



The Fredric Brown MEGAPACK®: 33 Classic Science Fiction Stories

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Fredric Brown (1906-1972), one of science fiction's greatest masters from the Golden Age, is famous for his many classic short stories -- quite a few of which are presented here, including "Arena," "Knock," "Earthmen Bearing Gifts," "The Star Mouse," and many more. The 32 tales of science fiction and fantasy assembled in this massive volume include:

ARENA

EXPERIMENT

KEEP OUT

HAPPY ENDING

HALL OF MIRRORS

EARTHMEN BEARING GIFTS

IMAGINE

IT DIDN'T HAPPEN

RECESSATIONAL

EINE KLEINE NACHTMUSIK

PUPPET SHOW

NIGHTMARE IN YELLOW

JAYCEE

PI IN THE SKY

ANSWER

THE GEEZENSTACKS

KNOCK

REBOUND

THE STAR MOUSE

ABOMINABLE

LETTER TO A PHOENIX

NOT YET THE END

ARMAGEDDON

OF TIME AND EUSTACE WEAVER

RECONCILIATION

NOTHING SIRIUS

PATTERN

THE YEHUDI PRINCIPLE

COME AND GO MAD

SENTRY

ETAOIN SHRDLU

THE END

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The Fredric Brown MEGAPACK ®: 33 Classic Science Fiction Stories Details

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From Reader Review The Fredric Brown MEGAPACK ®: 33 Classic Science Fiction Stories for online ebook

Amanda says

Fredric Brown is probably best known (when he's known at all) for one short story, Knock. "The last man on earth sat alone in a room. There was a knock on the door." Those two sentences form the basis of this short story (and a so-so episode of Doctor Who, but that's a different story).

I first came across this story listening to it on old Dimension X or X Minus One radio shows. If you haven't heard of them and like classic sci-fi, check them out at Internet Archives. Imagine a Twilight Zone style anthology series that is strictly sci-fi.

"Knock" is a great little story about an anthropological professor who is kept as a zoo specimen when an alien race invades earth and how he outwits them.

The rest of this collection is a bit uneven. Some of the stories are almost poetic, "Imagine", and some of them are every bit as impressive as "Knock": "The Geezenstacks" "Arena".

I love sci-fi from this era because absolutely anything seemed possible to these writers. At this point in time, we're a little jaded. We've been to the moon, we've sent probes out as far as Pluto and seen what all the planets in our solar system look like. We know for certain they can't support terrestrial life. We don't even really support space exploration much anymore. But in the forties and especially the fifties, the universe was our oyster and maybe there were Martians, maybe there were invading aliens to fear or outwit, maybe psi powers were real, maybe we could figure out time travel. None of it seemed too fantastic. And when you read these stories, or hear them performed, you totally catch the sense of that emotion of the time.

I've often been amazed at the quality of the work presented on the anthology shows I mentioned, and that's led me time and again to seek out the source materials and read them for myself. I've never been disappointed except in occasionally finding they were presented nearly verbatim and there's no additional material as I'd hoped for. But in this case, I came to this work because of "Knock" and I've stayed for the rest and thoroughly enjoyed most of the other stories.

Mike says

Brown is known as a classic writer of humourous SFF, and these stories provide a cross-section of his work. They range from flash fiction (the equivalent of a single-panel gag cartoon) up to a novella. Not all are funny, but all of them are clever.

Perhaps inevitably, they can be a bit trope-heavy. There are several time travel stories, several alien invasion stories, several interstellar war stories. These were familiar story ideas at the time (as they still are today, among the less imaginative), and Brown puts his own twist on them.

The Megapack edition suffers from less-than-thorough proofreading of the scanned versions, but I'll be sending them my notes, and hopefully they'll fix the next version up. In a couple of stories, Brown "transcribes" English spoken with a heavy German accent, at annoying length in the case of "Star Mouse," and the optical character recognition hasn't dealt well with it, often reading "vell" ("well") as "veil".

There are some beautiful moments (I could have done with more of them). 'The sign on the highway says, "Cherrybell, Pop. 42," but the sign exaggerates; Pop died last year—Pop Anders, who ran the now-deserted hamburger stand—and the correct figure is 41.' Or this: 'Morning came. It came right after midnight, and it

stayed, and it was still there at seven forty-five.'

Overall, an enjoyable collection, and I may eventually pick up the second volume.

Alan says

Classic science fiction.

Jon says

1943 Retro Hugo Finalist for Best Short Story

"Etaoin Shrdlu" by Fredric Brown (Unknown Worlds, February 1942)

- Liked this quite a bit. Birth of an early AI. 4 stars

Diego Tonini says

Brown is simply a genius of short stories

Colin says

An excellent collection of short science fiction from a master of the genre!

I picked up this collection as part of my project delving into the (in)famous "Appendix N" of Gary Gygax - the list of authors and books that inspired the creation of Dungeons & Dragons (and thus RPGs in general). Frederic Brown is unusual in the Appendix because he is not a novelist, but a writer of short stories - some of them very short, just a page or so, or even just a few lines. But Brown was a master of the genre of science fiction and of the form of the short story (a very difficult form in which to write, as I can attest!). There are few direct influences that one can see, but more of a subtle appreciation for words, wordcraft, and wordplay that clearly influenced Gygax. Even if you don't care about Gygax and D&D, Brown is worth reading to see how a real master of the short story form works.

Something's VERY strange about this collection of 33 stories - they're not numbered. I counted them. I checked several times and different ways to be sure. There are only 32 stories in this 33-story collection. How weird is that?

Charles van Buren says

The O. Henry of science fiction, January 20, 2016

This review is from: The Fredric Brown MEGAPACK ®: 33 Classic Science Fiction Stories (Kindle Edition)

Fredric Brown was a master of the short story and of quirky science fiction. He was particularly good at the short short story. This volume contains some of his best known stories such as THE GEEZENSTACKS which I first read in one of his best story collections, NIGHTMARES AND GEEZENSTACKS. In this book, ARMAGEDDON is a very neat twist on disaster. ANSWER postulates a horrible answer to the question, "Is there a God?" If your religious sensibilities are easily offended be aware that the questions of God and Satan (and Buddha too) do come up in some of his writing and you will probably not like some of Mr. Brown's answers. In fact I don't like some of them as philosophy but still enjoy the stories. Unlike many in the golden age of science fiction who addressed the questions of God, gods and religion by ignoring them, Fredric Brown seems to have enjoyed tweaking the sensibilities of anybody and everybody. However this collection should not offend anyone except the very easily offended and those strange people who want to be offended.

If you don't understand the title of this review, you owe it to yourself to search O. Henry on the web and to read THE RANSOM OF RED CHIEF. There should be free public domain editions or at least some cheap editions available on the web and from Amazon.

Steven says

Guillermo del Toro talked about how great Fredric Brown's stories were, and that motivated me into checking these stories out. Del Toro adapted Brown's story "Naturally", into the short film "Geometria" (1987). That story is not included in this collection. It's stunning to me that so many of these stories were written in the 1940s. Nothing about them seemed particularly dated or objectionable by today's standards. The collection had a great range in tones, topics and styles. After finishing the book, I feel like Fredric Brown was capable of writing anything. I'm amazed he isn't broadly celebrated in the same pantheon as Asimov, Clarke, and Matheson. So many of these stories would hold up against some of the best Twilight Zone episodes. The opening story from this collection, "Arena" (1944) was adapted into one of the most popular Star Trek episodes, and again, it's amazing that it was written over 20 years before that series ever started. My favorite story from this collection was "The Star Mouse" (1942), and was just so creative, funny, subtly emotional, weird, perfectly structured, and surprising as it went along - just an absolutely rollicking and wonderful short story. It seems like something Kurt Vonnegut would have been proud to have written. My close-second favorite story was "It Didn't Happen", which was a tight and thoughtful 3-Act short story - exciting opening hook, engagingly chewy middle, and a whopper ending. My other favorite stories were "The Geezenstacks", "Nothing Sirius", "Nightmare in Yellow", "The Yehudi Principle", and "Come and Go Mad". The whole collection was well worth my time, and I look forward to reading much more from Fredric Brown.

Herman Giggletorpe says

Not all the stories in this book are winners, but enough are for me to give Fredric Brown 4 stars. They're mostly science fiction from the 1940s-1960s, though a few are fantasy.

So many Fredric Brown stories have Twilight Zone twists that to read spoilers would ruin the effect. You'll find everything here, including time travel, insect aliens, creepy dolls, and mice with bad German accents.

The best Wildside Megapacks tend to be the single-author ones due to their consistency, and you can see why if you read Frederic Brown's witty style.

Grant Howard says

Can't recommend this enough.

A bumper collection of stories ranging in length from half a page to near novella. All with great wit and intelligence.

If you're a fan of Alan Moore's "Future Shocks" (which you should be) you'll enjoy these. Fredric Brown at once embraces, deconstructs, lampoons and re-invents just about every sci-fi trope you can think of.

This collection includes Brown's two most famous stories; "Arena" which was the basis of the Star Trek episode of the same name and "Knock" famous for it's "two line horror story" introduction "The last man on Earth sat alone in a room. There was a knock on the door...". These actually, while very enjoyable are two of the more straight ahead stories in here. What I'm saying is, if you know of these two classic tales, the rest is even better!

M.Y. David says

Frederic Brown was a true talent in the world of short stories.

He most wrote sci-fi, but there was the occasional humour and plain weird thrown in there for good measure, too.

Approximately 90% of the short stories in this collection were amazing; most of the others were just okay and one or two were simply bad, but considering that there are 33 stories in this collection, that isn't bad going!

I recommend this to anybody who enjoys a quick read with an unexpected ending. The beauty of such collections is that one can flick back and forth between the stories and even read books in between without forgetting anything about what they had just read.

Derek Davis says

Brown is a superb writer on every level – especially for an author of fantasy and SF in the '40s. He writes with a consistent clarity of intention, plot and focus. Even in his most convoluted plots – and they can get as intricate as a tangled skein of yarn – you know where you are, which way you're headed (or think you do), and you slaver to find out when and how he's going to pull the magic thread that will undo the knot.

The stories in this collection range from the early '40s to the mid '60s. Interestingly, his work of the first decade is the best. The collection opens with "Arena," his most famous and award-winning short story, about an Earthman chosen by a near-omnipotent entity to join in mortal combat with the single representative of an alien race at continual war with Earth. The loser will forfeit its entire civilization – total obliteration. It's an excellent story, with the Earthman winning (natch) by mind more than force.

Many of Brown's shorts are truly short – less than half a page – hingeing on trick endings that would make O.

Henry blush. Most endings are fall-off-your-chair funny, clever beyond the call to duty and totally unexpected. Indeed, his humor is raucous and right on the money throughout – especially when he plays games with time paradox.

He seems to have been influenced by nearly everyone and to have influenced nearly everyone who followed in the field. He throws out quick background references to everything (including Buddhism) and projects solid confidence in what he has to say, no matter how outlandish the idea being discussed.

My personal favorite is "Come and Go Mad," originally published in *Weird Tales*. By the 1940s, the tone of that magazine, best known for putrescent horror, had become almost literary at times, and this is a marvelous example. George Vine, a newspaper reporter, becomes convinced that he is Napoleon after a car wreck, but has the sense to keep that belief from his co-workers. Given the chance to infiltrate an insane asylum to cover a mysterious story, he ends up uncovering a far deeper and more dreadful truth. Here, Brown's humor almost totally disappears and we see a truly scary side to the man, especially in his descriptions of life within the asylum, which can match any nuthouse exposé.

This is the most I've read of Brown in one place, and I'm looking forward to picking up the second of his Megapacks.

Julia says

3 stars.

A surprisingly fun collection of 33 short stories by Fredric Brown. And who the heck is Fredric Brown, you ask? He was one of the early writers of science fiction, writing during the so-called “Golden Age of Sci-Fi”, alongside such genre luminaries as Isaac Asimov, Arthur C Clarke, and Ray Bradbury.

Unlike them, however, Brown is seldom remembered today, which is a shame as he wrote many interesting little stories—and I do mean “little”. Brown was master of the *short* short story, with many of his works totaling one page or less. Sometimes much less.

Case-in-point:

The half-page “Answer”, which relates what happens when people all across the universe unite to built the super-computer to end all super-computers, to finally calculate an answer to that most vexing of questions: “Is there a god?” To say anymore, however, would spoil the tiny story’s sinister surprise . . .

Of course, some of Brown’s most famous stories are considerably longer.

Case-in-other-point:

“Arena”, arguably Brown’s best-known work and the basis for the Star Trek episode bearing the same name, puts an intergalactic twist on the idea of single warrior combat. A superior alien race—at the end of its evolution and fused into a single being—decides that only one of two lower species will be allowed to survive and so evolve into a similarly advanced state. Humanity—*natch*—and the “Outsiders”, which look living red spheres covered in tentacles.

[image error]src="/image..." alt="Outsider sexiness! As depicted by David Schleinkofer for Reader's Digest." />

Thus, the (questionably) superior species selects two champions at random, plops them down into the eponymous arena, and tells them to get to killin'. Winner lives. Loser dies—along with the rest of his species. No pressure!

Personally, I prefer Brown's shorter stuff, but whatever your preference, short or long, there's plenty to choose from in this entertaining collection. The stories—by turns, creepy, clever, and amusing—are all quick and easy reads, and the themes are pure early 20th century sci-fi, i.e. anxiety about technology, science, warfare, and, most especially, first contact.

All in all, it's a great introduction to Brown's work, although it would be equally good for familiar fans who just want to revisit some of his famous stories. Not bad for a 99 cent Kindle purchase!

Kevin Black says

Great stories

Fredric Brown is an excellent story teller. His short stories are very entertaining and at times totally unexpected. I read each story and immediately started on the next one. Each was so different, some scary, others plain weird and all entertaining. These Megapacks are a great way to find new (old) authors to enjoy their writing.

Happy says

Fun.
