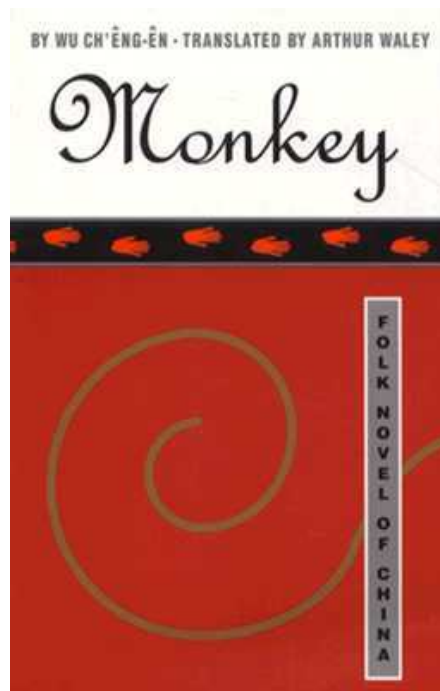




Monkey: The Journey to the West

Wu Cheng'en , Arthur Waley (Translator/Adapter) , Hu Shih (Introduction)

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Probably the most popular book in the history of the Far East, this classic sixteenth century novel is a combination of picaresque novel and folk epic that mixes satire, allegory, and history into a rollicking adventure. It is the story of the roguish Monkey and his encounters with major and minor spirits, gods, demigods, demons, ogres, monsters, and fairies. This translation, by the distinguished scholar Arthur Waley, is the first accurate English version; it makes available to the Western reader a faithful reproduction of the spirit and meaning of the original.

Monkey: The Journey to the West Details

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Author : Wu Cheng'en , Arthur Waley (Translator/Adapter) , Hu Shih (Introduction)

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From Reader Review Monkey: The Journey to the West for online ebook

Alex says

Waley's abridged version is widely...tolerated at least, liked by very many.

There is also this abridged version of the Yu translation: slightly longer at 528 pages.

Copying directly from Wendy - sorry, Wendy, it's just that it was really interesting:

The most popular, though much-abridged version (in translation anyway?) is Monkey: The Journey to the West. I did some research and have decided on this non-abridged version instead: The Journey to the West, Volume 1 and just take it on one volume at a time.

There's a great video with Anthony Yu, the translator of the above Journey to the West, Vol. 1, (<http://asiasociety.org/video/educatio...>) addressing the Asia Society. During the bombings his grandfather had distracted him with Journey to the West during the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong. He tells a great anecdote from JttW where Monkey pees on Buddah's hand--it was the translator's favorite part as a boy (of course!). Anyway, the video is 50 minutes long but interesting (esp the first 20 min) & definitely made me want to read it!

Also, NYT has an archived review of Yu's translation from 1983: <http://www.nytimes.com/1983/03/06/boo...> : "The standard modern version, translated by Mr. Yu, is substantially the same as what is thought to be the first edition, in 100 chapters, published (the author was anonymous) at Nanjing in 1592. (Mr. Yu's version differs from this mainly by the addition of a single episode, drawn from a short version of the novel dating to about the same era.)

That's alllll from Wendy.

Graham says

The last thing I'd expect a hundreds-of-years-old slice of classic Chinese literature to be is fun, but that's exactly what MONKEY is. It's great fun! It's a delight to read, a thoroughly modern action-adventure storyline that embodies the classic 'journey' narrative and packs it to the brim with all manner of outlandish incident and constant humour.

The only difficulty with MONKEY comes from trying to remember all of the various deities and sub-sections that Heaven is made up of. Almost every character in the story is divine in some way, and that's overwhelming at first, but the more you read, the more it all makes sense. Monkey himself is a great protagonist; he starts off as completely annoying, but the reader gradually warms to him as the narrative progresses. Monkey never changes, but the reader gets to know and like him instead. The rest of the characters, Tripitaka, Pigsy, and Sandy, are built to entertain.

Arthur Waley's translation is a joy to read, and probably the most readable version of a 16th century story that you'll ever find. It's also surprisingly modern in places, complete with back-stabbing, betrayal and low brow humour. The story is tumultuous and fantastic and yes, epic in the true sense of the word; the only

problem is that this is an abridged version of a much, much longer original, and thus it makes you long to read the full-length version.

Missy J says

July 12th, 2016 Review: FOUR STARS

I think I read a different book four years ago. It definitely was a different translation.

This time around, I really enjoyed the Journey to the West, or better known as "Monkey" translated by Arthur Waley.

The story was easy to follow and quite funny. I never lost track of what was going on.

I'm glad that I give this another chance. Monkey is a powerful, ingenious rascal, whose only faults are his self-absorbed regard of himself. I especially loved the beginning of the book, when Monkey rules over his own kingdom and causes chaos in Heaven (which is supposed to symbolize the government).

Out of the four Chinese classics, this is by far my favorite book. And it's not a long read!

"What's the use of living so long in the world if you haven't learnt even to recognise a joke when you hear one?" - Monkey

April 22nd, 2012 Review: TWO STARS

Guess this isn't my cup of tea. I chose this book, because I'm right now going through a "read books set in Asia" phase. Among the many books set in China, this wasn't about the communists, Cultural Revolution, torture,... It's one of China's most popular folktale. So I thought, ok I'll give it a try.

The way the story was told was unusual, no suspense, filled with old words. It maybe the fault of the translation. Reading this reminds me of "The Fugitive", which was really not exciting as well.

But I'm not angry that I read this book. There are good books and bad books, that's life.

Vanessa Fabiano says

Looking for a riveting piece of 16th century Chinese folk fiction? Try the hilarious adventure tale "Monkey" (also known as Journey to the West). Penned by scholar Wu Chen An, it tells the story of a mischievous monkey, and is based on the actual pilgrimage of the monk Tripitaka to India, to fetch the Buddhist scriptures for the Tang emperor.

Wu layers this earnest, grueling undertaking, with legend, gossip, superstition, religion, and concocts a rollicking bit of satire. The central irony of the book is that, though it is plotted around a religious pilgrimage, nothing in it is sacred: Taoism is run down as second-rate, the divine denizens of heaven are crushed by complex, impenetrable bureaucracy, Tripitaka, the monk designated for this important pilgrimage, is a sobbing, at times abject creature, and monkey, the disciple assigned to him by a Bodhisattva, is a self-important brat, addicted to physical violence, moody, and prone to fits of savage rage. And yet, he is the undisputed star of the show, a magical genius who attains the much coveted immortality status (as Buddha Victorious in Strife).

The other star of the book is its supreme, unflagging pragmatism. Disciples agonize about tattered frocks, philosophers fret about the cost of coal, immortals haggle about the number of transformations they are allotted, and scriptures command a hefty price tag. It is the unrelenting contrast between the surreal events of the novel - this surplus of magic - and the resolutely practical tone in which the story is told that generates its wit and narrative tension, and makes monkey such an entertaining treat.

dely says

3,5

Uno dei quattro classici della letteratura cinese che avrei voluto leggere da molto tempo. Mi sono decisa soltanto ora perché sto portando avanti una sfida personale leggendo alcuni libri consigliati in *Curarsi con i libri*: Rimedi letterari per ogni malanno.

Lo scimmiotto è consigliato alle persone che sono restie ai cambiamenti e preferiscono condurre una vita serena, tranquilla e sicura.

Non è che io abbia paura dei cambiamenti, però devono avvenire gradualmente, ho bisogno di tempo per prepararmi. I cambiamenti improvvisi, invece, m'innervosiscono e raramente mi lascio trascinare in cose fuori programma e non organizzate. In *Curarsi con i libri* le autrici si riferiscono anche ai cambiamenti interiori, ma di questi è impossibile aver paura visto che spesso siamo noi gli artefici di questi mutamenti e quindi sono cercati e voluti.

Leggendo *Lo scimmiotto* non è cambiamento assolutamente niente nella mia vita, ma ho comunque letto un gran bel libro che comunque avrei voluto leggere. Mi sono divertita leggendo la vita del re scimmia Sun Wukong: dalla sua nascita al caos che ha provocato in Cielo, dal suo imprigionamento durato cinquecento anni sotto la Montagna dei Cinque Elementi fino al raggiungimento dell'illuminazione. L'altro personaggio che seguiamo sin dalla nascita è Tripitaka, un monaco buddhista, che è incaricato di andare in India a recuperare le Sacre Scritture per portarle in Cina e così insegnare la retta via.

Tripitaka affronterà il suo viaggio con l'aiuto di tre discepoli, tutti bizzarri e singolari, e insieme affronteranno rocambolesche avventure dovendo superare montagne invalicabili, fiumi impetuosi e combattere contro draghi e mostri.

Il loro viaggio simboleggia anche la via della consapevolezza: da una vita materiale e dedita ai piaceri a un percorso, non sempre facile, che conduce alla realizzazione. In questo senso la storia dello scimmiotto insegna che è possibile affrontare e superare le difficoltà e ciò conduce spesso a un cambiamento positivo del quale non c'è bisogno d'avere paura.

Akemi G. says

I read this in Japanese, so I cannot comment about the quality of the English translation. Part adventure journey, part human comedy disguised as fantasy. (Very cynical to government bureaucracy)

For those who are wondering about the *complete* translation of this classic: There have been multiple versions of this, because authorship in the old China is not what you assume. People added their own fancy as they hand-copied the book(s), and it's hardly possible to distinguish which part is authentic. Again, I cannot comment about this specific version, but it just might be a good idea to start with this rather than the longer version.

Jim Peterson says

Monkey is a magical tale of fantasy and adventure in the Tang Dynasty (618–907) of imperial China. At around 350 pages, this translation is actually a short version of the 2,000-some-page Journey to the West, which was written in the 16th century. It is a very important book throughout Asia, and considered one of the four Great Classical Novels of Chinese literature. A Japanese friend of mine assures me that 98% of Asians know the story of Journey to the West whether through the book directly or its numerous spin-offs.

Although Monkey is an abridgement, it doesn't read like one. It really feels like a full story. Most of what was omitted consists of individual adventures along the pilgrims' journey to India to fetch Buddhist scriptures. Since these mini adventures are largely self-contained, you don't notice their absence when reading, although the ending does come off as somewhat abrupt.

I've been wanting to read some Wuxia for a long time due to my personal interest in martial arts. Wuxia is basically Chinese martial fiction, and it is hard to find anything in this genre with less than 2,000 pages. I specifically chose this abridged version because I wanted to get a soft start rather than dive right into a 2,000-page brick only to give up.

Though the translation is not perfect, the style is sometimes archaic and the ebook version contains some digital transfer errors, Monkey still fulfilled my expectations. And I expect this won't be my last wuxia novel. Despite the drawbacks, I'm giving this five stars because I know I'm going to be thinking about this story for a long time.

Note:

While it definitely helps to first have some basic knowledge of Buddhist philosophy and terms (i.e., the difference between Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Arhats) and the major figures (Guatama/Sakyamuni, Kwan Yin, Amitabha and the Taoist Lao Tzu), you could easily get by without any such prior knowledge and probably learn a good deal about Chinese beliefs simply by reading this book.

Interesting trivia: Dragon Ball is based on Journey to the West. The Monkey King is called Sun Wukong in Chinese and Son Goku in Japanese. Hence the name of Goku in Dragon Ball, who is based on the Monkey King.

Maureen says

i'm very sorry that i didn't like this more. many people seem to think this is a good translation, which disappoints me because i was quite willing to lay the blame at my inability to get into this book on arthur waley though it may be that they are lauding the book for its accuracy in translation rather than in its artistry. i'm not sure why i didn't enjoy it as much as i didn't: i love folklore, and monsters and fighting and adventures but despite all that, this book's take on those things kept making me want to pass out every time i read it. it's abridged but it still felt really long, and inconsistent, and repetitive. the only thing that really interested me was when the priest tripitaka lied to monkey with ease even though he was very pious about not eating meat, or doing other things that were contrary to what he had learned in buddhist monastery.

it may be that i just don't get it, i don't know. maybe i am just too ensconced in the traditions of western literature to really appreciate it. but it just fell flat.

Kitty Unpretty says

I actually read the version based on the WJF Jenner translation available for free on silkpagoda. As it was an ebook, I can't say for sure how long it was, but if it was abridged it was not by much. I almost want to read the abridged version, so that I could say for sure if one misses anything in choosing it over the one I read.

If it were just Monkey doing the Journey to the West, he would have it done before breakfast. The reason he cannot is, apparently, that Sanzang has to do it, and his mortality makes him burdensome. It makes slightly more sense than the reason the hobbits could not ride the eagles into Mordor.

Pig is completely useless and I have no idea why anyone would bring him anywhere. He spends basically the entire book convincing Sanzang to walk into traps, and eating his way into other traps. Perhaps there was something lost in translation that would have shown that this was intentional on his part, since he did always seem overeager to split up the loot and gtfo.

Sanzang is perhaps more annoying in that he never stops listening to Pig. Monkey kills a demon, Pig says it wasn't a demon, Sanzang is horrified and punishes Monkey. This happens so many times. So many, many times. Most of the time this only leads to Pig getting almost-eaten by demons so it's not really clear why he keeps doing it, except to be a huge asshole.

The horse is a dragon prince. This only seems to come up as a deus ex machina.

Friar Sand is mostly there to watch Sanzang while Pig and Monkey flail around and move the plot forward.

Once all the characters get introduced, the plot can be easily summarized as a series of arcs that are exactly the same. Sanzang falls into a trap involving demons who want to eat him, Monkey rescues him, something goes wrong and Sanzang is recaptured, Monkey uses his immense power to run away and find someone to kill or reclaim the demon.

Bodhisattvas are huge jerks, apparently, that see nothing wrong with converting people to Buddhism by beating the everliving shit out of them.

Speaking of Buddha! The reason Sanzang must endure such suffering is that he is the reincarnation of the Golden Cicada, who not only lived a perfect life, but did so ten times. The Golden Cicada once drifted to sleep while Buddha was lecturing. Buddha takes that shit seriously, and he will hold a grudge EVEN IF YOU DIE.

Sanzang is super attractive. This is told to the reader several times, putting emphasis on his huge forehead, silver teeth, flat head, square mouth, and frailty. Sometimes he is captured by sexy she-demons who want to steal his precious bodily fluids, who he resists despite their moth eyebrows and golden lotus feet. If anyone needed proof that beauty is a societal construct, I say to thee, sup.

There is a whole chapter about mpreg while the men need to find a magical abortion plant.

India is described as being a magical place, like heaven. Heaven is apparently exactly like China, but the rice is cheap.

This review might make you think I did not like this book. While it could get tedious sometimes, a book does

not stay this popular for this long by being boring. It is completely hilarious, and a great insight into Chinese culture at the time.

I plan to blame Wu Cheng'en for anime from now on, because seriously: overpowered heroes getting into fights in the sky, a hot monk, cum-hungry demons, and mpreg.

Steve says

I kind of regret buying this book. I thought it looked like a fun little read when I saw it in the mythology section, so I picked it up (several years ago).

Why regret it when I enjoyed it? I could have enjoyed MORE of it. You see, I found out much later that Monkey is an abridged version of Journey to the West. This is one of the four classic Chinese novels. I've read (and generally loved) the other three: Romance of the Three Kingdoms, Outlaws of the Marsh, and Dream of Red Mansions. Now I've read an abridged version of the last one, when I would have much preferred to read the full unabridged text. I'll still have to do that at some point.

Still, I can recommend this book pretty enthusiastically to some people at there. Reading the other three books mentioned above, I undoubtedly tried to sell you on them (directly or indirectly). Perhaps you were even a bit interested.

However, I recognize that the other three, thousand+ page monsters can be pretty intimidating, particularly since they feature so many characters with names that are difficult to pronounce and keep straight if you are not particularly familiar with Chinese names. Monkey is only about three hundred pages, and style wise is a much easier read as well. There are fewer important characters, and they have more easily pronounced/remembered names (Monkey and Pigsy being two of the main four characters). This story is also quite a bit more of a folk tale than the others, so it remains noticeably simpler. That said, it retains the very classic style that I haven't seen anywhere besides these Chinese novels. The charmingly formal well that people address one another (even the taunts before battles are formalized in a very unique way). This would be a great book to use as your trial run into classic Chinese literature, and if you enjoy the general style of it, you will enjoy the style of the longer and more difficult books as well.

Kaleido Books says

Fans of the fantastic 'Monkey Magic' series might enjoy reading this early English translation of the classic Chinese folk tale -- one based on historical fact.

This particular translation is prefaced by a very interesting essay about the translator, a Christian missionary who found (and thus inserted) various Christian messianic themes into the story.

Sadly, this translation has practically no characterisation; it is told as a series of events with very little drama or descriptive language.

Very interesting if you're hoping to get closer to the source material, disappointing if you want the fun and drama of good storytelling.

°°°.°..°°°.°.. ????? Ροζουλ? Εωσφ?ρος .°..°°°.°..°°° ★.°..°..★ ?????? ???????
??????? Ταμετο?ρο Αμ says

Μια μυθικ? διαχρονικ? και μαγικ? ιστορ?α που
σου δ?νει εισιτ?ριο για ?να ταξ?δι σε ?λλα μ?ρη και ?λλους τ?πους.
Εκε? ?που ?λα διαρκο?ν θε?κ? αι?νια.

Πρ?κειται για την ιστορ?α του σκανδαλι?ρη και αξιαγ?πητου βασιλι? π?θηκου.

Κ?ποτε, πριν εκατομ?ρια χρ?νια στο νησ? των λουλουδι?ν, των φρο?των και του ?λιου γενν?θηκε
απο απο μια ευλογημ?νη π?τρα ?νας π?θηκος.
Μητ?ρα του η γη και πατ?ρας του ο ουραν?ς.

Η π?τρα που τον γ?ννησε λο?στηκε πολλ? χρ?νια απο τις γ?ινες και ουρ?νιες υπ?ρτατες εν?ργειες
που επιταχ?νθηκαν απο τη λ?μψη του ?λιου και το φως της σελ?νης.

?ταν π?τυχε την αποστολ? του ως βασιλι?ς ?λων των πιθ?κων στο νησ? που γενν?θηκε, ?ρχισε να
αναρωτι?ται σχετικ? με τις αν?τερες μορφ?ς σωματικ?ς, ψυχικ?ς και πνευματικ?ς κατ?στασης.

?θελε να αποκτ?σει τα ?ψιστα εφ?δια που προσδ?δουν το μεγαλε?ο της φ?σης.

Μ?λις πληροφορε?ται για τους θεο?ς που κατοικο?ν στον ουραν? και τη γη, για τους αθ?νατους με
μεταφυσικ?ς δυν?μεις και αι?νια ?παρξη και για τους Βο?δες και Μποτισ?τβα που ?χουν
κατακτ?σει την αυταπ?τη ξεφε?γοντας απο την αναγ?ννηση, ξεκιν? η δρ?ση του.

?θελε να τα κατακτ?σει ?λα.

?τσι αποκτ? υπερφυσικ?ς και θε?κ?ς δυν?μεις μ?σω ταο?στικ?ν εκπαιδευτικ?ν πρακτικ?ν.

Ο μαται?δοξος και αχ?ρταγος, πονηρ?ς π?θηκος που κατακτ?ει με ευκολ?α την καρδι? του
αναγν?στη,

φθ?νει σε σημει?ο να επαναστατ?σει ακ?μη κι εναντ?ον του Ουρανο?.

Αναζητ? διαρκ?ς αν?τερα τιμητικ? και πνευματικ? αξι?ματα και διακρ?σεις.

?τσι, ο Βο?δας τον τιμωρε? να με?νει 500 χρ?νια κ?τω απο ?να βουν?.

Το μεγαλε?ο της Ασιατικ?ς μυθολογ?ας αρχ?ζει ?ταν ο βασιλι?ς π?θηκος ελευθερ?νεται απο τα
αι?νια δεσμ? με τον ?ρο να συνοδε?σει ως μαθητ?ς ?ναν σεβ?σμιο μοναχ? στη Δ?ση.

Σκοπ?ς του ταξιδιο? ε?ναι η αν?κτηση των βουδιστικ?ν γραφ?ν και η επιστροφ? τους στην
Ανατολ?.

Ε?ναι ?να ταξ?δι που διαρκε? 14 χρ?νια.

Ο δρ?μος που ακολουθο?ν συντροφι? και με ?λλους συμβολικο?ς μαθητ?ς ε?ναι γεμ?τος
ανυπ?ρβλητα εμπ?δια.

Μπερδεμ?νες καταστ?σεις αν?μεσα σε δυν?μεις κακο? και καλο? οδηγο?ν σε επικ?ς μ?χες και θριαμβευτικ?ς μα εξοντωτικ?ς ν?κες.

Χιλι?δες μαγεμ?να ποτ?μια, καταραμ?να βουν?, σατανικ?ς μορφ?ς που ξεγελο?ν, δρ?κοι, ξωτικ?, τ?ρατα, δα?μονες, θεο?, πνε?ματα, μαγε?α, μεταμορφ?σεις, ουρ?νιες τελετ?ς, γ?ινες υπερφυσικ?ς παγ?δες, απ?κρημνα και ?ρημα μ?ρη που ε?ναι βας?λεια μοχθηρ?ν πλασμ?των και μαγεμ?νων ψυχ?ν, θα εμποδ?σουν το ταξ?δι προς την υπ?ρτατο πνευματικ? προορισμ?.

?να παιδικ? αν?γνωσμα για εν?λικες. Συγκλονιστικ?. Γεμ?το μυθολογικ?ς φιγο?ρες και θρ?λους. ?να ονειρικ? κινεζικ? ταξ?δι στην μυθοπλασ?α του 16ου αι?να.

Συστ?νεται για αναγν?στες ?λων των ηλικι?ν, ανεπιφ?λακτα, σε γονε?ς και εκπαιδευτικο?ς και σε ?σους αγαπο?ν τα φανταστικ? ταξ?δια στα αι?νια θρυλικ? μ?ρη.

????????????????????

Καλ? αν?γνωση.
Πολλο?ς ασπασμο?ς!

Lara says

I'm embarrassed to admit that I learned only recently about Sun Wukong, a very famous monkey character all over Asia. That is to say, billions of people on earth are quite familiar with Sun Wukong, and I didn't know he existed until about a year ago! The planet is becoming smaller and smaller, but there are still some East/West divides...

In any case, the "monkey" of the title is Sun Wukong. This story, which is so well known in Asia, is usually known as "The Journey to the West" (without "monkey" in the title). The story, credited to Wu Cheng'en, dates to the 16th century. This version was translated by Arthur Waley, a British scholar, in the mid 20th century.

I'm so glad to have read this tale. It's hard to describe; my one sentence summary would be "The Ramayana meets Don Quixote". What does that mean? It reminds me of Don Quixote in that it was written hundreds of years ago in a land far away, yet parts of it are laugh-out-loud funny to this 21st century American. It reminds me of the Ramayana in that it has an epic scope (characters include the Buddha, Kwon Yin, Lao Tzu, etc.), and a powerful monkey is in the mix trying to do the right thing to serve his master. (In the Ramayana, it is "monkey"/vanara Hanuman who serves Ram; here, Sun Wukong is primarily serving the Buddha. Unlike Hanuman, who is quite earnest, Sun Wukong is a scamp/trickster and much more morally ambiguous than dear Hanuman.) The "journey to the west" in question is a trip from China to India to fetch some scriptures.

Why four stars instead of five? There are times when the writing feels stilted to me. I'm guessing that Waley was trying to translate literally (as literally as one can translate from Chinese to English, that is), and so the prose at times feels dense.

I'm very glad to have read this; I'm very glad that I have now joined the billions of people who know this whimsical tale.

Ran says

I love this story about a stone egg that birthed a monkey who went basically caused so much trouble in heaven that he was banished for 500 years under a mountain and was only freed to journey with Buddhist monk Xuanzang under the patronage of Bodhisattva Kuan-Yin (Guanyin). With a western perspective, I read this story awaiting for the Monkey King's comeuppance. Spoiler alert: it doesn't really happen.

And the monkey gets away with all sorts of hilarious antics. He becomes king of the monkeys. Then he bullies a bunch of dragons into taking their holy piece of iron that keeps the oceans at bay, the Jade emperor puts him in charge of a garden of magical peaches and he eats them, he then steal Lao-tzu's immortality elixirs, and basically pisses off most of the heavenly court, including drinking all their imperial wine. When charged with these sins, he replies, "It's all true. What are you going to do about it?"

That's Aang ... he reminds me of Sun Wukong in features only.

So, yeah, then Monkey (also named Sun Wukong) goes on a journey to the west to retrieve Buddhist knowledge with Xuanzang in Dahila (India). That is when my interest waned ... it's the story of a group of unlikely fellows joined together in a mission. There's Pigsy, Sandy, Monkey, and the monk. They defeat a few monsters - actually mostly Monkey defeats the monsters. But the story is essentially a tale of how China adopted Buddhism in during the Tang dynasty, including its antecedent belief systems of Taoism and Confucianism.

Donovan says

Monkey - Great Sage and Equal of Heaven. I watched the classic Japanese TV series when I was a kid to buying the complete series on DVD so my children wouldn't miss out on the fun (And I can say it is still as good today as it was when I was young). But until now I had not read the book itself. The original was written in the 1500's by a Chinese author Wu Ch'eng-en and was called 'Journey to the West'. The original was 100 chapters long and after trying to read more scholarly translations I found to be too literal and way too dry (It reminded me of reading the scholarly translations of Gilgamesh)I chose to go with an abridged version - and I am glad I did.

The version I went for is the Arthur Waley translation. It is 30 chapters long and captures the beginning and ending quite when and provides a good insight in to the characters. It was the ending for me that I really wanted to read as the TV series was cut short and I never found out what happened. The Waley version of the story keeps this story to a well paced read and includes a couple of the adventures of Tripitaka, Monkey, Pigsy, Sandy and horse that clearly define the characters, their relationships and the spirit of adventure that has made this one of the most read and adapted stories in (and out of) Asia.

If you have watched the TV show or want to know what the fuss is about regarding this amazing story then I recommend the Arthur Waley abridged version.

PLOT ***Spoilers***

At the beginning of the novel we learn of a monkey born from a stone nourished by the Five Elements, who learns the art of the Tao, 72 polymorphic transformations, combat, and secrets of immortality, and through guile and force makes a name for himself in Heaven - 'Great Sage equal of Heaven' and to put it lightly, gets in to so much trouble that he is ultimately trapped and imprisoned by the Buddha.

500 years later Buddha seeks a pilgrim who will travel West, to India. The hope is to retrieve sacred scriptures by which the Chinese people may be enlightened so that their behaviour (seen as greed, hedonism, promiscuity, and sins) may accord with the tenets of Buddhism. The young monk Tripitaka (Who has his own story) volunteers to undertake the pilgrimage.

Along the way, Tripitaka encounters and frees Monkey, and he and Monkey thereafter recruit two more companions, Pigsy and Sandy. There is another member of the group that is encountered and takes on the name and form of a Horse (Formerly a Dragon that had been punished and cast out of his father's palace). They liberate a captive princess and punish her abductor, who has also murdered her father. The father is resurrected and reinstalled as king. They meet several bodhisattvas and fight fierce monsters, make new friends, release slaves, reveal vile plots before finally arriving at Buddha's palace.

The scriptures are retrieved and return to China with them. They overcome some final hurdles so the numerology of their journey is precise and finally they deliver the scriptures to the Emperor and the people of China.

They are then returned to be rewarded by the Buddha. Tripitaka and Monkey are made in to Buddha's. Sandy is made in to a Arhat. Horse is returned back in to Dragon form as a great Naga. And poor old Pigsy who has always been tempered by his greed, is promoted to an altar cleanser (i.e. eater of excess offerings at altars).

Kevin says

"I first heard the story in the Japanese drama, Saiyuuki back in 2006, MONKEY MAJIK / Around The World theme song <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afnj1...>

The books is even better so far!"

Just loved the book, it's tone is perfect and Monkey is such a great character, while Pigsy supplies plenty of laughs. My favorite part of the book is the three Taoist deities, the trick that Tripitaka's three disciples play on them and how the competition between them turns out.

Sarah Louise Leach says

I had no idea this was a an actual book, never mind translated and available in Penguin classic format!

Having loved the camp TV series made in China and shown on UK TV in the late 1970s when i was a child I could not resist reading it. I am very glad I did.

As we Buddhists will tell you, it is very difficult to describe the indescribable but I will try. First of all life is humourous, the best part of life is laughter, and this book has plenty of that, and what is more uses it as a gentle didactic tool. Life is also a series of events, some of them make us despair, but there is always a solution, Tripitaka is almost an annoying character in how he cries at every misfortune on the road, but that is to say we are also whiny and annoying and is to symbolise and recognise the suffering of humanity and the futility of worrying about it. The book is like many books of the west, written a century or so later, a picaresque work, but so much more entertaining, the adventures speed by. It is like a Buddhist "Pilgrims Progress" only with jokes and likability and a message which i prefer to that of Chaucer or Bunyan. It makes a fair stab at Pure land Buddhism, and is inherently Chinese rather than Indian, you can see that with the vein of beauracracy and propriety running right through, Chinese Religions tend to encompass the others, so Confucianism is still there, (in fact I am surprised Li wasn't represented somewhere maybe it was and I missed it) and also with the specific brand of humour.

All the hidden as well as glaringly obvious religious messages aside, it is a wonderful story a glorious, ofetn

jolly, romp, and I will be reading it to my kids with relish.

Neaz says

"Monkey" is Arthur Waley's delightful rendition of Wu Cheng-en's "Journey to the West", one of China's four great classical novels. This abridged version provides English readers with an experience that would otherwise have been inaccessible to those of us unable to read the original Chinese. The novel offers a pleasant mixture of action, adventure and comedy. It examines a number of meaningful themes, including three great Eastern philosophies (Buddhism, Tao and Confucianism) and satirical commentary on their failed practice by people in an overly bureaucratic society who miss the forest for the trees. A must read.

Adrian says

Its funny, I read about 50 pages of this then lost the thread and started struggling with who was who, to such an extent that I put it down for a few months.

After this break I then went back about 20 pages and started again. This time it stuck, I sailed through the rest of the book, and really enjoyed it. I think if I hadn't of struggled it might have been 5 stars, but all in all I think 4 is a fair mark.

Katie Lumsden says

An interesting, if strange read, like nothing I've read before. It's funny, historically interesting and at times very engaging, if somewhat hard to get into.
