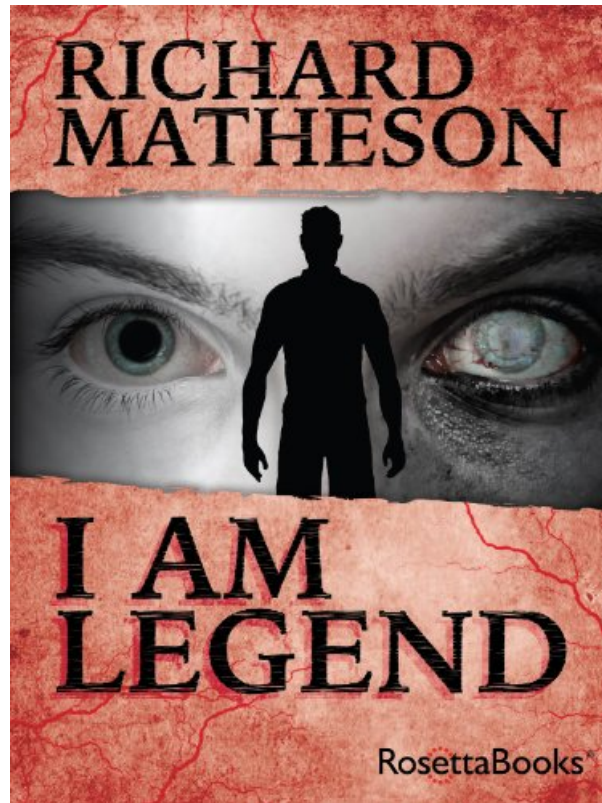
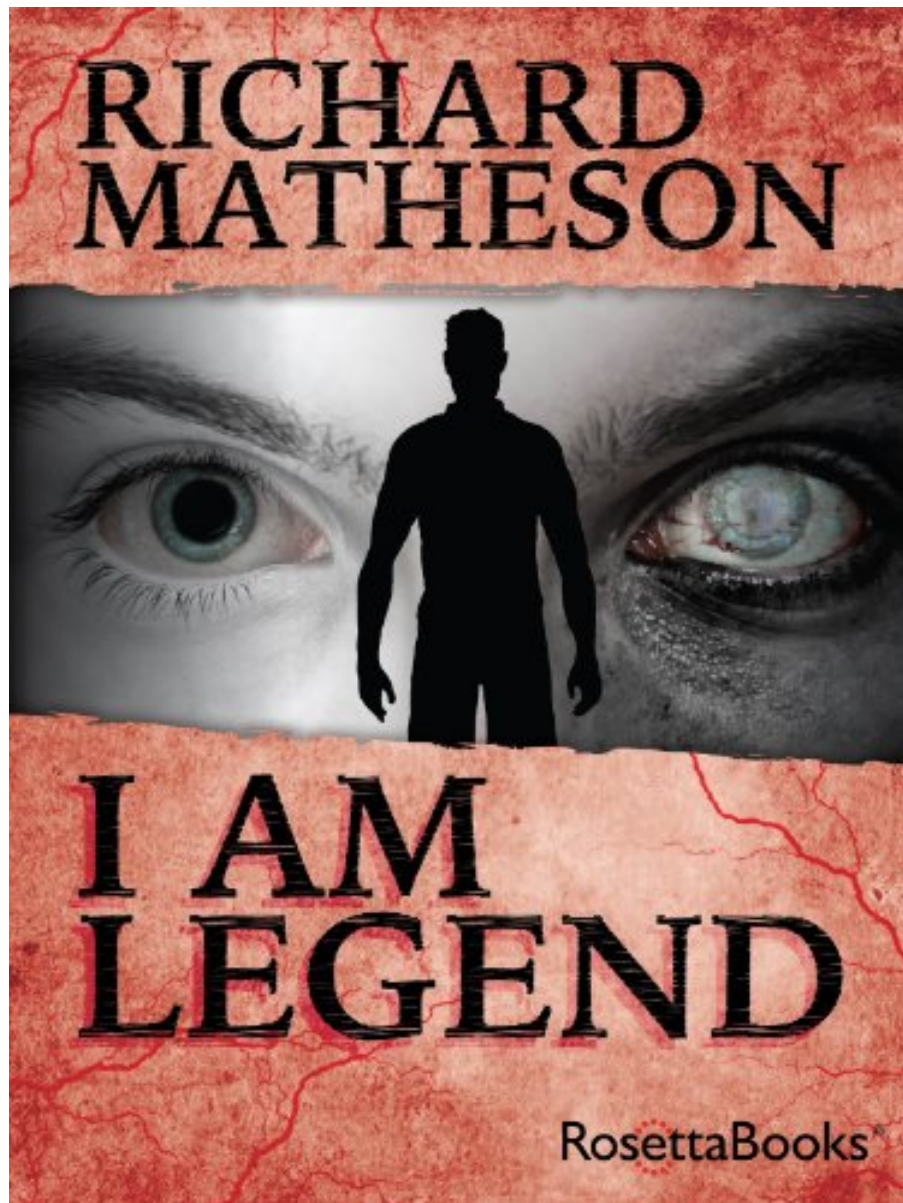


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Robert Neville has witnessed the end of the world. The entire population has been obliterated by a vampire virus. Somehow, Neville survived. He must now struggle to make sense of everything that has happened and learn to protect himself against the vampires who hunt him constantly. He must, because perhaps there is nothing else human left.

I Am Legend was a major influence in horror and brought a whole new thematic concept to apocalyptic literature. Several humanistic and emotional themes in this book blend the horror genre with traditional fiction: we see Neville as an emotional person, and observe as he suffers bouts of depression, dips into alcoholism and picks up his strength again to fight the vampiric bacteria that has infected (and killed off) most of humankind. Neville soon meets a woman, Ruth, (after three years alone), who seems to be uninfected and a lone survivor. The two become close and he learns from Ruth that the infected have learned to fight the disease and can spend short amounts of time in the daylight, slowly rebuilding strength and society as it was.

The novel was adapted to film in 1964 as *The Last Man on Earth*, as *Omega Man* in 1971 and finally as *I am Legend* in 2007, starring Will Smith.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Richard Burton Matheson (born February 20, 1926) is an American author and screenwriter working primarily in the fantasy, horror, and science fiction genres. Between 1950 and 1971, Matheson produced dozens of stories, frequently combining elements from the different genres in which he works, making important contributions to the further development of modern horror. Matheson wrote fourteen episodes for the American television series *The Twilight Zone*, including the famous "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet." Notably, Steven Spielberg's first full length film (made for television) was based on the story "Duel," for which Matheson also wrote the screenplay.

Matheson's first novel, *Someone is Bleeding*, was published in 1953. His thirty novels since then include *The Shrinking Man* (filmed as *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, again adapted from Matheson's own screenplay), and a science fiction/vampire novel, *I Am Legend* (made into film as *The Last Man on Earth*, 1964, *The Omega Man*, 1971, and *I Am Legend*, 2007).

A new film based on Matheson's story "Steel," entitled *Real Steel*, is a major motion picture that was released in October 2011. His most recent novel, *Other Kingdoms*, appeared in March 2011.

According to film critic Roger Ebert, Matheson's scientific approach to the supernatural in *I Am Legend* and other novels from the 1950s and '60s anticipated the "pseudorealistic fantasy novels like *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Exorcist*." In 2010, Matheson was inducted into the Science Fiction Hall of Fame, and Stephen King has cited Matheson as a creative influence; his novel *Cell* is dedicated to Matheson along with filmmaker George A. Romero. Author Anne Rice has said that Matheson's short story, "A Dress of White Silk" was a

primary early influence on her interest in vampires and fantasy fiction.

- Sales Rank: #1945 in eBooks
- Published on: 2011-05-14
- Released on: 2011-05-14
- Format: Kindle eBook

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who's perfect for the main character in many ways

By Stigmata67

Can't believe it took me this many years--make that decades--to finally get around to absorbing Matheson's quick-read mid-century masterpiece. In the realm of post-apocalyptic fiction, if any work deserves to be described as seminal, this is it. Its influence is clearly evident to this day in everything from "The Walking Dead" (particularly in the early-going, where a certain character's late wife comes back to haunt him from

beyond the grave) to much of dystopian fiction. Never mind that it's been made into a movie no less than three times (1964's "The Last Man on Earth" starring the oddly cast Vincent Price--a messy cheapie that's worth a look as the most faithful adaptation of the book and for its own influence on Romero's "Night of the Living Dead"; 1971's memorable "The Omega Man," starring Charlton Heston in his post "Planet of the Apes" dystopian sci-fi martyr phase [see also: "Soylent Green"], who's perfect for the main character in many ways, though the film is drastically reconceived from the source material and frequently has the aesthetics of a made-for-TV movie, and most recently the years-in-production 2007 Will Smith version that retained the title, if little of the flavor, though there were at least hints that some involved in the production had read the book). This is a book that earns its classic status for multiple reasons. While the Heston and Smith movies have always leaned into the apocalyptic action and away from the primal horror, Matheson crafts a sci-fi nightmare that would be better served by a mid-budget indie drama vibe than a mega-budget thrill-ride.

"I Am Legend" is a meditative character study of dire loneliness and intense isolation, the madness and resourcefulness that can stem from such, and is possibly the first book to attempt a smart (pseud)scientific explanation of the "why" of vampirism, presenting it not as spooky mysticism but a parasitic disease. I wouldn't be surprised if Max Brooks had that in mind when he wrote "The Zombie Survival Guide" and "World War Z," where he provided the first "credible" description of what keeps the undead walking around I'd ever read. Most of main character Robert Neville's vampire-killing sprees are kept off the page, and he is not presented as a square-jawed superman defiant in the face of imminent death. He's desperate, frightened, very close to broken, much more relatably the way you or I might react if his misfortune were ours. He's also quick-witted and capable of adapting, even turning himself into an armchair scientist as he struggles to understand what's befallen the world.

But what makes "Legend" a classic, the masterstroke of storytelling that sets it apart from so many similar and derivative stories, and that not one of the movies has even remotely done right (though there's an alternate ending to the Smith version that could have at least come close), is where Matheson and his protagonist land at the end. I won't spoil this sixty-something-year-old book for those that haven't experienced it, but suffice to say it is a wise and surprising little twist still capable of giving you a few existential shivers all these long years later.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

A Classic Horror Tale That Stands Above Its Movie Adaptations

By Ry

I Am Legend is a classic horror story. Some regard it as THE classic horror story. Influencing great modern horror writers like Stephen King, it's one that will stick with you. I still remember the exact moment I started and finished this book nearly 10 years ago. I was sitting shotgun while my father drove us home from a vacation in Michigan. The AC was too high and I was freezing but couldn't bare to pull my eyes away from this story long enough to ask him to turn it down.

I was delighted that I could find a Non-Will Smith cover for this book. As many people know, this story has been adapted into 3 or 4 movies over the years. Word of warning, this is different from the Will Smith movie. If the movie was a standalone with a different name, I would have liked it more. As an adaptation of the book, the movie is seriously lacking.

Differences like the fact that the vampires can talk make this story more compelling as the last man on earth isn't alone. This is one of my favorite books of all time.

Pros:



If you've seen the movie, you can still read the book and be very enthralled. Different enough where you won't know the twists.

Great writing. This book made me want to become an author when I was little.

Can't say too much more as I don't want to give anything away.

Cons:

Be careful to purchase the correct copy if you're avoiding the Will Smith movie cover print.

The sticker on the back of mine was sticky enough that now, once removed, my book sticks to everything.

That's my biggest complaint people. Back of the book is a little sticky. Seriously. Buy this!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

A Solid Last Man on Earth Book (with Vampires!)

By Filmorama

This is a fantastic novella from a brilliant writer. It was way ahead of its time and Matheson inspired so many giants in the horror field, including Stephen King. This book in particular is one of the main contributing forces that gave rise to the zombie genre. I wouldn't say this is a literary masterpiece so much as an amazing story that is solidly written. The premise is dazzling and it kept me turning the pages. I will refrain from giving it the fifth star because some of Neville's thinking got a touch repetitive for me and I was actually a little confused about what constituted a (WARNING, mild spoiler) vampire or another kind of undead type of vampire being that isn't quite a vampire. I honestly can't spoil it too bad because I don't clearly understand that part.

One of the things I really enjoyed about this book was that I have seen two film versions of I Am Legend and this still felt original. I think it's because the main character is a truly human character. We get a front row seat to those flaws in the book and we get to do it as he battles vampires from a last man on earth perspective. It was a fun read. I will try more of Matheson's written work. (He also wrote many screenplays.)

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