**Childhood’s End**

*Childhood’s End* is a 1953 science fiction novel by the British author Arthur C. Clarke. The story follows the peaceful alien invasion[1] of Earth by the mysterious Overlords, whose arrival occurs after the apparent utopia under indirect alien rule, at the cost of human identity and culture.

Clarke’s idea for the book began with his short story “Guardian Angel” (1946), which he expanded into a novel in 1952, incorporating it as the first part of the book, “Earth and the Overlords”. Completed and published in 1953, *Childhood’s End*, Clarke’s first successful novel. The book is well regarded by both readers and critics as Clarke’s best novel, and is described as “a classic of alien literature”. Along with *The Songs of Distant Earth* (1986), Clarke considered *Childhood’s End* to be one of his favorites of his own novels. in 2004. Several attempts to adapt the novel into a film or miniseries have been made with varying levels of success. Director Stanley Kubrick, published in the 1960s, but collaborated with Clarke on *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) instead. The novel’s theme of transcendent evolution also appears in Clarke's Space Odyssey series. In 1997, the BBC produced a two-hour radio drama of *Childhood’s End* that was adapted by Tony Mulholland. The Syfy Channel produced a three-part, four-hour television mini series of *Childhood’s End*, which was broadcast on December 14-16, 2015.

**Plot summary**

The novel is divided into three parts, following a third-person omniscient narrative with no main character[5]

**Earth and the Overlords**

In the late 20th century, the United States and the Soviet Union are competing to launch the first spacecraft into orbit, for military purposes. When vast alien spaceships suddenly position themselves above Earth's main cities, the space race ceases. After one week, the aliens announce they are assuming supervision of international affairs, to prevent humanity's extinction. They become known as the Overlords. In general, they let people go about their affairs in their own way. They are overtly interfering only in South Africa, where sometime before their arrival Apartheid had collapsed and was replaced by persecution of the white minority; and in Spain, where they put an end to bull fighting. Some people are suspicious of the Overlords’ benign intent, as they never visibly appear. The Overlord Karellen, the “Supervisor for Earth,” who speaks directly to Rikki Stormgren, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, tells us that they will be exposed to themselves in 50 years, when they will become used to their presence. Stormgren smuggles on Karellen's ship in an attempt to see Karellen's true form. He is a part of the world, and chooses to keep silent.

**The Golden Age**

Men Buttons
They Had Come to the Universe –
They Had Brought Peace
and Prosperity to Earth
But then the change began.
It appeared first in the children
-frightening, incomprehensible.

Now the Overlords made their announcement: What was the first step
in the elimination of the human race
and the beginning of What?

-Original back cover quote, paperback edition

Humankind enters a golden age of prosperity at the expense of creativity. Five decades after their arrival, the Overlords reveal their appearance, resembling the traditional Christian folk images of demons: wide bipeds with cloven hooves, leathery wings, horns, and tails. The Overlords are interested in psychic research, which humans assume is part of their anthropological study. Rupert Boyce, a prolific book collector on the subject, allows one overlord, Rashaverak, to study these books at his home. To impress his friends with Rashaverak’s presence, Boyce holds a party, during which he makes use of a Ouija board. Jan Rodricks, an astrophysicist and Rupert's brother-in-law, asks the identity of the Overlords' home star. George Greggsong’s future wife Jean faints, the Ouija board reveals a star – catalog number consisting of the direction in which Overlord supply ships appear and disappear. With the help of an oceanographer friend, Jan Rodricks stows away one year Overlord supply ship and travels 40 light-years to Their home planet. Due to the time dilation of special relativity at near-light speeds, the time is limited to a few weeks, and it settles to endure in drug-induced hibernation.

**The Last Generation**

*Childhood’s End* [1]
[2]
[3]
[4]
[5]
Although humanity and the overlords have peaceful relations, some believe that innovation is becoming extinct and that culture is becoming stagnant. One of these groups establishes New Athens, an island colony in the middle of the Pacific Ocean devoted to the creative arts, which George and Jean Greggson join. The overlords conceal a special interest in the Greggsons’ children, Jeffrey and Jennifer Anne, and intervene to save Jeffrey’s life when tsunami strikes the island. The Overlords Have Been Watching Them With The Ouija Board, Which Revealed The Seed Of Transformation Hidden Within Jean.

Well over a century after the overlords’ ‘arrival, human children, beginning with the Greggons’, begin to display clairvoyance and telekinetic powers. Karellen reveals the overlords’ purpose; they serve the Overmind, a vast cosmic intelligence, born of amalgamated ancient civilizations, and freed from the limitations of material existence. The overlords are unable to join the Overmind.

As Karellen explains, the time of humanity is a race of individuals with a concrete identity is coming to an end. The children’s minds reach into each other and merge into a single large group consciousness. If the Pacific were to be dried up, the islands would dotting it would lose their identity as a part of a new continent; in the same way, the children of their parents knew and become something else, completely alien to the “old type of human”. For the children’s safety – and because they are painful for their parents to see what they have become – they are segregated on a continent of their own. No more human children are born, and many parents die or commit suicide. The members of New Athens destroy themselves with a nuclear bomb.

Jan Rodricks emerges from hibernation on the planet and arrives on their planet. The overlords allowed a glimpse of how the Overmind communicates with them. When Jan returns to Earth, he finds an unexpectedly altered planet. Humanity has become extinct, and is now the last man alive. Hundreds of millions of children – no longer fitting what Rodrigues defines as “human” – remain on the quarantined continent, having become a single mind readying themselves to join the Overmind.

Some overlords remain on earth to study the children from a safe distance. When the world moves mentally alter the Moon’s rotation and make other planetary manipulations, it becomes too dangerous to remain. The departing overlords offer to take a look at the world of earthquakes.

Before they leave, Rodrigues asks Rashaverak what encounter the overlords had in the past, according to an assumption that the fear of humans had “demonic” form was due to a traumatic encounter with them in the distant past; Purpose Rashaverak explains that the primal fear of humans was a racial memory, but a racial premonition of the overlords’ role in their metamorphosis.

The overlords are eager to escape from their own evolutionary dead end by studying the Overmind, so Rodrigues’ information is potentially of great value to them. By radio, Rodrigues describes a vast burning column ascending from the planet. As the column disappears, Rodrigues experiences a profound sense of emptiness when the children have gone. Then material objects and the Earth itself begin to dissolve into transparency. Jan reports no fear, but a powerful sense of fulfillment. The Earth evaporates in a flash of light. Karellen looks back at the receding Solar System and gives a final salute to the human species.

**Publication history**

**Original short story**

Balloon Dam over London during World War II. Clarke observed balloons like these floating over the city in 1941. He recalls that his earliest idea for the story may have originated with this scene, with the giant balloons becoming alien ships in the novel, [6]

The novel first took shape in July 1946, when Clarke wrote “Guardian Angel,” a short story that would eventually become Part I of Childhood’s End. Clarke’s portrayal of the overlords as devils was influenced by John W. Campbell’s depiction of the devilish Teff-Hellani species in The Mightiest Machine, [2] first serialized in Astounding Stories in 1934. After finishing “Guardian Angel”, Clarke enrolled at King’s College London and served as chairman of the British Interplanetary Society from 1946 to 1947, and later from 1951 to 1953. He earned a first-class degree in mathematics and physics from King’s in 1948, after which he worked as an assistant editor for Science Abstracts. “Guardian Angel” was submitted for publication but was rejected by several editors, including Campbell. At the request of Clarke’s agent and unbeknownst to Clarke, the story was edited by James Blish, who rewrote the ending. Blish’s version of the story was accepted for publication in April 1950 by Famous Fantastic Mysteries magazine. [7] Clarke’s original version of “Guardian Angel” was later published in the 1950 Winter issue of New Worlds magazine. New Worlds closely reads Part I of the novel, “Earth and the Overlords”.

Most of the short story is word by word, but there are also a number of differences. Some are trivial revisions with no narrative Obvious motivation (for instance, in the short story, one radio Karellen first spoke to the world on the eighth day after the arrival of the alien ships, in the novel, on the sixth day). Other differences are more significant, and some changes were needed by the full-length novel Clarke would write later, the author of the story in a different direction of the outcome.

The plot of the short story is about the overlords look like. As in the later novel, they promise to show themselves after fifty years, but the story ends when they are still twenty years to go. Rikki Stormgren, trained a general secretary and the one who had been close to Karellen he saw a black “barbed tail” disappear behind a closing door. It is so strongly that the overlords look like the pop-cultural version of devils. The corresponding section in the novel only has Stormgren reflecting on what he saw and agreeing that the world is not ready to meet the overlords face to face. The reader does not learn what it was Stormgren glimpsed.

In the short story, Karellen has indicated to Stormgren that he has come from a world called Skyrodel, where he was “professor of astropolitics” and supposedly accepted the assignment to oversee earthquake (though Stormgren suspects that Karellen has come to greatly enjoy his position). In the novel, Karellen never names his homeworld. In the book version, Stormgren believes the Supervisor’s original field of work has something to do with mathematics, and that he only rules earth with a small portion of his vast mind. However, nothing is any longer said about Karellen having actively resisted the assignment, nor that he was a “professor” on his own planet.
In the short story, Karellen is dictating the establishment of a European federation, but it is likely that it will eventually join it. In the novel, he is a very early federation, and it is said that the European Federation was already in existence when the Overlords arrived (ca 1980, for the chronology of the 1953 novel). Karellen, however, speaks of the “foundation of the World State” as a “first step”, making the short story potentially self-contradictory on this point.

In the short story, the mission of the Overlords is for the civilize earth and prepares humans to play a role in the continuing exploration of the universe. Karellen’s characterization of all worlds “that can understand it”, seemingly for idealistic reasons. Karellen at one point broadly outlines the future he is guiding humankind towards. He may not be able to understand the truth, “I must reach the nadir of my popularity, which must be made to destroy me.” These lines are not intended to be discussed in this article, but are not intended to be discussed in this article. Clarke would produce later.

The short-story version of Karellen in any case is likely to be more and more prevalent, and it will be another impatience. Men will be invited to go to the stars, and to see the other worlds of the Universe and to join us in our work. One day, Rikki, your descendants in their own world will be brought to the world.

The novel's version of Karellen utters no such feelings. Quite on the contrary, later in the story he declares that “the stars are not for Man” and that humans will never achieve interstellar flight. Instead of Karellen anticipating humans in the world and helping them with their work, Rikki Stormberg in the novel asks if should happen, and Karellen very remarkably remarks that one might put it that way. At the end of the novel, it becomes clear that Karellen is going to be a human being with the cosmic Overmind, on which point humanity will become part of the power directing the Overlords. The short story is more mundanely understandable fate for the human race; After all, they will join in the effort to civilize all races in the Galaxy.

The overall implication of the short story, confirmed by Stormgren's musings in the final lines, is that the Overlords had been going to earth before and trying their civilizing experience already in human pre-history. However, this had somehow ended in spectacular failure, so much so that the physical form of the overthrown entwined human legends as evil demonic icons. This is set up with Karellen admitting to Stormgren that “we have had our failures” and making obscure remarks about the long memory of humankind, yet also saying that the Overlords “wait – and try again” whenever a failure has occurred. Remarkably, all of these narratives are maintained in the full-length novel, though the novel ends up denying the conclusion they were pointing to. The human repulsion for the “demonic”

**Development into full-length novel**

After Clarke's nonfiction science book *The Exploration of Space* (1951) was successful, he began to focus on his career. In February 1952, Clarke started working on the novelization of "Guardian Angel"; he completed a first draft of the childhood novel *End of* December, and a final review in January 1953. [8] Clarke traveled to New York in April 1953 with the novel and several of his other works. Literary agent Bernard Shir-Cliff convinced Ballantine Books to buy everything Clarke had, including *Childhood's End*, "Encounter in the Dawn" (1953), (which Ballantine retitled *Expedition to Earth*), and *Prelude to Space* (1951). However, Clarke had composed two different endings for the novel, and the last chapter of *Childhood's End* was still not finished. [9] Clarke proceeded to Tampa Bay, Florida, to go scuba diving with George Grisinger, and on his way visited Frederick D. Durant – President of the International Astronautical Federation from 1953 to 1956 – and his family in the Washington Metropolitan Area, while still working on the last chapter. He then traveled to Atlanta, Georgia, where he visited Ian Macauley, a friend who was active in the anti-segregation movement. Clarke finished the final chapter in Atlanta while Clarke and Macauley discussed racial issues; These conversations may have influenced the development of the last chapter, particularly Clarke's choice to make the character of Jan Rodricks – the last surviving member of the human species – a black man. [10]

Clarke arrived in Florida at the end of April. The short story, "The Man Who Plowed the Sea", included in the *Tales from the White Hart* (1957) collection, was influenced by his time in Florida. While in Key Largo in late May, Clarke puts Marilyn Mayfield, and after a romance lasting less than three weeks, they traveled to Manhattan and married at New York City Hall. The couple pays their honeymoon in the Pocono Mountains in Pennsylvania, where Clarke Proofread *Childhood's End*. In July, Clarke returned to England with Mayfield, but it became clear that the marriage would not have been easier. Further, Clarke, Marilyn, who had a previous marriage, informed Clarke after their marriage. When *Childhood's End* was published The Following month, it Appeared with a dedication: “To Marilyn, For letting me read the proofs is our honeymoon.” The couple separated, but remained married for the next decade. [11]

**Publication**

Ballantine wanted to publish *Childhood's End* before *Expedition to Earth* and *Prelude to Space*, purpose Clarke wanted to wait. He felt that it was a difficult book to release. He had written two different ends for the novel and was unsure of which to use. According to biographer Neil McAleer, Clarke's uncertainty is due to its thematic focus on the paranormal and transcendence with the Overmind alien. While McAleer wrote that “it was not science fiction based on science, which he came to advocate and represent”. When he wrote about *Childhood's End*, Clarke was interested in the paranormal, and did not become a skeptic until much later in his life. [12]Ballantine convinced Clarke to let them publish *Childhood's End* first, and it was published on August 24, 1953, with a cover designed by American science fiction illustrator Richard M. Powers. [13] *Childhood's* first published in hardcover and hardcover editions, with the paperback and the original edition, an unusual approach for the 1950s. For the first time in his career, Clarke has been known as a novelist. [12]

Decades later, Clarke was preparing for a new edition of *Childhood's End* after the story had become dated. The initial chapter of the 1953 novelities of the United States and the United States of America, but it is actually happening (post-1975, the exact year is not given in the text, but 1945 is said to be more than thirty years ago). After the book was first published, the Apollo missions landed humans on the Moon in 1969, and in 1989 US President George HW Bush announced the Space Exploration Initiative(SEI), calling for astronauts to eventually explore Mars. In 1990, Clarke added a new foreword and revised the first chapter, now suggesting an early 21st century and changing the world for the space race from the Moon to Mars. [8] Editions since have appeared with both versions. "Guardian Angel" has also appeared in two short story collections *The Sentinel* (1983), and *The Collected Stories of Arthur C. Clarke* (2001).
On October 28, 2008, Audible.com released a 7-hour 47 minute unabridged audiobook version of *Childhood's End*, narrated by Eric Michael Summerer, under its Audible Frontiers imprint. An *AudioFile* review commended Summerer's narration as "smoothly presented and fully credible". An audio introduction and commentary is provided by Canadian science fiction author Robert J. Sawyer.

## Reception

The novel is well received by most readers and critics. Two months after publication, all 210,000 copies of the first printing had been sold. The *New York Times* published two comparative reviews of the book: Basil Davenport compared Clarke to Olaf Stapledon, CS Lewis, and HG Wells, a "very small group of writers who have used science fiction as the vehicle of philosophical ideas." William DuBois called the book "a first rate tour de force that is well worth the attention of every thoughtful citizen in this age of anxiety." Don Guzman of the *Los Angeles Times* admired the novel for its suspense, wisdom, and beauty. He compared Clarke's role as a writer to that of an artist, "a master of sonorous language, a painter of pictures in futuristic colors, a Chesley Bonestell with words". *Galaxy* reviewer Groff Conklin called the novel "a terribly impressive job ... a continuous kaleidoscope of the unexpected." Anthony Boucher and J. Francis McComas were more skeptical, and faulted the novel's "curious imbalance between its large-scale history and a number of episodic small-scale stories." While praising Clarke's work as "Stapledonian [for] its historic concepts and also for the quality of its prose and thinking," they concluded that " *Childhood's End* was an awkward and imperfect book." P. Schuyler Miller said the novel was "all imagination and poetry," but concluded it was "not up to some of Clarke's other writing" due to weakness in its "episodic structure." Brian W. Aldiss and David Wingrove wrote that *Childhood's End* is "a rather banal philosophical idea," but that Clarke "expressed [it] in a single goal aspiring language that vaguely recalls the Psalms [and] combined [it] with a dramatized sense of loss [for] undeniable effect." In 2004 *Childhood's End* was nominated for a retroactive Hugo Award for Best Novel for 1954.

## Adaptations

In the 1960s, director Stanley Kubrick was interested in a film adaptation of the novel, but blacklisted director Abraham Polonsky had already optioned it. Instead, Kubrick collaborated with Clarke on adapting the short story "The Sentinel" into what became of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). Months before his performance at Woodstock in 1969, folk singer and guitarist Richie Havens told *Ebony* magazine about his appreciation of Clarke's story and expressed his interest in working on a future film adaptation of *Childhood's End*. Screenplays by Polonsky and Howard Koch were never made into movies.

David Elgood first proposed a radio adaptation of the novel in 1974, but nothing came of it in that decade. Philip DeGuere, whose credits include the TV series *Alias Smith and Jones*, who wrote a film in the late 1970s for Universal, who planned to Premiere a six-hour mini-series for CBS Television, and later on a two-or-three-hour telemovie for ABC. However, Universal discovered that its contracts with Arthur C. Clarke — some of which were back to 1957 — were out of date. These contract difficulties were resolved in 1979 and DeGuere worked with the legendary comic book artist Neal Adams on preproduction drawings and other material. The project had Clarke's approval. However, $40 million would have been nearly $10 million, so the movie was not made.

Director Brian Lighthill revisited the radio adaptation proposal and obtained the rights in 1995. After Lighthill received a go-ahead from BBC Radio in 1996, he commissioned a script from Tony Mulholland, resulting in a new, two-part adaptation. The BBC produced the two-hour radio dramatization of the novel, and broadcasted it on BBC Radio 4 in November 1997. The recording was released on tape by BBC Audiobooks in 1998 and on CD in 2007.

As of 2002, film rights to the novel were held by Universal Pictures, with director Kimberly Peirce attached to a project. On April 10, 2013, the Syfy Channel announced plans to Develop a *Childhood's End* TV miniseries. The three-episode, four-hour production premiered December 14, 2015. Charles Dance portrays the Karellen Supervisor.

In 2016 the Los Alamos High School is a show of choir show. The adaptation won two national titles.

## See also

- Novels portal
- *Childhood's End* (miniseries)
- First contact (science fiction)
- Golden Age of Science Fiction
- *The Cosmic Rape*

## Notes

1. Jump up ^ Booker & Thomas 2009, pp. 31-32.
2. Jump up ^ a b McAleer 1992, p. 88.
3. Jump up ^ a b Dick 2001, pp. 127-129.
4. Jump up ^ Cordeiro 2008, pp. 47-50.
5. Jump up ^ a b Samuelson in 1973.
6. Jump up ^ *Childhood's End*, pp. vii-viii.
7. Jump up ^ Clarke 2000, o. 203. See also: ACC Photooaric reproduction of the first pages of the original tale Guardian Anoel. from "FANTASTIC aerial..."
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Children's End is great looking, with impressive special effects. It's also extremely slow, at least in the two hours previewed, and none of the characters is especially engaging.

Dec 14, 2015 | Rating: 3/4 | Full Review... Gail Pennington. St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Top Critic. Syfy's adaptation plays with Clarke's plot and themes but does so in such a leaden, DOA way that it's almost like a grade-school paper from someone who didn't read the assignment.

Children's End. Arthur C. Clarke. Science Fiction Masterworks Volume 77. "In Childhood's End Arthur C. Clarke joins Olaf Stapledon, C. S. Lewis, and probably one should add H. G. Wells, in the very small group of writers who have used science fiction as the vehicle of philosophical ideas. Having said that, one must add that it is as readable a book from the point of view of pure narrative as you will likely find among today's straight science fiction. Childhood's End is a 1953
that it is as readable a book, from the point of view of pure narrative, as you are likely to find among today's straight novels”. Childhood's End is a 1953 science fiction novel by the British author Arthur C. Clarke. The story follows the peaceful alien invasion of Earth by the mysterious Overlords, whose arrival begins decades of apparent utopia under indirect alien rule, at the cost of human identity and culture. Clarke's idea for the book began with his short story "Guardian Angel" (published in New Worlds #8, winter 1950), which he expanded into a novel in 1952, incorporating it as the first part of the book, "Earth and the Childhood's End is the third episode of the first season of The Society. It is the third episode of the series overall. After the boys ransack the stores, Cassandra rallies the girls to exert their power. The students plan a prom, and Kelly uncovers a family secret. SPOILERS AHEAD. The next day, the in the town gather together and realize that they're more at risk than the boys. They're nervous about being attacked, hurt, and raped if things get out of hand and Cassandra suggests that they start Childhood's End. Quite the same Wikipedia. Just better. Childhood's End. From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. This article is about a novel. For other uses, see Childhood's End (disambiguation). Childhood's End. Cover of first edition hardcover. Author.