



Voyager: Seeking Newer Worlds in the Third Great Age of Discovery

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A brilliant new account of the Voyager space program-its history, scientific impact, and cultural legacy

Launched in 1977, the two unmanned Voyager spacecraft have completed their Grand Tour to the four outer planets, and they are now on course to become the first man-made objects to exit our solar system. To many, this remarkable achievement is the culmination of a golden age of American planetary exploration, begun in the wake of the 1957 Sputnik launch. More than this, Voyager may be one of the purest expressions of exploration in human history.

For more than five hundred years the West has been powered by the impulse to explore, to push into a wider world. In this highly original book, Stephen Pyne recasts Voyager in the tradition of Magellan, Columbus, Cook, Lewis and Clark, and other landmark explorers. The Renaissance and Enlightenment-the First and Second Ages of Discovery- sent humans across continents and oceans to find new worlds. In the Third Age, expeditions have penetrated the Antarctic ice, reached the floors of the oceans, and traveled to the planets by new means, most spectacularly via semi-autonomous robot. *Voyager* probes how the themes of motive and reward are stunningly parallel through all three ages. Voyager, which gave us the first breathtaking images of Jupiter and Saturn, changed our sense of our own place in the universe.

Voyager: Seeking Newer Worlds in the Third Great Age of Discovery Details

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From Reader Review *Voyager: Seeking Newer Worlds in the Third Great Age of Discovery* for online ebook

Joe says

This was a regrettable book. Half of it was pretty good and the other half was unreadable.

The juxtaposition of the first two great ages of discovery with the third (culminating in the Voyager mission) is a logical comparison, but Pyne's attempt falls far short of enjoyable. The chief offense of our purportedly award-winning author is that he forces this loosely braided narrative down the reader's throat with no regard to its success.

In each chapter he establishes a rough theme about discovery then erratically jumps from the (very good) technical discussion of the Voyager mission to some of the most lofty, pretentious and difficult to follow mish-mash of European history I have ever encountered. During the latter, he throws around obscure historical figures and events with absolutely no chronology, qualification or explanation, speaking as if he's delivering a lecture to a conference of history professors. Then he uses an obnoxious number of \$20 words just to showcase his vocabulary, which truly detracts from the story on just about every page of the book.

Making matters worse, the segue between the space and historical narratives almost always included some form of the classic high school book report hand-off "There were similarities as well as differences," which was just absolutely terrible.

To be sure, the parts of the book that were about the twin Voyager spacecrafts making their way through and beyond the solar system were interesting, well-tempered and well-written. Clearly his lack of expertise regarding the Voyager mission made his reportage infinitely more enjoyable because he couldn't demonstrate his exhaustive (and exhausting) knowledge of arcana.

I think *Voyager* was actually two books hacked to bits and reassembled as some sort of academic exercise. To remedy this I decided about half-way through to only read the parts about the Voyager mission and I'm confident that I lost little in the process.

If you DO want to read a solid book about the great ages of discovery, I highly recommend *The Age of Wonder* by Richard Holmes. He's not a douche.

Michael Duane Robbins says

I was hoping when I saw the title that this would actually be about the Voyager space missions, that it would focus on the flybys of the Outer Planets and all the discovering appertained. Oo boy. I understand the author's purpose in trying to link the so-called Third Age of Discovery with the grand voyages of the past, but quite honestly, I don't give a good damn about that. I don't give a good goddamn about the politics or the Cold War machinations behind the scenes, or the 'God gold and greed' motivations of explorers' past. I expected a bit more than a glossing over the planning, assembly and launch of the grand tour. One chapter, 'Missing Mars', gives us at best a couple of sentences whereby both Voyagers breeze harmlessly past the Red Planet, plus 20 pages of exposition peripherally related to Mars. So it goes. This is as bad as the Harry Potter novels, where the villains blow 20 pages reciting all the past slights, real or imagined, that Harry has inflicted on them. Very little detail on the Voyager program, pages and pages on the ocean-going voyages of old, over and over again. Next time maybe the author can do a tome actually devoted to Voyager; for now I

am disappointed.

John Giroux says

I wanted to read about Voyager, not previous "ages of exploration" so about halfway through the book, I skipped over the sections that weren't about Voyager.

Matthew says

A rough start, because the author's conceit that the Voyager missions are akin to Magellan and Humboldt is somewhat obscure, but once I conceded that point and really started dig in, it was fantastic. The technical specs of Voyager are available elsewhere, but this is a philosophical consideration, and if we are to become a spacefaring race, we have to make space a part of our philosophy and find its place in the broader story of our species. A wonderful read that reminded me of the wonder of the Great Age of interplanetary exploration. The Voyagers inspired me as a child (I was born a year before their launch and followed their mission as I grew up), and have been the inspiration for two of my compositions, and perhaps a third. A great winter read!

David R. says

Pyne's concept is to weave together an account of the actual Voyager missions (1977-?) with thoughts and discussion of three "Ages" of exploration. It's an appealing idea, but it doesn't come off in this particular treatment. The "First Age" and "Second Age" material often seems contrived (one example being a long winded discussion of islands that was presumably inspired by Voyager's measurements of Jupiter's moons) and regularly disrupts the flow of the Voyager storyline. The awkward final chapters only sputter along and tend toward bloviation. Regrettably not recommended.

Susanne says

Pyne didn't seem very interested in the history of the Voyager program himself. He continuously drew very labored parallels between the age of space exploration and the two earlier ages of exploration he identified: the age of geographic exploration in the 1500s and 1600s and the age of ecologic exploration in the 1700s and 1800s. He spent the bulk of the book (that I managed to read) on the earlier ages, making me 1) want to skip pages to get to the space program, and 2) think that he should have been writing about the earlier ages of exploration, since that was obviously where his interest lay.

Heather Goss says

I got about a third of the way through before I couldn't take anymore. If I had realized what this book would really cover I wouldn't have picked it up.

I was really looking forward to an in-depth look at the people and story behind the making of the Voyager missions, and the decades in flight before this book was published in 2010, shortly before V2 left the heliosphere. Instead, this is a meandering musing on the concept of "voyages" throughout the last few centuries. He ping-pongs from Voyager launching on the Centaur/Titan rocket to the comparable size and power of the ships Vasco de Gama et al toured around the Euro's undiscovered worlds and how both launched a thousand meanings of "discovery" for the human race.

There are some people who would love this book for sure: But that person is the kind of guy who used to trap you and your friends in a dorm room for hours pontificating on how the proceedings of the Roman Senate were a lot similar to this discussion we're having now on what club we should hit up tonight. Maybe there's some barely intellectual yarn to be told here but who gives a shit?

Ushan says

I wanted to read a book about the Voyager spacecraft: why they carried the scientific instruments they did; how they were different from later NASA probes such as Deep Space 1, Galileo and Cassini-Huygens. This is not this book; about half of it is devoted to comparing the probes to the voyages of Magellan, Cook and other explorers of the Age of Discovery, and much of the rest is filled with purple prose (because the Voyagers crossed the orbit of Mars without passing close to the planet, they "bypassed the world that most mesmerized the space partisans" and so on and on) and has glaring mistakes ("Apollo 16 and 17 were canceled"... oops).

William says

great history of the Voyager 1&2 spacecraft, the people that built, operated them and nursed them along.

Henry Watts says

Ugh, ok this book is sort of awesome and sooooo sluggish, some what miss leading and it is also very academic. I felt like some tweed jacketed jerk was trying to explain something to me while we were both drunk at a bar. Bottom line, there's no reason to go out of your way to make your book a chore to read, it's like you're good at the guitar but you make shitty music.

Now that I'm done with that this book is good. It's no fun to read and not really all that much about the Voyager space probes as a stuffy book using them as sort of an analogy for the 3 great periods of discovery on earth. This fucker is full of facts but light on space facts booo

Still, I feel smarter for reading it so thanks.

Daniel Kukwa says

I'm very disappointed. I wanted more details on Voyager...on the rise and fall of NASA's planetary exploration mission...I wanted COLOUR pictures! But all I get are hints of the behind the scenes drama...and

a long, drawn-out thesis on how the Voyagers are an extension of the great waves and ages of past exploration. It isn't that I'm against the subject (I teach it, for heaven's sake), but all the digressions irritated me. I wanted to get back into space. I wanted to get back into JPL and NASA headquarters. Instead, the author wants to wax lyrically. By all means, do so...but couldn't it take place somewhere else? It could also benefit from a bit more subtlety; the message here is a thumb tack, being assaulted by a sledgehammer.

Brad says

This book tries too hard. There's an attempt to make parallels between the First and Second Ages of terrestrial exploration and the Voyager "grand tour", which is not a BAD idea per se, but in its execution it falls short. I found myself bored by the florid language and belabored metaphors and wishing that he would just get on with telling us about all the cool stuff Voyager found during its Saturn fly-by. Very misleading blurb, cover image, and title.

The space stuff IS good, which is why the book gets two stars. Otherwise this would be an easy 1-star.

Madelyn says

I was really excited about this book--the Voyager mission continues to give us tremendous data, and I was eager to learn about how the mission got its start, especially after reading other books about various NASA missions. When Pyne wrote about the Voyager mission, I found myself engaged, but he spent far too little of this book actually talking about the mission, and instead developed his thesis of Great Ages of Discovery. I found his excursions from the Voyager mission to be tiresome, with over-blown prose (just like this review!) and repetition that had me wondering if I was reading a series of essays instead of a narrative nonfiction. The afterward actually helped me to understand exactly why he wrote the book as he did, but that doesn't mean that I really liked it.

I'm not passing this one on to anybody else; it is going straight to the library to be recycled in their next book sale.

Joe says

The twin Voyager missions to the outer planets and then out of the solar system have been two of my favorites. A space probe that is over 20 billion kilometers away, where a signal takes over 12 hours travel from Earth to Voyager or reverse, the probes are still sending data to us - how cool is that! They're made so many significant discoveries and explored places that may not be explored for decades, if ever.

When I saw a book about the Voyager mission, I had to read it. But did I get the wrong book? Portuguese explorers? Antarctica? South America? I thought this was supposed to be about the exploration of the outer solar system.

I would give it 4 stars if I had wanted to learn all kinds of obscure facts about early exploration of our planet. The occasional diversion to exploration of Jupiter and Saturn could be easily ignored. However, planetary and interstellar exploration is what I wanted to read about. The many paragraphs, and in some cases, whole

chapters, devoted to the hazards of discovering a new land on Earth was not what I was looking for.

There were a few good facts about the Voyager mission but everything else was too much noise. The few low-resolution pictures included didn't help. The dramatic and exalted language was kind of annoying.

Good thing I borrowed this book from the library, otherwise I would be looking for a refund.

Paul Lunger says

Stephen Pyne's "Voyager: Seeking Newer Worlds in the Third Great Age of Discovery" is a book that actually means well but gets off target by discussing things that aren't really relevant to the main focus of the book. The book is the story of the Great Tour of the solar system that was taken by Voyager 1 & 2 from 1977-1989 which visited Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus & Neptune. Pyne's detailed analysis of the project is fine along with the interludes per se which cover the dead spots in the story as the probes travel from planet to planet. We also see the problems involved with funding & also meet the dangers the probes have as they traverse the solar system. The book goes astray by focusing a bit too much on the previous ages of exploration from the 15th-17th centuries & the 19th & 20th. The anecdotes are essentially used as filler & probably would've been better served as part of the intro or epilogue rather than their placement. What is though relevant though is that these 2 probes are still out there transmitting data back to Earth & will do so for another few years before finally going silent. An average tribute to one of NASA's most successful space probe pairings which opened our eyes up to the mysteries of the outer solar system.
