



THE CONTROVERSIAL CLASSIC
OF MILITARY ADVENTURE

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**STARSHIP
TROOPERS**



The book chosen for this assignment was *Starship Troopers*, by Robert A. Heinlein, published by G.P. Putnam's Sons on November 5, 1959. While this novel was the only installment, the story has spawned a film, though the 1997 adaption for the big screen was created in large part to satirize what some consider to be the author's controversial political views. Written by a former Naval officer, it was, in part, Heinlein's reaction to President Eisenhower suspending nuclear tests.

Starship Troopers examines a distant future, experienced through the eyes of Juan "Johnny" Rico. Rico is a member of the mobile infantry, an elite group of soldiers empowered with physically enhancing robotic suits, that also experience high casualty rates. Rico enlists with the M.I. in order to gain his citizenship. In this time, Earth is governed by an ultra-nationalistic global government, and the right to vote is separated from civilians, being reserved for citizens. The novel follows Rico from his enlistment, to the attack on his home world by an intergalactic insect enemy, to his development into a skilled warrior.

The enemy bugs in *Starship Troopers* are almost an afterthought. The meat of the story is Johnny experiencing and explaining the mechanics of futuristic military society. The story is his evolution from a civilian to a citizen. While the bugs do make an appearance of sorts towards the end, they do not make up a substantial portion of the story. However, the eusocial nature of the antagonist species is used as an illusory tool for comparing the, at times, fascist nature of future human society and the insect's "communist" society.

Group Discussion Questions

1. How is insect "culture" portrayed in the film? Is it an accurate representation of eusocial insect society?

2. What features of the alien antagonists suggest the resemblance or relation to insects on Earth?
3. Is the arachnid attack on Earth representative of realistic behavior seen in eusocial insects?
4. What castes do we observe within the bug home world?
5. Aside from the arachnid warriors, are there any alien insects that remind you of real-world species?
6. How might the bugs be representative of real-world threats?
7. Would insects of this size be as dangerous to humanity as the book indicates?
8. Why do you think Heinlein chose Bugs as the enemy?