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The Lost World

Arthur Conan Doyle · *1912 · original English text*

A young reporter, Edward Malone, wants to prove himself to the woman he loves and joins the expedition of the explosive Professor Challenger to a plateau in the Amazon basin. Challenger claims that dinosaurs and ape-men still live there. Conan Doyle's novel is the model of the lost-world adventure: part travelogue, part science debate, part comedy.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

Is the unknown a place of real wonders worth the danger, or only a matter of boasting among scientists?

The story takes the question seriously and with a smile. Challenger is proved right about the plateau, and the hunters, Lord John Roxton and the skeptic Summerlee, are changed by the trip. Malone discovers that bravery matters more to him than the approval of the woman who sent him. The book celebrates adventure while poking fun at both the scientist's vanity and the journalist's need for a story.

KEY CHARACTERS

Edward Malone
The narrator, a young journalist who wants a story and a cause.

Professor Challenger
A short-tempered, brilliant zoologist who says the plateau exists.

Professor Summerlee
A skeptical, dry-witted scientist.

Lord John Roxton
A famous hunter and an explorer in the Amazon.

Gladys
Malone's love, who sets him off on the trip.

Zambo
Their loyal guide and servant.

Grades 5–8

Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

The Reporter and the Professor

CHAPTERS I–V

Malone, stung by a refusal from Gladys, is sent to interview Challenger. He is thrown out, then called back, and he hears the claim. A public meeting ends in a challenge.

- Gladys's speech about heroism starts Malone off.
- Challenger's temper is a comic set piece.
- The meeting at the lecture hall ends with a committee sent to test his claim.

02

The Expedition

CHAPTERS VI–IX

Challenger, Summerlee, Roxton, and Malone go to South America and up the Amazon with Zambo and local guides. An American artist's sketchbook is their evidence. They climb the plateau's cliff, and a treacherous act brings down the tree-trunk bridge behind them.

- The party is quarrelsome from the start.
- Maple White's sketchbook is their evidence.
- The fallen bridge strands them above.

03

The Plateau

CHAPTERS X–XII

Cut off on the plateau, the party finds animals that should be extinct. Iguanodons and a pterodactyl swamp are the first of many wonders.

- The first dinosaur sighting is told with plain delight.
- The fallen bridge sets the stakes for the rest of the story.
- Malone becomes the party's scout.

04

Ape-men and Indians

CHAPTERS XIII–XIV

They find an ape-man village at war with a tribe of Indians. The explorers help the Indians win and find a way down.

- The ape-men are shown as terrifying, with human-like faces.
- The battle is a violent finish to the plateau stay.
- Roxton's skill with a rifle matters.

05

The Return

CHAPTERS XV–XVI

They descend with a pterodactyl for proof. In London, Challenger's lecture ends in uproar when the creature escapes. Malone returns to find Gladys married.

- The ending is partly a comedy.
- Gladys's marriage releases Malone from his first motive.
- Roxton and Malone look ahead to another trip.

Adventure · Science and Doubt · The Unknown · Courage

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 5–8

1. Notice how the book mixes humor with a serious demand for proof.
2. Challenger's arguments are scientific in style. Ask what makes his claim credible.
3. Malone is a journalist. Watch how his motive changes.
4. The story is of 1912 and shows the period's attitudes to indigenous people; read it with that in mind.

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