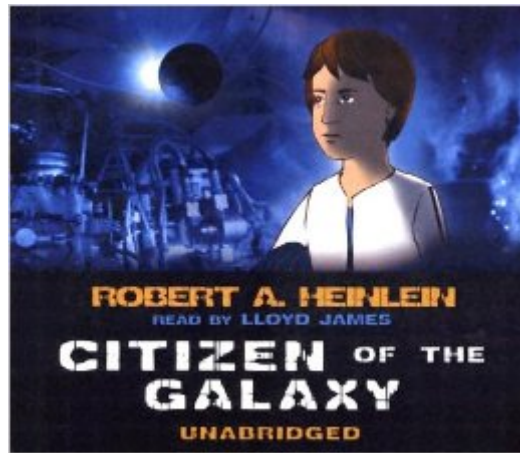


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Citizen Of The Galaxy



Synopsis

The ragged, starving boy, Thorby, stood on the slave auction block. Surprisingly, he is purchased by the crippled beggar Baslim. Thorby soon discovers that Baslim is no ordinary beggar but a superb teacher who leads him to adventures on the starship Sisu.

Book Information

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Authors, A-Z > (H) > Heinlein, Robert A. #189 inÂ Books > Books on CD > Science Fiction &

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Customer Reviews

Citizen of the Galaxy is probably Heinlein's most mature juvenile novel and is certainly one of his most inspirational. It contains a sweeping indictment of slavery and provides a stirring message about citizenship and civic responsibility. Thorby is a slave; the only memories he has are a tangled morass of mistreatment spread among faceless men on nameless worlds; all he brings with him to Sargon are a filthy piece of clothing and an ugly assortment of scars and sores. On the block, no one values him enough to even bid on him, all except for the beggar Baslim. He takes him home (a hole beneath the abandoned amphitheatre) and raises him as a son rather than a slave. Thorby learns the art of begging from his new Pop and enjoys the happiest years of his life with him. Then Baslim, whom Thorby eventually learned was much more than a simple beggar, is arrested as a spy. Thorby satisfies his Pop's wishes by evading capture himself and taking a message to a certain ship's captain. Captain Krausa adopts Thorby as his own son and makes him a member of the Free Trader family on the ship Sisu. Here Thorby learns the complexities of Free Trader family life, makes real friends, and assumes a pivotal job protecting the huge spacecraft from raiders. Then Thorby is displaced once again, as Krausa takes him to the first ship of the Hegemonic Empire he comes in contact with. While Thorby hates to leave his new family, he does it to satisfy Baslim's

ultimate wish for him to find his true family. Thorby soon learns that wealth does not make you rich as he strives to fight slavery in the galaxy and become the son his birth parents wanted him to be. Heinlein gives us three strikingly different looks at family life.

I've only read a few books by Heinlein, but the more of his stories I read the more I see two trends. First, he likes to take an idea, and then run with it through every possible effect and ramification it could have. Secondly, he seems to (unless I miss my guess) be writing his adventure stories from the dual perspective of himself as a youth, and himself as an older world-weary traveler (in his own eyes anyway). Reading this book I got the same feeling from *Starship Troopers* and *Tunnel in the Sky*, that our protagonist is struggling to learn the essential life lessons that he will one day be in a position to hand down. But that's just Heinlein... In this story, our master of sci-fi takes the idea of freedom to its absolute philosophical limits. First, he shows us the world of a person who is an actual slave and has no rights whatsoever. Then, he takes that individual, and shoves them into situation after situation that leave us wondering what exactly freedom is. When Thorby is taught by his adoptive father how to think, he is freed mentally. When he is adopted by space-traders he is almost totally free in a physical sense (the traders travel all of space), but he finds himself enslaved to a way of life, a series of traditions, and many many rules. As part of the intergalactic space police force (or its equivalent), he finds himself fighting for freedom, yet again a slave to the ideals and way of life (and organization) behind it. The real kicker though, is when Thorby finds himself in a position of super-powerful financial might, with literally the world at his fingertips, yet enslaved to that power and all the responsibilities that it implies.

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