

The Voyage of the Space Beagle

A. E. van Vogt

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The Voyage of the Space Beagle is one of the most influential works of Science Fiction. It is best known today as the inspiration for the motion picture Alien, but before that it inspired the "five year mission to explore new worlds..." theme of Star Trek. Beyond these two noteworthy franchises, it has influenced and molded hundreds of other works in many forms.

The novel is composed of four novellas woven together with new material to relate the voyage of a science research ship, the Space Beagle, as it encounters alien life forms that prove to be hostile to everyone on board and to virtually all life forms in the galaxy should the being reach any civilization. Fortunately, the crew of the Beagle is able to defeat the threats.

If the stories only concerned dangerous aliens bouncing off superior technology, the point of the work would be far less interesting than it is. Van Vogt adds a dramatic element that creates internal strife among the ship's scientists and crew that speaks to today's readers directly.

The central character is a young scientist, Elliott Grosvenor, the youngest scientist on board and a student of the newly formed science of Nexialism.

Like today's Millennials, Grosvenor is both widely informed and thinks differently from the gray-haired single specialists who compose the scientific teams. Rather than knowing everything about something, Grosvenor knows more than something about everything and with his Nexialism training amplified by Nexial machines, he can see patterns and interconnections that the traditional scientists cannot. In modern terms, Grosvenor, has the equivalent of Internet search, big data, and analysis tools at his fingertips; he instantly grasps what he doesn't know and quickly deduces how to learn it.

Readers who acclaimed The Voyage of the Space Beagle as "a classic of the golden age of science fiction" responded largely to the thrill of defeating alien creatures. Today's readers will more clearly see the triumph of knowledge technology.



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