is adequate but never inspiring, and the word 'serviceable' frequently came to mind. I found myself wishing Robert E. Howard could have got this gig instead. He could have done wonders to make the setting more vivid, the action more kinetic, and to convey the sense of menace and tragic majesty that defines Kong himself.

For the record, there are departures from the script on minor detail points but nothing of consequence. For example, instead of Charlie the cook we have the expanded character of 'Lumpy' the old sailor, who appears in several scenes through the narrative. For another, the iconic final scene plays out slightly differently and the dialogue isn't quite identical.

In all, it's an adequate book that conveys something of what makes Kong an enduring intellectual property, though not nearly so much as it might have. If you can stomach the inevitably antiquated views on race and gender, it's worth a read as a monster romp and for those curious to upgrade their interest in Kong to fan status.

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## **??????? ????? says**

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## Martin Rondina says

No soy muy fanático de las novelizaciones, aunque esta, está bastante bien, es prácticamente la película de 1933 plasmada en el libro. Es una lectura bastante ágil, sin vueltas ni detalles pesados. De hecho peca un poco en este sentido, ya que me hubiese gustado que profundice un poco más en algunas cosas y que se tome ciertas libertades para hacer la historia un poco mas "completa". Aún así, es bastante entretenido y es una novelita que puede leerse solo en un par de días. Le bajo dos estrellas, la primera es porque si bien, es de fácil lectura, no termina de gustarme del todo la "mano" del autor, el periodista Delos Lovelace, y porque me hubiese gustado que profundice mas en otros aspectos, como la construcción de los personajes y ciertos apartados descriptivos de la historia. Y la última estrella que le tuve que bajar, fué por el cierre abrupto de la novela, considero que podría haberse extendido varias paginas más y generar una desenlace final mas enriquecedor, daba para mucho más. Igualmente recomiendo leerla, es entretenida, ágil y está llena de recuerdos del clásico film.

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## Joey says

Perhaps among the imaginary giant characters I am more familiar with, King Kong stands out among them. I can see his replicas in toy stores (And for sure you can even come across him in Universal Studios). I can play him on video games. I can read him in comics. I can see him making fun of children as a mascot at birthday parties. He could scare the living day lights out of me in a haunted house at an amusement park or even on Halloween day. Above all, he could make an antagonistic cameo appearance in fantasy dramas or movies. He can be famous in any situations. Thanks to its movie adaptation, he is now immortal. For sure, he will be borne upon in the mind of the next generation since it is said to have another movie remake.

I have seen its 2005 movie remake and I enjoyed it a bunch. Comparatively, having watched its movie adaptation gave me the ideas of the plots and settings. However, nothing beats the book. It gave me more clear description and narration. Imagining King Kong gave me the creeps. Also, I could feel the atmosphere of the uncharted, far-flung Kong Island. I could feel the breath-taking hue and cry among the characters.

Although I am now a young adult and I no longer believe in fantasy, I still find it fascinating. King Kong is a downright strange, far-fetched creature. Something or someone unusual can get my attention. Besides, the theory of poor old Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution is instilled in me. So a confluence of questions popped into my head. Pop! How if there were such a gigantic monkey? Gee whiz!

Granted that it is a fantasy, Cooper seems to have made a botch of , or to put it bluntly, to have monkeyed around with some settings. He must have intended to leave us readers hanging, turning over the questions

such as: How long does it take the main characters to get to Kong Island? How do they manage to load King Kong onto a ship back to New York? Hehehe Even a genius kindergarten could call it into a question.

In the end, it just occurred to me that we, the said highest mammal on this planet, would be defensive against another species superior to us. It would be a big, big threat. Figuratively speaking, King Kong resembles some hot issues today such as the advanced robotics, nations with big economy, nuclear deterrent, etc.

Admittedly, I am still completely flummoxed by some latent meanings of this book. Obviously, the themes have something to do with survival, lost civilization, dominance of human to animals....But the book gives emphasis on the Beauty and the Beast. King Kong represents The Beast who will fall for Anne Darrow as the Beauty. At the end of the story, Danhem bragged before the news reporters that, "It's the Beauty killed the Beast..." What do you think Danhem means?

I worried that I would not enjoy it since I have seen its movie; it could be kitsch; it could have been just a product of a child's imagination. Also, the passages must be awash with low standards of languages. Not bad. It is still a classic everyone should not underestimate. Merian Cooper had somehow what it took to be a fantasy-adventure writer.

I'm looking forward to its most-awaited movie remake since we have now ultramodern media production ^^

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## **Kooshmeister says**

Without doubt, this is one of the finest movie novelizations ever written. In a genre of literature that is so often a cash grab in modern times, 1932's King Kong by mystery writer Delos W. Lovelace is a cut above the rest.

If you've seen the movie, you know the story: reckless film director Denham has a map to a lost island, and he wants to go and film a movie there. Bowing to public pressure to have a female love interest, he hires out of work Ann Darrow, and they set off for the island aboard the Wanderer. Ann falls in love with the ship's hunky first mate, Jack Driscoll. Upon arriving at the isle, the gang discovers it is inhabited by natives who worship a huge gorilla named Kong. The natives kidnap Ann and give her to Kong as a sacrifice, forcing Denham and Driscoll to lead a rescue party to try and get her back...

Based on earlier drafts of James Creelman and Ruth Rose's scripts, Lovelace's book contains numerous differences from the complete film. Some are cosmetic, such as renaming the Venture the Wanderer. There's a few wholesale character substitutions (instead of a Chinese cook named Charlie, we get a salty old seadog named Lumpy), and entire scenes that didn't make it into the film, including the infamous spider pit as well as a scene where Kong fights a group of triceratops in a morass of molten asphalt (!).

Some of the slang and word usage is dated, particularly Lovelace's use of "ejaculate" to mean "shout" or "yell."

The 2005 Modern Library edition(s) is probably the best version to get. Not only is it a more recent printing, but it contains both an introduction by Merian C. Cooper biographer Mark Cotta Vaz and a preface by Greg Bear. Both contain a lot of interesting information about author Lovelace and the writing of the book.

Unfortunately if I have one complaint about this edition, it's that the information about the author is buried amidst the usual regurgitated stories about the making of the movie and focuses way too much on the two men it shouldn't: Merian C. Cooper and Edgar Wallace.

Cooper, obviously, has a lot to do with King Kong, as Kong was his idea and he was the only who paid Lovelace to write the book, but since this is supposed to be about the novelization, which he did not write, the lengthy passages about him are just filler. And I've never understood why Wallace is discussed so often in connection to King Kong. He wrote one draft, which Cooper hated and didn't use, and he was only ever credited to add prestige. Now that Kong has established itself as a pop culture staple, it has no further need of the boost given to it by attaching Wallace's name, so I don't get why publishing companies keep listing him on the front cover along with Cooper and Lovelace. All I can figure is it must be for the same reason George Lucas keeps being credited as the Star Wars novelization's author, despite his own admission it was Alan Dean Foster - namely, that who is credited and how is tied up in the publishing rights.

But they get "About the Author" sections in back and Lovelace doesn't. heck, Greg Bear (!!!) gets an "About the Author" bit and not Lovelace. I'd say I've never seen such contempt for the person who wrote a novel based on someone else's idea, but I'd be lying; that'd be the Joe DeVito and Brad Strickland wholesale rewrite of Lovelace's book which mentions him not one single time despite borriwing passages from his novelization verbatim. At least here, Lovelace is mentioned, discussed and credited.

It's ironic that Bear mentions in his preface that movie novelizations are often ghostwritten and published under the director or screenwriter's name because "naive audiences need to believe that a film and everything connected to it come from a single creative mind," when the Modern Library only helps perpetuate this belief by crediting Cooper (who only commissioned the book) and Wallace (who had nothing to do with it) ahead of the actual author. Oh well.

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### **Charles says**

It was well written. I got a little bored toward the end, but only because I knew exactly what was going to happen from the movie. the ending seemed a touch rushed as well, but overall it was a decent read.

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### **Gabriel Sloane says**

I don't need to write a review because everyone knows that this was the greatest story of its time.

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### **Frank says**

I was pleasantly surprised that I really enjoyed this novelization of *King Kong*, the classic movie from 1933. Of course, unless you were born under a rock, this is the story of how Carl Denhem, a movie producer in the 30s, seeks out the legend of Kong based on a map and story he received from a Norwegian sailor. He travels on a steamer to Skull Island along with his mate, Jack Driscoll, and Ann Darrow, the young woman he finds on the streets of New York who he wants to play the lead in the story of the adventure. And when they do get to Skull Island, Ann is captured by the colossal prehistoric gorilla King Kong. And of course, Kong is subsequently subdued and brought to New York as the "Eighth Wonder of the World" where in the end "Beauty killed the Beast."

This edition was published by Modern Library and included a preface by Mark Cotta Vaz and an introduction by Greg Bear, the science fiction author. These additional 30 pages added a lot to the book. The preface tells how Kong came to be and tells the story of Merian C. Cooper who produced the film. It also gives some good information on how the film was made including the use of stop-action filming using miniature models of Kong and the dinosaurs in the movie. The introduction tells more about the novelization of the film and why many movies get novelized. It also described some of the differences between the movie and the book. The book was actually issued a few months before the release of the movie and some of it was based on earlier scripts that were changed during the filming. For example, there is one scene in the book where the heroes were chased onto a log over a pit full of large spiders and lizards which ultimately got to feast on the dying sailors. A similar scene was evidently filmed but was cut after the first preview because it scared the audience into screaming fits! The original issue of the book published by Grosset & Dunlap is quite rare as well. I've seen copies of it on eBay going for hundreds of dollars.

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### **Ken says**

I have a new rule: read the novelization \*first\*, then watch the movie. Regardless, as this book was written off advance scripts of the movie, it does differ in some areas, notably the horrid spiders at the bottom of the ravine and a shortened Manhattan ending. Taken on its own, this is quite the adventure yarn. Skull Island, with its dinosaurs, tar pits, giant creatures of all kinds, and ruins of an older civilization, is of course an awesome D&D campaign setting, one I'm not sure Isle of the Ape does justice too but I'll have to reread it. Then onto Manhattan, and you have to remember that when this book first came out - a year ahead of the movie - the Empire State Building was only 3 years old. What an imagination to think about the uses it could be put to! In the movie's ending, he takes a lot of bullets from the fighter planes, gives Ann a sad look, and falls off to his death. In the book, he realizes the menace of the planes, and decides to go out fighting by leaping after one of them - which was a nice touch. I always wonder just how much Denham gets sued afterwards for all the damage Kong causes. The prefaces to this edition were interesting, and Cooper - the creative force behind book & movie - was quite the man's man apparently!

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### **Jonathan Terrington says**

It seems to me that classics tend to become classics for one of two reasons. The first being that they are incredibly well written novels that become examples of their craft. The second being that they may contain ideas which are universally relevant. I'm not suggesting that a classic cannot be both, for instance *Pride and Prejudice* is both a social commentary and beautifully written. Yet I believe that one of those two features dominates as to why it is remembered as a classic work of fiction.

In the case of *King Kong*, the legend of the beastly Kong survives mainly due to the second reason, with the nature of its ideas being greater than the book itself. It reminds me of a similar book by Edgar Rice Burroughs in *Tarzan of the Apes*, as the idea behind *King Kong* - that of a savage king of the wild encountering westernised civilisation - is similar. Yet, interestingly, in the case of this classic novel, like with another classic *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the book is a novelisation of the film. However, this novelisation was written and released before the movie reached cinema screens.

By now almost everyone in western civilisation knows the basic premise of *King Kong*. Most people know of how he came from a mysterious island to New York. There are fewer who do not know how he ultimately

ends up atop the giant Empire State Building battling planes, the symbol of nature battling the enforcers of civilisation. The image of Kong atop the Empire State Building is one ground into the public consciousness and reinforced by advertisements, films, video games and slogans. This book, like most source material, contains this very legendary story and fleshes it out for the reader who has not yet discovered the entire story.

The writing in this novel is somewhat rough and at times poetic. It is hardly the most artistic writing and yet it has a historical charm about it that speaks of adventure and exotic action. It is a writing style that works in connection with the powerful ideas and the legend of King Kong to provide a fascinating storytelling experience.

As a final note it can be hard not to see the tale of *King Kong* as a metaphor given the period of history in which it developed. The idea of a creature being taken from its homeland and chained for the amusement of (presumably) white American Broadway attendees and press hints at issues in the consciousness of the time. It hints at the cultural condition of the African-American people and slavery. And yet I would be wary to consider this book as one which endorses and upholds white supremacy as I would be wary to consider the legend of Tarzan in the same way. There can be such an issue as reading too deeply into any narrative. I would also be reluctant to see Kong as a symbol of masculine strength and domination over women (therefore creating a chauvinistic narrative from this text), though an argument could perhaps be made for this.

However, I would consider the tale of Kong as one which considers the idea of western civilisation versus the forces of nature. Kong, the mighty king, can be seen as a force of the wild. An untamed, spirit of nature which is ultimately destroyed by the power of progress and the machines of war. Yet at the same time it is a clearly a reworking of the fairytale Beauty and the Beast, a fairytale referenced often in this book.

Ultimately, the story of Kong is one which is a powerfully symbolic tale. Yet at its heart it is also classic adventure fiction of the best type, full of pulpy writing and characterisation. As such it is a fun read yet hardly the most compelling novel ever written. In this case I sense that the beast within this novel is perhaps greater than the novel itself. A primordial force which cannot be contained by the bounds of literature or film.

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## Russ says

Excellent. Although it's a novelization, this book is an accomplishment unto itself. If read alongside Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* and Edgar Rice Burroughs's *The Land That Time Forgot*, *King Kong* shoulders up with those classics. In terms of the cohesive, crisp storyline, and vivid descriptions, *King Kong* is better than *The Land Time Forgot*. In terms of sharply drawn characters like Denham and Kong himself, *King Kong* competes with *The Lost World's* marvelous Professor Challenger. Where *King Kong* surpasses them both is imbuing the monster with a mysterious mix of menace and majesty as opposed to Doyle and Burroughs's (and later Crichton's) parade of nameless, faceless dinosaurs.

Delos Lovelace has a charming way with words. I was floored to read that he had a journalism background, because I associate newspaper writers with effective but colorless prose. Lovelace uses artful but very natural expressions to convey nuanced ideas economically.

Also, the style is strikingly contemporary. It is vivid and Lovelace is always "showing not telling." He did everything in 1932 that writers in 2017 are told they must do if they want to be published.

Ann Darrow doesn't become a damsel in distress until after her first abduction. Prior to that, it was fun to read about her and get a better feel for the strength of her character especially during the journey to Skull Mountain Island. Denham calls her the pluckiest girl he's ever known, and she does come across that way. She's a great, spunky character with a mix of Depression-era hunger and assertive femininity.

There are few differences between the movie and the novelization. The book describes more about what Denham sees in Ann Darrow's potential. It also provides more details of Driscoll's pursuit of Ann up Skull Mountain, and we get deeper look at their burgeoning romance as they float downriver during a longer getaway scene from Kong. The movie has a couple of scenes the book doesn't, like Kong's fierce attack against the islanders' village and his derailing of a train in New York.

For those who find the special effects in the King Kong movie to be dated or hokey, no worries here with the book. The images it will conjure in your mind are very real.

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### **Aaron says**

One of my favorite movies retold and remade over and over. "Deep horror" (term coined by Brian Kaufman) wherein the thing one holds most dear, most cherished, is the very thing which destroys one (emotionally, spiritually, physically or any combination there of).

This novelization of the original movie is ham-fisted at best. "Beauty and the Beast" is hammered and hammered and hammered at the reader in almost every chapter. There are some poetic moments and the characterizations are done well enough, but the story was rushed and forced and reads like they just wanted to capitalize on the movie's popularity and didn't care about the craft but were focused only on a finished product.

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