

SPECULATIVE FICTION REVIEW by Stephanie Young

TITLE *Childhood's End*
AUTHOR Arthur C. Clarke
PUBLISHER Ballantine
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PRINTING 1969

Précis Just as earth is preparing to go to the moon, a far superior alien race arrives and slowly takes control of the whole planet but in a benevolent way. These soon become known as the Overlords and are very secretive about their plans for humanity. They are only seen by one man, the UN Secretary General. The unification of all the nations into one earth by the Overlords meets with resistance and a group of resistors forms and demands to meet the Overlords.

 Just when things reach critical mass, the Overlords make a key announcement and that stalls the protests. Once they accomplish what they set out to do, they leave but continue to monitor earth for a surprising reason.

 They finally see the wonder of what happens on earth at the end of the book, and the title of the book is known.

Protagonist The human Race
Antagonist The unknown power of the Universe

What I liked I loved the way Clarke tells this epic story by giving us insight into several key characters while telling us just enough about the aliens to maintain the mystery. The ending is well disguised and I expected something totally different. Clarke using language in ways I have not read before and all the while expanding our mind in the process.

What I didn't like The only thing I didn't like was the minimal information we get on the Overlord's home planet when one of the characters stows away on a ship.

Comments I read this because when Clarke passed away recently I realized I had only read one book by him. In the many blog entries going around afterward, this book came up often as a seminal work. I am glad I read it because if I had read it in my teens I would have been a diehard scifi then.

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