



Zeuglodon

James P. Blaylock

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"A skeletal hand clutching an iron key lies hidden within a mermaid's wooden sarcophagus; a hand-drawn map is stolen from beneath the floorboards an old museum; an eccentric sleeping inventor dreams of a passage to the center of the hollow earth, and by dreaming of the passage, brings it into being. Pursued by kidnappers thinking of riches and murder, Katherine Perkins and her two cousins, junior members of The Guild of St. George, must descend into the depths of the hollow earth in order to return the Sleeper to his ancestral home on the shores of Lake Windermere. But to awaken him might mean the end of his dream, the closing of the Windermere Passage, and the three intrepid explorers marooned in a savage land forgotten by time itself..."--Front jacket flap.

Zeuglodon Details

Date : Published August 31st 2012 by Subterranean Press (first published August 23rd 2012)

ISBN : 9781596064546

Author : James P. Blaylock

Format : Hardcover 217 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Steampunk, Fantasy, Adventure, Fiction, Young Adult

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From Reader Review Zeuglodon for online ebook

Mike says

For some reason, I was sure that I had read the book that started this “series”, “The Digging Leviathan” but it is not in my GR lists and my local library does not have it available. Still, since it was written long ago when hominids were still evolving, I may actually own a copy – packed away in one of 40-or-so boxes of bound printed matter.

I snapped up **this** book, Zeuglodon because I saw the cover blurb stating that it was the “sequel” to “The Digging Leviathan” and thought that I should obviously read it. (Once again ignoring my firm resolve to read down the TBR shelf.)

I can’t rightly say if I remember anything about the earlier book, but that doesn’t matter. The book starts off by throwing the reader into the thick of things and then slowly working them out. It’s not offensive or frustrating as the process begins almost immediately and is done with apologies from the young narrator.

I don’t want to give away any real spoilers as I think Mr. Blaylock did a pretty neat job of creating a fast-paced plot that mixes adventure, science (real and imagined), classic yarns, and a bit of wit in just the correct proportions. Is this a YA book? I would say so given the ages of the three primary protagonists and the feel of the book. But if so, it works equally well for an adult who is willing to suspend a bit more of their disbelief than when reading more serious stuff.

As I read it I felt echoes of “A Series of Unfortunate Events” (in a good way). The author also directly borrows from both Jules Verne and Edgar Rice Burroughs; the former being more of the serious literature sort and the latter more of the fun-at-any-cost sort that livens up this tale.

Zeuglodon is well over a 3, just can’t say if it is a 4-star book. For now call it 3.5 (rounded up on stars.) Pick it up and judge for yourself!

David Schwan says

This is a fun YA story. Three young people--one girl two boys have an adventure that takes them far from their home. The story starts in their hometown on California's Mendocino coast with a theft at the local museum. A chase ensues that takes us to Newfoundland and later to the UK. The good guys are members of the Society of St. George, a secret society dedicated to investigating mysterious things. The writing style is quite cinematic, this would make a fun to watch movie. This is a definite diversion from other novels by the same author.

Kat Hooper says

3.5 Review originally posted at www.fantasyliterature.com

Eleven year old Kathleen Perkins considers herself a scientist — a cryptozoologist, to be exact. She studies legendary animals. According to Kathleen, “legendary” just means that they don’t appear very often. (“You can hardly blame them.”)

Kathleen’s mother disappeared in a submersible while trying to find the entrance to Pellucidar, so Kathleen now lives with her orphaned cousins Perry and Brendan at her eccentric uncle’s house. Uncle Hedge, who runs a little seaside museum of strange objects, is a member of the Guild of St. George, a secret society of men and women who fight the plots of an evil genius named Dr. Hilario Frosticos. Kathleen and her cousins love Uncle Hedge but their neighbor Ms. Peckworthy, “a member of a very troublesome do-gooder society,” is trying to get the kids reassigned to their Aunt Ricketts who would probably be a more suitable guardian.

When a pale stranger and a mermaid show up looking for an old key that may be in Uncle Hedge’s museum, the three cousins and their dog are drawn into a dangerous adventure. Along the way they must contend with an island made of ice, Ms. Peckworthy, a giant skeleton, the kinds of creatures that only a cryptozoologist could love, Social Services and, of course, Dr. Hilario Frosticos.

Zeuglodon is a fun adventure story — it’s fast-paced, entertaining, and delightfully absurd. Kathleen’s charming voice (it’s written in the first person) is the star of the show. It’s impossible not to like her, to admire both her wild imagination and her desire to be a good scientist, and to appreciate her understanding that she’s writing for a skeptical audience:

“You can believe in Pellucidar or not, and I won’t blame you if you don’t. But like I said before, no one believed in Japan, either, until they got there, and then there they were.”

Perry and Brendan, who are sometimes looking over Kathleen’s shoulder as she writes, giving her help or suggestions about her style and structure, each have their own distinctive and likable personalities. The children value both their traditional and non-traditional educations and are eager to apply their knowledge and experience to their new adventure.

I was surprised at the end of Zeuglodon. I expected some things to get resolved that didn’t. I liked this mysterious but optimistic ending and I sincerely hope that James P. Blaylock will be producing further adventures for Kathleen and her cousins. Zeuglodon was a fun read. I’ve given my copy to my 13-year-old son.

LP says

Kathleen Perkins, a young cryptozoologist, and her two cousins, Percy and Brendan, become enmeshed in a mysterious adventure of Vernean proportions involving the Guild of St George, a mermaid, and two very bad villains. It’s a beautifully, sometimes poignantly, written story with plenty of humor and action. I hope there will be more.

Fantasy Literature says

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Kathleen's mother disappeared in a submersible while trying to find the entrance to Pellucidar, so Kathleen now lives with her orphaned cousins Perry and Brendan at her eccentric uncle's house. Uncle Hedge, who runs a little seaside museum of strange objects, is a member of the Guild of St. George, a secret society of men and women who fight the plots of an evil genius named Dr. Hilario Frosticos. Kathleen and her cousins love Uncle Hedge but their neighbor Ms. Peckworthy, “a member of a very troublesome do-go... Read More: <http://www.fantasyliterature.com/reviews/zeuglodon-by-james-p-blaylock/>

Gary says

This is James P. showing his mastery of his craft. This is 'the famous five' crossed with 'a series of unfortunate events' - a book I assume aimed at younger readers but still very enjoyable by old curmudgeons such as myself. Blaylock hallmarks of sinister villains and sidekicks plus plucky heroes and heroines and a dog for good measure!

Just a pleasure to read, really. I love his books.

Unwisely says

This is definitely a 3-2+. I wanted to like this book more than I did. It started out okay, with a very different voice (that felt like a reasonably authentic pre-teen girl), but even as a former pre-teen girl, that got old. Maybe that's not even how old the protagonists were; at one point in the narrative when something that I thought was pretty weird for tweens I went back and looked, but I didn't see it. They sounded like pre-teens, anyway.

The settings were probably the highlight: there's a foggy whaling ship that was pretty neat; an iceberg; a town on the California coast named after somewhere else which kept confusing me; and a lost world place. Among others. The plot, however, wasn't quite there. Things didn't go where I expected, in a not-good way. I didn't feel like things were explained well or generally made much sense overall. Which is too bad; there were a lot of things that seemed like they should have gone somewhere and concepts that seemed neat that just didn't quite work out. Alas.

Aaron says

Zeuglodon is told in classic Blaylock style. You won't be disappointed. The characters are fully fleshed out from their very first words spoken, and told in the first person narrative gives the story a fun, whimsical song.

Brilliant from cover to cover with no commercial breaks.

I highly recommend anything this author has written.

Tom says

I became a fan of James Blaylock in middle school, after reading his Tolkiensque novels The Elfin Ship and The Disappearing Dwarf. In 1984, Blaylock's then-newest book was published - The Digging Leviathan. I was expecting, and hoping, for something set in the same world as the Elfin Ship but this was something different. Set in Los Angeles some time after the Kennedy Assassination, The Digging Leviathan was the story of Jim Hastings, his "lunatic" father William, and Jim's friend Giles Peach, who was a merman. The whole lot of them were intent on reaching Pellucidar, the land at the center of the earth. This was way different than the Elfin Ship stories, but it became one of my favorite books.

So, 28 years later, Blaylock publishes Zeuglodon, a sequel to The Digging Leviathan. After 28 years, could Blaylock recapture the spirit of the Digging Leviathan, and would I enjoy it? The answer is yes, to both questions.

Zeuglodon is set in present times, and most of the characters are new, though Giles Peach is a key figure in the plot. My main disappointment with Zeuglodon is that it's written probably for young or tween readers, where Leviathan was not. Zeuglodon is told from the point of view of a 12 year old orphan girl living with her uncle and cousins in Northern California. Once again, everyone is trying to get to Pellucidar, this time to save a grown-up Giles Peach.

It was a pleasure to revisit the world of The Digging Leviathan, and I enjoyed Zeuglodon for what it was - a children's book. I just wish it had been more than that.

Jim says

i give it only 3 stars as it was a YA book-for Young Adults. Not substantial enough. And it was terribly thin. I wanted more of this story of adventurous kids finding their way to the center of the earth. I was awaiting this story , as it's a sequel to the author's The Digging Leviathan written back in the 80s...

Nigel says

A lively, endearing novel, set in Blaylock's version of California from The Digging Leviathan and revolving around the many peculiar abilities and affinities of the quasi-mermaid Peach clan. Eleven year old Kathleen Perkins, or just Perkins, trainee cryptozoologist, lives with her uncle and her cousins on the remote Californian coast. Mysterious strangers with ill intent threaten their happy state: a woman intent on taking them back to their Aunt and a man intent on stealing papers and maps from their uncle's museum. Soon they are off on a hairy and scary and wild adventure that will take them to an ice island on the foggy Grand Banks and the mysterious mansion of the Peach family on the shores of Lake Windermere.

Written as for a mid-range or Young Adult audience, Blaylock's world proves ideal for excitable and imaginative young minds. Perkins is a perceptive, intelligent, honest-to-a-fault narrator, and her odd and infuriating cousins are a great pair of companions.

Michael Hirsch says

an excellent Nobel for kids, written in the wrong decade. It felt like E. Nesbit meets the Mad Scientists Club. It's about three precocious kids (but not too precocious like something Card would write) who get caught up in an adventure right out of Jules Verne.

The story had it all: a strong 11 year old protagonist, a noisy busybody, an eccentric uncle, mermaids, locked boxes, submarines.

If I were 13 I'd give it 5 stars. It's definitely juvenile fiction, but still quite enjoyable ad an adult.

Stephen says

Overall Assessment: Good Read

Commentary:

Zeuglodon reminds me of the children/young adult fiction I grew up reading in the late 60s and early seventies. Stuff like Sid Fleischman's Mr. Mysterious and Company and By the Great Horn Spoon. Books which are full of whimsical adventures told from the perspective of a child protagonist/protagonists; books featuring daring deeds, odd and mysterious events, and siblings working (and fighting) together against nefarious strangers.

And maybe it's just that I've grown older, but Zeuglodon despite being a rich stew indeed, didn't do much for me. Eminently readable, fun and whimsical but I ultimately found myself disengaged. I think the problem for me was that I never became invested in the main characters - Kate, Brendan and Perry. Ironically a primary conceit of the book is a hollow earth, which is how I found Zeuglodon - a bit hollow.

Becky Loader says

I would rate this 6 stars if I could. ;-)

Blaylock has written a story about 3 intrepid cousins and their uncle, who is an important person in a very secret mysterious society. Oh. My. Gosh. The adventures they have with a mermaid, an arch villain, a creepy Creeper, and a woman from Children's Services, who has to be played by Margaret Hamilton. I can just picture my Uncle Hugh as Uncle Hedge, and of course my sister and I would be the adventurers. Our Mother never quite went exploring in the Sargasso Sea in a bathyscaphe, but I know she would have had fun doing it! Loads of adventure and fun reading. Huzzah!

Joe Slavinsky says

As I mentioned, in my review of "The Aylesford Skull", I love that Blaylock writes in different styles. That book, is "steampunk", or alternate history, set in England around the turn of the 19th, to the 20th century. This book, is set in "modern" day, about three adolescent cousins, who live with their uncle, in Northern California. The uncle is a member of the St. George Society, a group with both mythological, and

metaphysical ties, and the kids get taken on an adventure, literally around the world, which ends in England. There's a villain, the evil Dr. Frosticos, with a submarine, a mermaid, and a trip toward the center of the Earth, to the legendary Pellucidar. Blaylock keeps the pace relatively brisk, with lots of twists, and turns, not to mention suspense. Overall, this is one fun read, that you won't want to put down.
