



Doctor Dolittle in the Moon

Hugh Lofting

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In Doctor Dolittle in the Moon Doctor Dolittle has landed on the Moon. He meets Otho Bludge the Moon Man, a Stone Age artist who was the only human on the Moon when it broke away from the Earth. The animals of the Moon flock to Doctor Dolittle, and he discovers how to communicate with the intelligent plants there. But will the lunar flora and fauna ever let him leave? Hugh John Lofting was a British author who created the character of Doctor Dolittle - one of the classics of children's literature. His early education was at Mount St Mary's College in Sheffield, after which he went to the United States, completing a degree in civil engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He enlisted in the Irish Guards to serve in World War I. Not wishing to write to his children of the brutality of the war, he wrote imaginative letters that were the foundation of the Doctor Dolittle novels.

Doctor Dolittle in the Moon Details

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Then we get to the Moon, which owes a certain amount to Lucian of Samosata, with a couple of updates to take account of contemporary scientific knowledge (the lighter gravity, the shorter distance to the horizon; though by the 1920s it was pretty clear that there was no beathable atmosphere, let alone lush vegetation). The Doctor leantrs to talk to lunar plants, applying the techniques he has long employed for animals on Earth. The plot, such as it is, revolves around the race-memory of the formation of the moon passed down to the monkey Chee-Chee and the true identity of the Man in the Moon. It's interesting to note that the plants of the moon submit to a centrally planned schedule of reproduction so as to avoid exhausting their world's natural resources, but probably this should be read as vaguely utopian rather than anything more specific.

Peter says

Doctor Dolittle in the Moon is the eighth book in the Dolittle series. It takes up the story directly from the end of the previous volume, *Doctor Dolittle's Garden*.

The storyline changed rather radically in the middle of the book; it represented a profound shift in tone. Instead of trying to cope with the foibles and difficulties of human society such as the Doctor's near-constant (albeit unwilling) need for money, the plot began to focus instead on exploration and mystery, as strange and unknown creatures and forces seemed to be impelling John Dolittle off the face of the Earth entirely.

Doctor Dolittle in the Moon continues in that new key. It presents an entirely new environment, the lunar environment: an apparent utopia. Utopias are often somewhat dull places, but Hugh Lofting's Moon (which is, of course, in utter violation of everything we know about the Moon today) is actually rather an interesting place. Lofting's descriptions are vivid and memorable, representing some of his best work. The sense of mystery is strong and intriguing. All in all, it's a refreshing change in this classic series.

I won't go into great detail. Here's the important thing: I read *Doctor Dolittle in the Moon* to my son, Sebastian, aged seven. **He loved it.** We've read the previous seven volumes over the last two or three years, and some of them were more or less interesting than others, but *Doctor Dolittle in the Moon* took the prize. I'd told him while reading one of the earlier books that Doctor Dolittle would eventually visit the moon, and he'd been looking forward to reading about the trip ever since. Even so, his reaction surprised me.

He had me bring the book in the car, to read to him driving to and from the train station (my wife was driving, not me!). He had me read it to him while he was flossing and brushing his teeth. The mystery of the identity of the Moon Man mesmerized him. And last night, he had me start reading to him early and stayed up late - we spent nearly *two hours* reading, until we finished the book. I had expected him to fall asleep, but instead he became more awake as the story progressed. Fortunately he fell asleep fairly quickly after I finished the book.

I'm fond of the book (my parents gave me a copy when I was young), but Sebastian **loved** it. I would have given it a four (or a 4.3 in a fractional scale), but he'd give it a solid "5". He's already very eager to start reading the sequel, *Doctor Dolittle's Return*.

A few notes: Unlike some of the earlier Dolittle books, this one has no racial or cultural issues which might provoke censorship (some of the earlier Dolittle books are badly bowdlerized). According to Wikipedia, Lofting originally intended this to be the final Dolittle book. If so, I don't know what changed his mind - but he wrote four more Dolittle books, as well as two related books.

Along with *Doctor Dolittle's Return*, this book represents one of the better-written and more interesting parts of the Dolittle series.

Jonathan says

Yams turn you into a giant.

JZ says

This was my favorite Dr. Dolittle book. I remember it well, nearly 60 years later. It set my mind on fire, because it was the same time that President Kennedy was promising to send a man to the moon, back when he was running for office in 1959. Damn, I'm old.

Jean says

yes, it's a children's book about a man who talks to animals (and plants, in this case). it's also a collection of nice drawings. what i love it for, however, is lofting's thoughtful imaginings of what life would be like on the moon, not only the phantasmagorically evolved giant trees and moths (good indoctrination in Darwinism, too), but also what it would feel like to walk in low gravity, how far you could go in a step, to what extent the curvature of a smaller sphere would be evident to one used to the earth's size. and i will put the passage from the book's lonely middle about the comfort of the formerly forbidding stars up against anything you care to bring.
