

DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA

FROM PAGES TO PIXELS

Why Dune stands the test of time

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SARAZEEN SAIF AHANA

I recently had the sublime experience of watching the recent adaptation of Frank Herbert's *Dune* (Chilton Books, 1965), a 2021 and 2023 two-part movie series directed by the passionate Denis Villeneuve. It is, in my mind, a cinematic triumph, and I am thrilled to witness the surge interest these movies have driven for Herbert's science fiction book series of the same name.

The call of this literary masterpiece resonates with incredible intensity, pulling readers along to embark on a journey of incredible emotion, wonder, and more than anything else, discovery. While the silver screen may offer a tantalising glimpse into the vast expanse of Herbert's universe, it is the written word that truly ignites the flames of passion and imagination.

As I journeyed through the pages of *Dune*, I found myself swept away by the sheer magnitude of Herbert's imagination, lost amidst the brief waters of Caladan, the endless sands of Arrakis, and even the dark glimpses of Geidi Prime. His universe is teeming with life, mystery, and danger, stirring a sense of awe and wonder that borders on the sublime. From the scorching heat of the deep deserts to the whispering winds that echo through the sietches, every

sensation feels real, every detail comes alive. In Herbert's universe, you are not merely a reader, but a traveller venturing into the unknown with heart pounding and senses ablaze. Watch out for the sandworms, though, unless you have Maker Hooks strapped to your stillsuit.

Through the lens of immersive science fiction, Herbert peels back countless layers of the human psyche, discussing truths both exhilarating and unsettling. Questions of power, politics, religion, and ecology resonate through his pages, sparking intense introspection. However, his mastery of the writing craft is such that even such profound philosophy cannot deter from the heart-thumping thrill of the actual plot, which hooks into you and does not let go until the last page has been turned.

At the heart of *Dune's* narrative are its characters, each a symphony of humanity, with all its triumphs and tragedies laid bare. From the enigmatic anti-hero Paul Atrides to the Machiavellian schemes of Baron Harkonnen, Herbert's characters leapt off the page, their hopes, fears, and desires intertwining in a mesmerising dance. Let the lure of melange take your breath away.

Since its publication in 1965, *Dune* has left an indelible mark on the landscape of

science fiction, inspiring countless writers, filmmakers, and artists to reach for the stars—quite literally in some cases. Its influence can be felt across the breadth of modern culture, from the sprawling epics of *Star Wars* to the dystopian landscapes of *Blade Runner 2049* (also directed by Denis Villeneuve in 2017), each paying homage to Herbert's vision in its own unique way. The true appeal of *Dune* lies in the sheer joy of literary exploration it offers. In an age of fleeting distractions and shallow entertainments, the novel continues to stand as a beacon of hope, a testament to the enduring power of the written word—to captivate, inspire, and enlighten.

Dune transcends the boundaries of time and space, just as the story itself does, offering readers a journey of emotion, wonder, and discovery that is not to be missed. As *Dune: Part 2* continues to dazzle audiences around the globe, now is the perfect time to heed the call of Herbert's universe and experience the magic of *Dune* for yourself.

Sarazeen Saif Ahana is an adjunct member of the faculty at Independent University, Bangladesh where she teaches English and has a small cult of friends similarly obsessed with genre fiction.

BOOK REVIEW: FICTION

Beyond science and scope: 'The Three-Body Problem'

Review of 'The Three-Body Problem' (Tor Books, 2014) by Cixin Liu

KAZI RAIDAH AFIA NUSAIBA

The Three-Body Problem is the first book in the *Remembrance of Earth's Past* (2006) trilogy by Cixin Liu, a renowned Chinese author. It starts off during the Cultural Revolution in China, where a young astrophysicist, Ye Wenjie, witnesses her father's brutal death at the hands of the Red Guards. Shattered by this event, she ends up joining a secret military project to establish contact with alien civilisations. Fast forward to modern-day Beijing, we meet Wang Miao, a nanotech researcher who gets roped into a mind-bending virtual reality game that seems to be linked to these extraterrestrial encounters.

Perhaps the most impressive aspect of *The Three-Body Problem* is its sheer world-building prowess. From the moment you're introduced to the chaotic and unpredictable world of Trisolaris, you can't help but be awestruck by the level of detail and thought that Cixin Liu has poured into crafting this alien civilisation. Every aspect of Trisolarian society, from

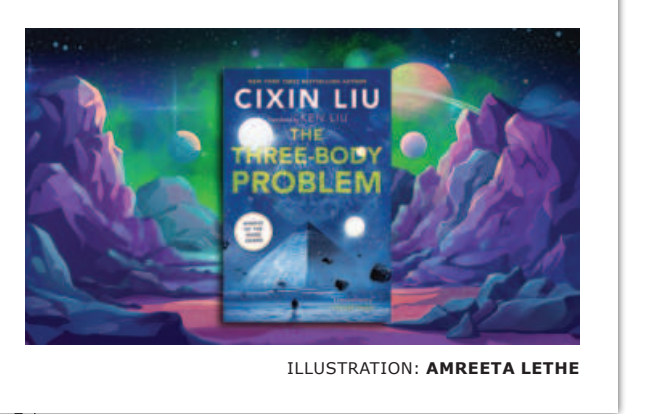


ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

their unique method of hibernation to their intricate system of mathematics and physics, is meticulously constructed and grounded in real scientific principles. It's a testament to the author's background in engineering and his deep fascination with the natural world.

It's this genius mix that really sets this book apart from the run-of-the-mill sci-fi fare. Cixin Liu juggles these disparate elements, creating a rich tapestry that keeps you constantly engaged and guessing what's coming next. Just when you think you've got a handle on the science, the author throws in a curveball from the historical or mystery realms, keeping you on your toes and ensuring that the story never feels one-dimensional or predictable.

There were, however, moments when the scientific exposition got a bit dense for me, and I found myself rereading passages to fully grasp the concepts. But to me, that's also part of the charm of *The Three-Body Problem*. It's a book that demands your full attention and challenges you to think beyond the conventional boundaries

The book has a unique way of dealing with the big questions such as "Are we truly alone in this vast expanse of the universe?" and "If there is intelligent life out there, how would they perceive us, and more importantly, how would we perceive them?"

of science fiction.

Another minor gripe I had seen in many readers was with the characterisation. While the central characters like Wang Miao and Ye Wenjie were well-developed, some of the supporting cast felt a bit one-dimensional. I, however, find that by not over-developing every single character, Cixin Liu leaves room for us to project our own thoughts, feelings, and interpretations onto these individuals. In a genre that pushes the boundaries of technology and scientific speculation, having somewhat blank canvases as characters invites us to envision how humans (or alien beings) might behave in such extraordinary circumstances.

The book has a unique way of dealing with the big questions such as "Are we truly alone in this vast expanse of the universe?" and "If there is intelligent life out there, how would they perceive us, and more importantly, how would we perceive them?" Through the lens of the Revolution, Cixin Liu offers a blazing perspective on the matters of suppressed ideas and how civilised nations are created and destroyed.

By the time you reach the end of *The Three-Body Problem*, you can't help but feel a sense of awe at the sheer scope and ambition of Cixin Liu's creation. It's a world that will linger in your mind long after you've turned the final page, inviting you to ponder the deepest mysteries of the universe and our place within it.

Kazi Raidah Afia Nusaiba is a contributor at The Daily Star and a student at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB).

THE SHELF

5 atmospheric books to read during a kalboishakhi jhor

NUR-E-JANNAT ALIF

As long-awaited summer showers arrive to offer respite from the sweltering heat we have been experiencing, here are a few books to accompany you as you cosy up in bed and watch the rain beat down on your windows.

Memsahab

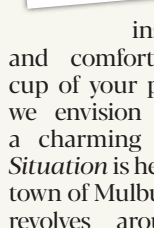
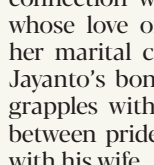
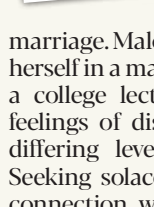
Nimai Bhattacharya
Dey's Publishing, 2015

To be frank, romance fiction is one of the perfect fits to pair with stormy, despondent weather. We are all aware of rain's ability to conjure past feelings in oneself, throwing an unexpected trip down the much-neglected memory lane. *Memsahab* is a book that could help elevate your experience. Bacchu, the protagonist of the novel, was living in an existential quandary—lonely and miserable, working a job that paid peanuts. Memsahab's arrival in his life was pivotal, turning the trajectory of his dismal subsistence into a thing that could be made meaningful. The author's prose is fluent and moving, ensuring the readers' smooth descent into the pages.

Raat Bhor Brishti
Buddhadeva Bose

MC Sarkar & sons, 1967

A widely-read work of fiction, *Raat Bhor Brishti* was actually banned during its first publication in 1967 on charges of obscenity. Now, whether you would prefer to indulge in this novel is



up to you, and we are already informed of the wide discourse regarding "banned books". This book is a compelling narrative, exploring the intricacies of desire, intimacy, and love within the context of marriage. Maloti, a Bangali woman, finds herself in a marriage with Nayonangshu, a college lecturer, but struggles with feelings of dissatisfaction due to their differing levels of sexual confidence. Seeking solace, she forms a passionate connection with Jayanto, a journalist, whose love offers her comfort amidst her marital challenges. As Maloti and Jayanto's bond deepens, Nayonangshu grapples with his own emotions, torn between pride and a desire to connect with his wife.

A Sticky Situation
(Mulbury Mystery #1)
Juno Harvey
Thorpe Bowker, 2021

Cosy mysteries are always a delight, especially on gloomy days. Warming up inside a blanket, snug and comfortable, with a steaming cup of your preferred beverage is how we envision the ideal backdrop for a charming mystery. And *A Sticky Situation* is here to deliver! In the quaint town of Mulbury, where life customarily revolves around pies, coffee, and second-hand books, Rosemary Exeter

is known for her expertise in jams and pickles. But when the body of a mysterious old man is discovered under the town's heritage, The Exceptional Tree, Rosemary suspects foul play in the idyllic sanctuary. Determined to uncover the truth, she embarks on an investigation with the help (and hindrance) of her fellow shopkeepers. As she delves into the conundrums of a blood-stained car, a lost postcard, and missing fathers, Rosemary relies on her faithful companion, Sunny, the cat, for comfort amidst the chaos of a murder mystery.

The Lonely City: Adventures in the Art of Being Alone
Olivia Liang
Picador, 2016

Olivia Liang is a master storyteller, her manner of stitching together an anecdote is second to few. *The Lonely City: Adventures in the Art of Being Alone* is her part memoir, part essay collection focusing on the riveting aspects of loneliness and art history. Moving to New York in her mid-thirties, leaving a world behind to trade it for another, Olivia found the sole reason for her migration—her relationship with her then American partner—disintegrating. Alone and adrift, the author grapples with her crippling reality, attempting to make sense of solitude through the medium of art and observation. Only the ponderous narrative pattern of this

book is enough to make it rain-worthy, and who knows if you could reflect on a thing or two yourself?

The Wicked Deep
Shea Ernshaw

Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2018

On the flap of the book, it is described as "Hocus Pocus and Practical Magic meets the Salem Witch trials"—need I say more? The town of Sparrow is a cursed little corner, haunted by the tragic past of three sisters. Two centuries ago, these sisters were condemned as witches and sentenced to a gruesome death at the hands of the townsfolk. Now, every summer they return, possessing the bodies of three vulnerable girls to exact their revenge—luring young boys to a watery grave. 17-year-old Penny Talbot has resigned to the town's dark legacy. But this year, a newcomer named Bo Carter unwittingly walks into the danger that looms over Sparrow.

As suspicion and fear grip the rain-soaked streets, Penny and Bo find themselves entangled in a web of secrets and mistrust. Death lurks around every corner for those who succumb to the sisters' sinister call.

Nur-E-Jannat Alif is a gender studies major and part-time writer, who dreams of authoring a book someday. Find her at @literatureinsolitude on Instagram or send her your book/movie/television recommendations at nurejannatalif@gmail.com.