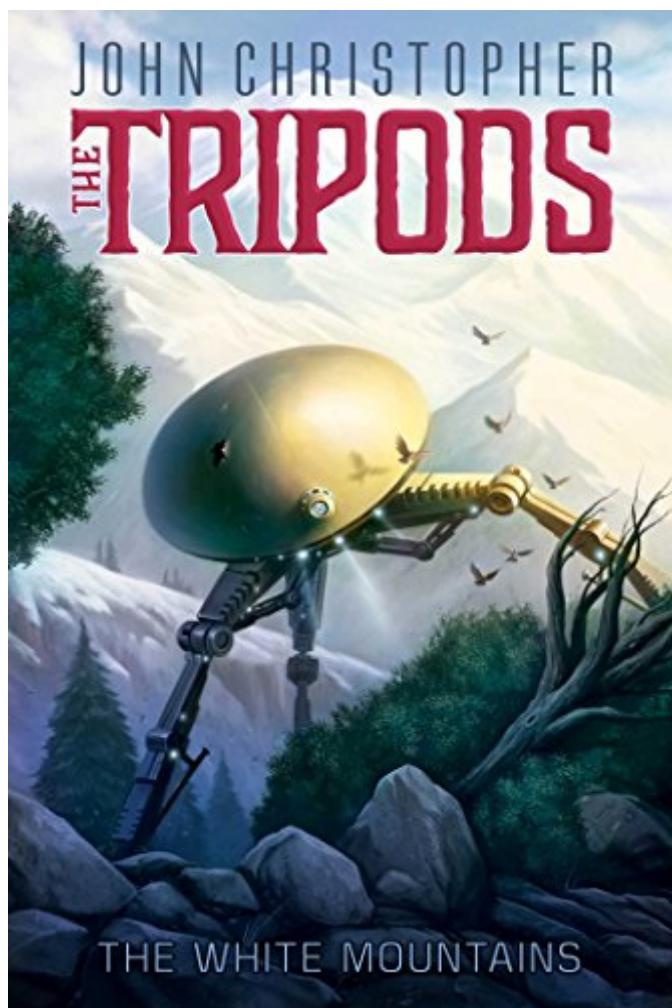


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The White Mountains (The Tripods Book 1)



Synopsis

Monstrous machines rule the Earth, but a few humans are fighting for freedom in this repackaged start to a classic alien trilogy ideal for fans of Rick Yancey's. Will Parker never dreamed he would be the one to rebel against the Tripods. With the approach of his thirteenth birthday, he expected to attend his Capping ceremony as planned and to become connected to the Tripods—huge three-legged machines that now control all of Earth. But after an encounter with a strange homeless man called Beanpole, Will sets out for the White Mountains, where people are said to be free from the control of the Tripods. But even with the help of Beanpole and his friends, the journey is long and hard. And with the Tripods hunting for anyone who tries to break free, Will must reach the White Mountains fast. But the longer he's away from his home, the more the Tripods look for him—and no one can hide from the monstrous machines forever.

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Customer Reviews

I discovered the Tripods trilogy as a boy back in 1981 when Boys' Life magazine began a comic-strip adaptation that continued for the better part of the ensuing ten years. By the time the comic strip ended I had long since read the books, of course, and in the 30+ years since then I've never forgotten them. I still have the copies of "The City of Gold and Lead" and "The Pool of Fire" that I purchased back in the early 1980s, but for some reason I'd never bought a copy of "The White Mountains." So when I found myself thinking about the trilogy earlier this year I purchased the Kindle edition of "The White Mountains" so that I could re-read it. It's still an excellent book. I found it interesting to read it again as an adult in my 40s compared to as a 10-year-old kid because so many of the references to today's world (things the reader is presumed to understand but that mystify the characters) are a lot clearer to me now than when I was a kid. Nowadays I readily understand all the landmarks, especially Notre-Dame, that I didn't necessarily get as a kid who had never been to Europe. As a kid I understood what the Shmand-Fair was, but I didn't understand why Will thought Beanpole called it that (turns out Beanpole probably said "chemin de fer," "iron road," but at age 10 the extent of my French knowledge was to be able to count to ten). Prior to reading the book this time around I wondered if I'd find its very short length unsatisfying, even recognizing it's aimed at younger readers. Lately I've been reading 1000+ page books such as George R.R. Martin's "Song of Ice and Fire," and I knew this book is under 200 pages, so I thought maybe it'd seem superficial or too rushed. Upon re-reading it, however, I didn't feel that way. I'm not really sure the story would have worked well in a longer book because the point of the characters not understanding many things about the Tripods or about how the world used to be are so important to the story but are not things that really lend themselves to greater exploration (potential spoiler: that comes in the sequels). So I highly recommend this book and its sequels, especially for boys in the age 10 to 13 range. (I cannot comment on the prequel, "When the Tripods Came," because I only learned about it in the 1990s and I've never read it. I wish the publisher would release it for the Kindle. I must caution potential readers, however, not to read the prequel until after you've read the original three books. Even though I haven't read it, I know it has to contain too many spoilers for information that isn't revealed until "The City of Gold and Lead." If you read the prequel first, it will be harder to appreciate the characters' wonder at the "ancient" world when you read "The White Mountains.")

This book is about Will, his cousin Henry and a very smart boy nicknamed Beanpole. Three boys on the cusp of being fitted with Caps by the Tripods that come together for different reasons but become united in their belief that the Tripods, whatever they actually turn out to be, are evil. Will is dubious about the procedure because he has just seen his cousin (and best friend) Jack Capped.

There is a feast day and celebration for Jack who is now considered an adult. Beforehand Jack admitted his reservations about the Capping to Will. Afterwards Jack is totally changed. He goes to work with the other men and tells Will that everything is fine. That he will understand. Just as soon as he's capped. Then Will meets a "Vagrant" (a person who's Capping was unsuccessful) named Ozymandias who is more than he seems. It turns out that Will may have a chance to avoid being Capped, but it will be a long and dangerous trek to find sanctuary. I remember the library shelf in Banting Elementary School in Waukesha, Wisconsin, where I picked out this book to read. I think I remember it so vividly because it fascinated me from the beginning, starting with the cover. It's been decades and yes, I realize this is a children's book, but I wanted to read it again. I also wondered if it would stand the test of time (as it was first published in 1967) and memory. The short answer? It certainly does.

Sometimes when you are struggling to find the next book to read, it is good to just reread an old favorite. For me, *The White Mountains* by John Christopher was one of the first young adult stories I read as an adult, and it was the first story I enjoyed with a student. It had been well over a decade since I read it, so I thought I would pick it up again. And I am glad I did! Will has always known his Capping Day was coming, but until now, it didn't seem like something to worry about. But as his day grows nearer, he gets more and more worried about the idea of allowing one of the tripods to put a metal cap in his head that would control his thoughts. Everyone in his village had it done and seems content, but there is something about the process that doesn't sit well with Will. When a Vagrant (a person whose Capping didn't go well) approaches him about the Capping, he is interested in hearing the man's perspective. But it turns out the man wasn't Capped at all. He was masquerading as a Capped Vagrant, but in reality, he was a rebel recruiting unCapped young adults to bring to the White Mountains- a place where the rebels are safe from the Tripods and can plot to take the world back. Will decides to head to the White Mountains, and along the way he acquires two new friends, Henry and Beanpole. But the three boys have a long way to go to the White Mountains and between them and sanctuary are many many tripods. This story was written almost 50 years ago and still it is one our kids today could enjoy. I have seen a few comparisons to *War of the Worlds*, but this story takes place well after the tripods have taken over the world. No one really fights back and everyone accepts the Capping with a complacency that makes them even easier to manipulate and control. The idea of choosing the easier road because you don't want to make life harder with the fight for freedom is a universal theme especially relevant for today's children. Kids who are so far removed from wide-spread social protest don't really understand fighting for freedoms and rights,

so this story could easily be related to the current events of our students' lives. While this is more of a middle reader, it is a great series for young adults who also like to read science fiction. The stories are easy to read, so they might be best for an older student who has a lower reading skill level. Christopher's stories are classic, and they will survive long after the tripods come to Cap us! So if you have a sci-fi junky who has burned through everything, pass this gem on. You won't be sorry!

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