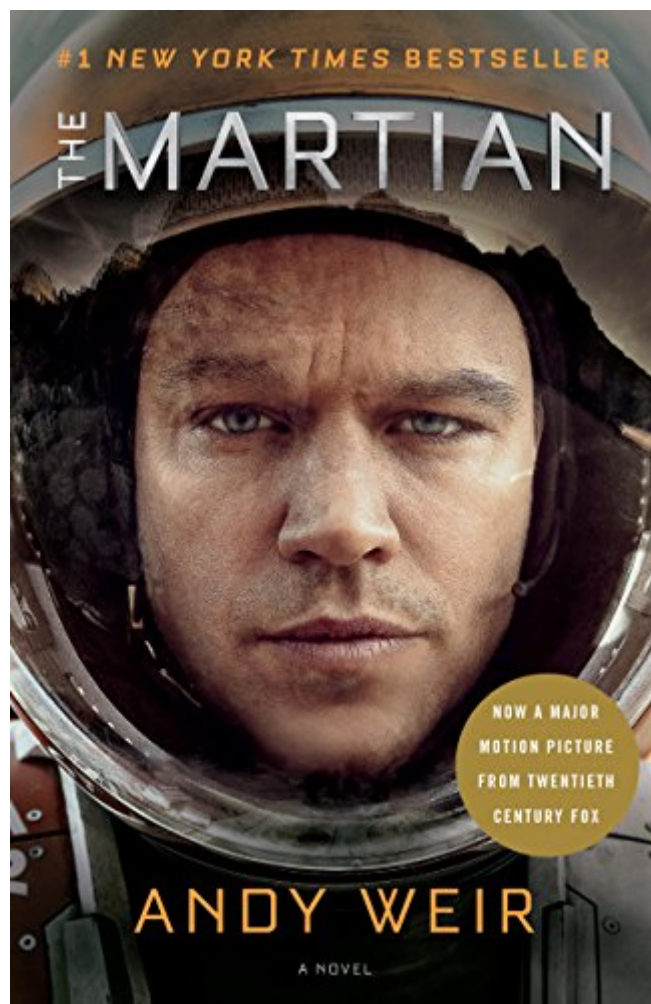


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The Martian: A Novel



Synopsis

Six days ago, astronaut Mark Watney became one of the first people to walk on Mars. Now, he's sure he'll be the first person to die there. After a dust storm nearly kills him and forces his crew to evacuate while thinking him dead, Mark finds himself stranded and completely alone with no way to even signal Earth that he's alive—and even if he could get word out, his supplies would be gone long before a rescue could arrive. Chances are, though, he won't have time to starve to death. The damaged machinery, unforgiving environment, or plain-old "human error" are much more likely to kill him first. But Mark isn't ready to give up yet. Drawing on his ingenuity, his engineering skills—and a relentless, dogged refusal to quit—he steadfastly confronts one seemingly insurmountable obstacle after the next. Will his resourcefulness be enough to overcome the impossible odds against him?

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Customer Reviews

I'm a hard-science science fiction fan and would rather read hard sc-fi than almost anything. I love stories and movies about Mars, and I'm a fan of survival, castaway, and man-against-the elements

stories. I loved Robinson Crusoe, so it should not surprise you that I loved the movie, Robinson Crusoe on Mars. I realize it's not Academy Award material, but to me, it's everything I want it to be, as was this book, The Martian. The main character, Watney, presumed dead, is accidentally left by his crew mates when an intense Martian dust storm forces them to abort their mission. What follows for part of the book is a logbook style narrative that describes in great technical detail Watney's efforts to extend his life until the next scheduled mission arrives in 4 years. After reading just the first 20% of the book (my Kindle has no page numbers) one can't help but be impressed by the author's depth of knowledge in this regard. In fact, the entire book is an astronaut's primer on extraterrestrial and deep space survival and rescue. The Martian isn't without its typos and editorial glitches, and I'm not sure if this was a result of a bad Kindle conversion or just a shortsighted editor. For me, though, typos and editing issues paled in comparison to the snowballing storyline, which I gladly admit is not for everyone. This is not a touchy-feely book about love, romance or relationships. There is no overpowering angle between characters. No good guys in white hats and bad guys in black hats. There's no room for cliches. It's all very business like and scientific. So, if you're looking for Twilight in Space. Or Fifty Shades of Mars. Or Tom Hanks making himself a friend by drawing a face on a soccer ball, you'll probably want to skip this one.

"I'm stranded on Mars. I have no way to communicate with Hermes or Earth. Everyone thinks I'm dead. I'm in a Hab designed to last 31 days. If the Oxygenator breaks down, I'll suffocate. If the Water Reclaimer breaks down, I'll die of thirst. If the Hab breaches, I'll just kind of explode. If none of those things happen, I'll eventually run out of food and starve to death. So yeah. I'm f---d." - Mark Watney

As the two-hundred thirty-fourth reader to review THE MARTIAN by Andy Weir, I have no illusion that I can add anything substantive to the plaudits already heaped on this intelligent work of space sci-fi. Simply put, it's a nail-biter that'll trim your finger nail plates down even with the nail beds. My reading tastes usually don't encompass space fiction because the vast majority of it seems to fall within the realm of extreme fantasy with worlds and ETs of the most fantastical sorts. I prefer my off-Earth stories to have some plausible connection with realistic, albeit extrapolated, technology and situations, and the one book that remains embedded in my memory as simply terrific is from all the way back in 1975 when I was much younger and perhaps more impressionable - Arthur C. Clarke's Rendezvous with Rama. With films, I'm the same way; Outland and Silent Running come to mind. THE MARTIAN is my kind of SF.

A futuristic Robinson Crusoe! Due to a dust storm, Mark Watney is left for dead in the Acidalia

region of Mars when the Ares 3 mission is aborted 6 days into the scheduled two months. What follows is largely a logbook of living in a large tent or a small rover for about 550 days on what was supposed to be two month's rations for 6 people. Fortunately there were some potatoes for thanksgiving that were alive, so Mark starts dividing them and growing them. But first he has to make soil, and then water, and so on. Generally speaking, a logbook is a poor technique, but here it is brilliant. You cannot have conversation, and you cannot develop other characters, but did I mention he was abandoned? Alone? You might still think that 550 days stuck in a tent or rover could get boring, but no, this book is absolutely gripping. Watney was resourceful, and the book is very good at showing the scientific approach to problems, putting numbers to them, and showing what happens if you do what, so in a sense it is also a book of puzzles: this has gone wrong, how can it be fixed? Tension is maintained well because Watney has an unseen companion: Murphy. If it can go wrong, it does, sometimes because of Watney's own lack of knowledge. To make water, first he makes hydrogen. This is not a good idea, and Watney finds out why. Because I have also written a book centred on Mars, I know the author has really spent a lot of time understanding the nature of Mars, and this book shows quite well what being on the surface of Mars would be like. There is the odd error, probably intentional for effect, for example the effects of the dust storm are too great.

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