

English I
Book Report
Fiction
Kenneth Robeson
The Man Of Bronze
Bantam Books, New York

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170 Pages

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Introduction

The book I have chosen for my book report is *The Man Of Bronze*, the first book in a series of 190 novels about the adventure hero known as Doc Savage. Before I get into the report on the book itself I want to tell a little about the series and how it has inspired other characters.

The original 181 books in the series were originally published between 1933 and 1949 in *Doc Savage Magazine* and were later reprinted one at a time in paperback format by Bantam Books between 1964 and 1990. One other book was written for the magazine in 1948 but ended up not being published until 1979 as part of the Bantam paperback series. The rest of the books were written especially for Bantam in the 1990s.

The author listed for all of the original novels and all but one of the new books is Kenneth Robeson, but this is a pen name. Most of the novels were written by Lester Dent, who created the character. Because the original magazines were published every month, other writers were needed to help meet the deadlines. To make readers think that all the books were written by one person, all the writers used the same pen name of Kenneth Robeson. All but one of the newer books that were published in the 1990s were written by Will Murray, who also used the Kenneth Robeson name. The other book in the new set was written by Philip Jose Farmer, who used his own name.

Doc Savage has been a very popular character ever since the first book was published, and has appeared in other places besides the novels. Over the years there have also been several different Doc Savage comic book series, three different Doc Savage radio series, and one Doc Savage movie that was made in 1975.

Doc Savage has also inspired many other characters. The creators of the comic book character

Superman borrowed some of their ideas from the Doc Savage stories. (Both characters' real first name is Clark, and both have a secret hideout called "Fortress of Solitude" near the North Pole.) Mr. Spock from *Star Trek* uses a neck pinch to knock out bad guys that was first used by Doc Savage in his adventures. And Indiana Jones has the same kind of adventures in the movies that Doc had in the books. These are just a few of the other characters that Doc Savage inspired.

And now for my report on *The Man Of Bronze*.

Type Of Conflict And Why

This story is mainly a "self-vs.-another" conflict because it tells about Doc's fight against a group of Mayan warriors led by the criminal who killed Doc's father, wants to steal treasure that rightfully belongs to Doc and releases germs that causes a sickness called "The Red Death" to kill his enemies and get what he wants.

Even though Doc does not have a face-to-face battle against the main villain until the very end of the story, this villain is the person who is behind everything that happens and is the reason that Doc and his friends become involved in this adventure in the first place. Even though certain parts of the story have the other three types of conflict, the main story is "self-vs.-another."

Plot Summary

The story begins as Doc returns to his home in a New York City skyscraper after being away at his secret hideaway near the North Pole and is met by his five friends, who tell him that his father has died while he was away. They tell him that he died from some strange disease, but they think that someone may have caused him to catch the disease on purpose. Part of the reason they are suspicious is because a friend of Doc's father who none of them have seen in many years has died from the same disease.

Doc learns that his father had sent him an important letter just before he died that one of his friends, Ham the lawyer, put away in Doc's safe until Doc could come home and read it. But before Doc could come home and read the letter, someone had broke into his apartment and used an explosive to blow

open the safe and the explosion destroyed part of the letter. The part that has not been destroyed tells about a special gift that Doc's father has left for his son, but the part telling what that gift is was burned up in the explosion.

As Doc and his friends are trying to figure out what to do next, someone starts shooting at them from another skyscraper nearby. Doc and his friends leave to find the shooter and learn that he is a warrior from a Mayan tribe that was thought to be extinct. They manage to capture the Mayan but he kills himself before they can find out why he tried to kill them. Doc then shows his friends a secret message that his father had left for him that is written in a special invisible ink on a window, which Doc can see by shining a black light on the window. The message says that important papers have been left for Doc in a special hiding place; those papers turn out to be the deed to land at a place called the Valley of the Vanished in the nation of Hidalgo which Doc's father has left to him. Another Mayan tries to attack them and manages to get away, and Doc and his friends make plans to go to Hidalgo, which is in Central America.

One of the planes Doc plans to use for his trip is blown up before it can take off at the airport. Fortunately it was a radio controlled plane with nobody on board that Doc was controlling from the ground as a decoy because he was sure that whoever had been responsible for sending the Mayan warriors to try to kill him would try again. They finally make their way down to Hidalgo and are attacked again by a sniper who manages to shoot them down near Belize. It takes four days to fix the plane and then they finish the trip to Hidalgo.

Ham and one of Doc's other friends, Monk, finally meet Don Rubio Gorro, the Secretary of State of Hidalgo, who acts as though he does not want them in his country. They become suspicious and are on their way back to their hotel room to tell Doc about the meeting when they are attacked by more Mayans. Doc comes along and manages to save them, and the next morning the group goes to the capitol to meet with Carlos Avispa, the president of Hidalgo and an old friend of Doc's father. They learn that enemies have tried to kill President Avispa and that the leader of the Mayans is a criminal who calls himself Kukulcan and pretends to be the son of a Mayan god.

Eventually Doc and his group make their way to the Valley of the Vanished, where a tribe of Mayans have been living hidden from the rest of the world for thousands of years. Doc meets the leader, King Chaac, who also knew Doc's father year before and learned to speak English with his help. They also meet the king's daughter, Princess Monja, who falls in love with Doc, and a warrior named Morning Breeze, who is secretly working for the villain who has been trying to kill Doc. Doc learns that the sickness that killed his father is called the Red Death, and also learns that arrangements were made between King Chaac and Doc's father to allow Doc to have his share of the secret treasure 30 days after he arrives in the Valley of the Vanished.

Over the next few days there are several battles between Doc's group and Morning Breeze and his followers, and at one point another pilot working for the villain who calls himself Kukulcan flies into the Valley in a plane of his own and there is a dogfight between his plane and Doc's. Doc wins and wins the trust of King Chaac's people, and Morning Breeze is locked up as a criminal. King Chaac decides that Doc and his friends have proven they can be trusted and agrees to let them have the treasure even though the full 30 days have not gone by yet. In order to do this they must go through a special ceremony which will make them honorary members of the tribe. Before the ceremony can take place one of the Mayans becomes sick with the Red Death. Others quickly start becoming sick and Doc learns that the villain has put the germ in the tribe's water supply. He uses his scientific knowledge to find a cure for the Red Death and saves the lives of the Mayans. The ceremony goes on as planned but while it is going on Morning Breeze manages to escape with Kukulcan's help and they lead Morning Breeze's warriors in a great battle against Doc, his friends and King Chaac's followers.

During this battle Doc and his friends take shelter in a large pyramid in the center of the village which is being used to store the great treasure that the Mayans had given to Doc's father and which now belongs to Doc. They use some of the golden vases inside the pyramid to make homemade bombs and manage to defeat Morning Breeze and his men. Kukulcan tries to get away but Doc chases him down and there is a final battle between the two. Doc tears off the mask that is part of Kukulcan's disguise and learns that Kukulcan is really Don Rubio Gorro, the secretary of state. Kukulcan tries to get away

and falls into a chasm and dies.

King Chaac gives Doc his share of the treasure, which Doc promises to use to help people in need and to right wrongs. Princess Monja is unhappy because Doc is leaving, but becomes happy again when Monk tells her that he thinks Doc secretly likes her too. Then he and his friends say goodbye and leave the Valley of the Vanished to see what new adventures they might find.

Theme

I believe the theme or controlling idea of this book is the importance of dedicating your life to helping your fellow man. I say this because Doc's father had dedicated his life to helping others and raised his son to live his life the same way. The treasure that Doc's father found was used to help people whenever and however he could, and Doc promises to keep using the treasure for this purpose after his father has died.

There is a paragraph near the beginning of the book that explains how Doc's father had promised to use his treasure after he had first discovered it so many years earlier. The paragraph is found in Chapter One near the center of Page 5:

“That purpose was to go here and there, from one end of the world to the other, looking for excitement and adventure, striving to help those who needed help, punishing those who deserved it.”

Doc's father spent the rest of his life living up to that promise and taught his son to follow in his footsteps. During his adventures in the Valley of the Vanished Doc helps the Mayans many times and proves that his father trained him well. And as the story ends Doc and his friends are setting out to look for new adventures and to help others who are in danger or in trouble.

Setting

The Man Of Bronze takes place during the early 1930s before World War II. We know it is before World War II because every time someone speaks about World War I they just call it the World War.

The story begins in New York City, where Doc lives on the 86th floor of the tallest skyscraper in the

city. This would be the Empire State Building, even though the actual name of the building is never used. Part of one chapter takes place in Washington D.C., and the rest of the story takes place in Central America. Most of that section of the book takes place in the country of Hidalgo, where the Valley of the Vanished is located.

Point Of View

The narrator of *The Man Of Bronze* is third person omniscient. The narrator never talks about himself, and knows everything that happens during the story. We know this because the narrator goes back and forth all through the book between what is happening to Doc and his friends and to what is happening some of the other characters who are somewhere else at the same time.

The narrator also knows what the characters are thinking, like in a scene with some of the villain's men on Page 76: "Greed was behind every act of these men. They wanted to overthrow President Avispa's honest, low-cost government, so they could loot the public treasury."

Characterization

To me the main characters of this book are round and dynamic because the writer does a good job of describing each one in a way that makes them seem interesting and real.

The main character is Dr. Clark Savage Jr., better known as Doc Savage. He is described as being six foot tall, 200 pounds, with a powerful body and mind thanks to his routine of doing special physical and mental exercises for two hours every single day. He is a trained physician and surgeon, and has taught himself to be an expert at many other things as well. His nickname is the Man of Bronze because his skin is deeply tanned and his hair color is reddish-bronze. He is brave, believes in helping those in need, hates those who do evil and puts the needs of others before his own. He is very close to his five friends, and sometimes calls them "Brothers." They all met while serving during the World War and made a promise that they would remain friends after the war was over.

Doc's five friends are all described as being the best at what they do for a living, with only Doc

himself being better than any of them. Monk is a great chemist who got his nickname because he looks like some sort of gorilla. His real name is Andrew Blodgett Mayfair and he was a lieutenant colonel during the war. Monk is smarter than he looks or sounds, and he enjoys a good fight. He and Ham are best friends even though they are constantly teasing and insulting each other, and there is a scene where Monk gets tears in his eyes because he is afraid Ham has been killed by some of the Mayan warriors. Monk has a crush on Princess Monja but knows that she likes Doc.

Ham is a lawyer who likes to wear fancy clothes and carries a sword cane. He went to Harvard and was a brigadier general in the military, and he got his nickname because Monk played a trick on him during the war that caused Ham to get thrown in jail for awhile on a phony charge of stealing hams. He doesn't like the nickname but has never been able to get people to stop using it. Doc says Ham has a lot of friends in Washington.

William Harper Littlejohn is called Johnny for short and is the world's greatest living expert on geology and archaeology. He is very thin and wears glasses that has a left lens that is thicker than the right one. He is the one who helps give Doc the idea to use some of the golden vases to make bombs near the end of the story. The narrator says that Johnny has great endurance and has been known to go for three days and three nights with only a slice of bread and a canteen of water.

Long Tom is a genius at electricity and looks like a physical weakling, but is actually a good fighter. The narrator says he is thin and not very tall, but has never been sick in his life. He has a gold tooth in the front of his mouth and sometimes loses his temper but is very loyal to his friends.

The last member of Doc's group is Colonel John Renwick, who is called Renny for short. He is an engineer who has built many buildings and bridges all over the world. He is actually four inches taller and 50 pounds heavier than Doc, and always looks like he is unhappy about something. He also has huge hands, and the narrator says that one of Renny's favorite sports is to slam his giant fists through heavy wooden doors. He is an expert pilot and next to Doc is the best marksman in the group.

Quotations for these characters:

Doc: "We must carry on, regardless of personal desires." (Chapter 22, Page 169)

Monk: “Tell him I’ll pull his ears off an’ feed ‘em to him if he don’t come clean! (Chapter 5, Chapter 34)

Ham: “Why should I want a ham when I associate with a crowd of them all the time?” (Chapter 9, Page 65)

Johnny: “That region is unexplored for only one reason - white men can’t get into it!” (Chapter 7, Page 55)

Long Tom: “We sure knocked the feathers off that bluebird!” (Chapter 8, Page 62)

Renny: “Tell him he’s in for the same thing that door got if he don’t tell us whether your father was murdered, and if he was, who did it.” (Chapter 5, Page 35)

Figures Of Speech

A. Similes:

1. “Like an aged string, the gun belt snapped before that tremendous strength.” (Chapter 21, Page 166)

2. “His eyes were so surrounded by gristle as to resemble pleasant little stars twinkling in pits.” (Chapter 1, Page 5)

3. “The hand he opened the door with was long-fingered, supple. Yet its enormous tendons were like cables under a thin film of bronze lacquer.” (Chapter 1, Page 4)

B. Metaphors:

1. “The face was a pale, grotesque mask.” (Chapter 21, Page 167)

2. “Monk’s awakening was one long blaze of pain.” (Chapter 9, Page 70)

3. “Death was a man.” (Chapter 1, Page 1)

C. Personification:

1. “The sun was up, blazing with a wild revelry.” (Chapter 8, Page 57)

2. “The rain beat him.” (Chapter 1, Page 2)

3. “Angry little lights danced in Doc Savage’s golden eyes.” (Chapter 11, Page 88)

Mode And Why

I would say that this book fits into the mode of a comedy, because the story begins in chaos but has a happy ending with order restored.

The story begins in chaos, because Doc's father had been murdered, someone is also trying to kill Doc and his friends as they try to learn what has happened and find the treasure that has been left to Doc.

But the story has a happy ending, because Doc finds the person who killed his father and defeats him, and has earned the treasure that will allow him to carry on his father's work of helping those who need it. And order has been restored because Morning Breeze is no longer around to keep trying to steal King Chaac's kingdom away from him.

Opinion And Why

I enjoyed *The Man Of Bronze* because it is a very exciting story. Doc Savage is a true hero. He is strong and brave who always does what is right, He is also very smart and uses both his brain and his muscles to help people in need all over the world and to battle evil. And his friends are both loyal and funny. The book was fun to read.

I think that anyone who likes heroes like Indiana Jones or stories like *Sahara* would like the Doc Savage stories. I hope to read some of the other books in this series when I get the chance. My dad has most of them so perhaps I'll get the chance to read some of his.