

# **Burroughs, Edgar Rice (1875-1950)**

## **Encyclopedia Article**

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# Burroughs, Edgar Rice (1875-1950)

Perhaps best known as the creator of Tarzan the Apeman, Edgar Rice Burroughs did much to popularize science fiction and adventure fantasy during the first half of the twentieth century. When he turned to writing in his mid-thirties after a mediocre and varied business life, Burroughs met with quick success when his first publication, *Under the Moons of Mars*, was serialized in *All-Story* magazine in 1912.

Edgar Rice Burroughs

Noted for his fertile imagination, Burroughs created several imaginary societies for his popular adventure series: one set on Mars, one in the primitive world called Pellucidar located inside the earth, and another on Venus. His Tarzan series (started in 1918) was also set in an imaginary Africa, much to the dismay of some readers. The constant theme running through Burroughs' stories was a detailing of how alien or primitive societies inspired heroic qualities in characters. Typically Burroughs' stories depicted powerful men saving beautiful women from terrible villains. Besides Tarzan, Burroughs' most famous character was Virginian gentleman John Carter of his Mars series, who became the "greatest swordsman of two worlds." Though his plots were often predictable and his characters lacked depth, Burroughs successfully captured readers' interest in life-and-death struggles brought on by environmental impediments. His slapdash depictions of how primitive environments catalyze greatness in humans have continued to entertain readers and inspire more intricate science fiction writing.

## Further Reading:

Holtsmark, Erling B. *Edgar Rice Burroughs*. Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1986.

Zeuschner, Robert B. *Edgar Rice Burroughs: The Exhaustive Scholar's and Collector's Descriptive Bibliography of American Periodical, Hardcover, Paperback, and Reprint Editions*. Jefferson, North Carolina, McFarland, 1996.