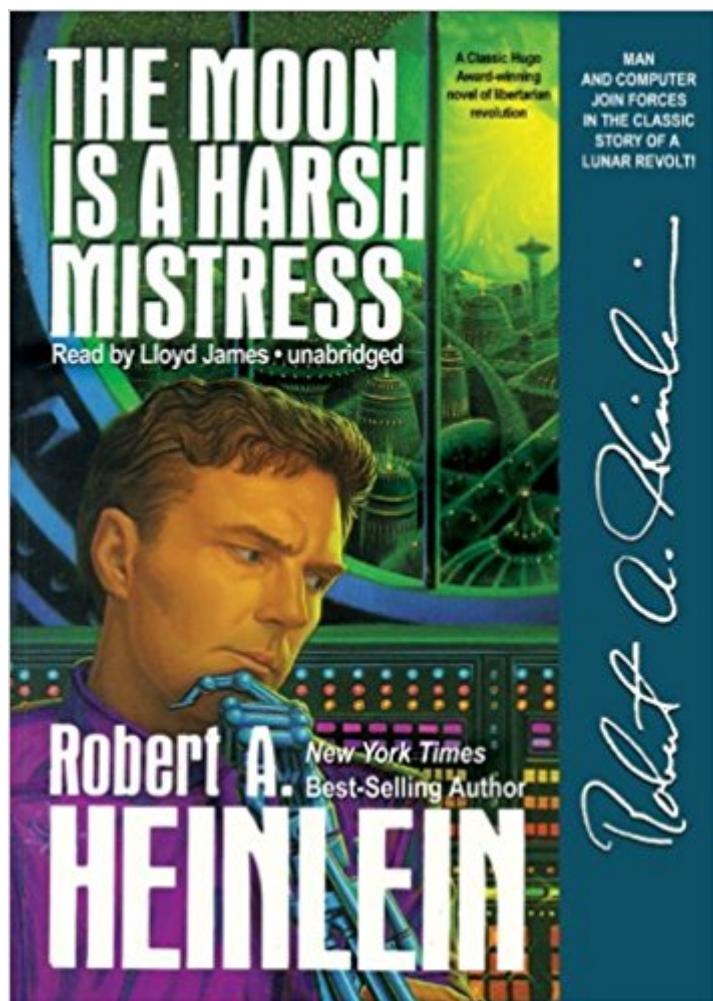


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# The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress



## **Synopsis**

Robert A. Heinlein was the most influential science-fiction writer of his era, winning the Hugo Award for best novel a record four times. *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* was the last of these Hugo-winning novels and is widely considered his finest work. Revolution is brewing on twenty-first-century Luna, a moon-based penal colony where oppressed "Loonies" are being exploited by a harsh Authority that controls it from Earth. Against all odds, a ragtag collection of dissidents has banded together in revolt, including a young female radical, an elderly academic, a one-armed computer jock, and a nearly omnipotent supercomputer named Mike, whose sentience is known only to this inner circle and who is committed to the revolution for reasons of his own. Drawing many historical parallels with the War of Independence, Heinlein's fourth Hugo Award-winning novel is a gripping tale bursting with politics, humanity, passion, innovative technical speculation, and a firm belief in the pursuit of human freedom.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Tom Clancy has said of Robert A. Heinlein, "We proceed down the path marked by his ideas. He shows us where the future is." Nowhere is this more true than in Heinlein's gripping tale of revolution on the moon in 2076, where "Loonies" are kept poor and oppressed by an Earth-based Authority that turns huge profits at their expense. A small band of dissidents, including a one-armed computer jock, a radical young woman, a past-his-prime academic and a nearly omnipotent computer named Mike, ignite the fires of revolution despite the near certainty of failure and death. --This text refers to

an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Adrenalinizing, mind-stretching, conviction-testing...unmatched by any contemporary! --Theodore Sturgeon  
We proceed down the path marked by his ideas. He shows us where the future is. --Tom Clancy

Though a bit long, the action and the storyline kept going, and I kept asking, "now what?" Then, in a bit, I found out, and then things would take a change and the action kept going. Robert A. Heinlein won four Hugo Awards, at least one for this particular piece. This is not only full of action and realistic characters, it is literature in the classical sense. Who actually won the war? What kind of victory was it, what kind of loss was it, and for what end, good, or bad?

This Robert Heinlein classic has been described as science fiction with a political slant. In my opinion, it can be more accurately described as a political work set on the moon. In a nutshell, the Moon is developed as a penal colony. After three or four generations, the inhabitants have begun to chafe under the yolk of the repressive Authority, which controls all aspects of their lives. This novel follows the Lunar movement to achieve independence and self sufficiency. There is excellent hard science fiction here and the development of artificial intelligence is outstanding, but more impressive are the sociological and anthropological aspects of the story. An example of this is the family constructs which have evolved from the very "male heavy" environment. Of course, polyandry is an obvious solution, and one of those employed, however the idea of "clan marriage" and the far more original and fascinating "line marriage" (a continuous marriage arrangement in which new marriage partners are added with time) are also introduced. Of course, the political statements contained within the story are front and center and are what set this science fiction work apart from many others of its genre. This novel was written in the 1960s, so some of the technology and scientific principles might seem dated, or off the mark, but I didn't find them to be so erroneous as to detract from the story. A landmark work to be sure, and a blockbuster at the time it was written. It has aged better than many of its contemporaries, but falls just below what I would consider to be a current, five star experience.

The year is 2075. The moon has been colonized for about 100 years, mostly by convicts transported to the moon, and their decedents. The colony is run by The Authority, which holds moon in trust for the Federated Nations of the earth. The residents of the moon (who call themselves

"Loonies," derived from lunar) lead by a small cell of revolutionaries, are determined to win their independence, and thus freedom, from the "earthworms"--their term for people who still live on earth. This revolt is fueled in equal parts by a radical awakening, and computer projections run by the supercomputer The Authority has built to control virtually every function on the moon--projections which show that without change, there will be a severe food crisis within seven years. Inevitably, conflict breaks out as the earth won't let the Loonies go quietly. As the plot unfolds, Heinlein has an opportunity to play out not only his deep knowledge of science (much of which seems pretty basic by today's standards--hand programing a computer by typing lengthy commands?) but a semi-anarchist view of politics. He summarizes Loonie political philosophy as "There Is NO Such Thing As A Free Lunch." This means everyone has to work and pay for what they need (including air, which is in short supply on the moon), but also that everyone forms extended families who undertake care for the elderly. Heinlein does a great job of moving the story forward, developing a couple of characters we care about (including oddly the supercomputer, and building anticipation towards several well paced climaxes of the narrative. The science is right, and fairly complex, but Heinlein does such a good job of explaining it, and integrating it into the story, that it never distracts. This is the first Heinlein I have ever read (which is embarrassing, since the book is now over 50 years old!), but it definitely will not be the last.

One of Heinlein's best. In fact, probably one the best "hard" SF novels ever written, and I've read every fiction work he ever published. By the way, it was this novel that raised TANSTAAFL from near obscurity to a household "word". Its roots go back into the 20's, at least, but it wasn't widely known.

I first fell in love with Robert Heinlein as a teenager. I thoroughly enjoyed his young adult adventures, but found this one annoying. Coming back to the author as an adult, I decided to re-read the books I found difficult before. I found the vivid descriptions of a possible life on the moon fascinating. The idea of a computer come to life is not that alien to us now (this was written in the 1940s, I think), but the character development was constantly interesting. Even more so were the concepts and tactics of revolution, the morality and strategy behind it. All this I missed as a youngster. I now fully understand its award status.

I spotted this book on a list of the top 100 science fiction novels and it sounded intriguing so I thought I would give it a try. For a book that was written in the 60's it stands up

incredibly well and I can understand why it made the list. Heinlein is an excellent author and his is certainly on his game with this book. It is fantastic science fiction of a revolt of the residents of the Moon from the government/business owners on Earth. The book is as much 60's revolutionary/anti-establishment political theory as it is science fiction with sound plot twists and well fleshed out characters, the most intriguing of which is Mike, the super computer who becomes self-aware and the anchor of the revolution. There are sections that didn't connect with me. I didn't thrill at the in-depth descriptions of family and marriage structures on the Moon in 2075 but to each his own. In the end, this is a very accessible science fiction classic that allows one to appreciate one of the masters of the genre while enjoying a very good story.

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