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Legend Of The Galactic Heroes, Vol. 2: Ambition



Synopsis

In the thirty-sixth century humanity has conquered the galaxy and colonized countless star systems. The Galactic Empire, modeled along Prussian lines, and the democratic Free Planets Alliance are at war, and the fate of every human being in the universe hangs in the balance. This classic Japanese space opera, adapted into a legendary anime, is finally available in English for the first time. After a coup d'état erupts in the Free Planets Alliance, military strategist Yang Wen-li is ordered to use his tactical wizardry to put down the rebellion, but the ringleader holding the capital is someone he once trusted deeply. Meanwhile, in the Galactic Empire, Reinhard will soon face a new trial, as in the wake of the emperor's death he stands amidst an intensifying power struggle among the aristocracy. The unbeatable magician and the unstoppable genius: the battles these heroes wage will send shock waves across the galaxy!

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

For the uninitiated, Yoshiaki Tanaka's sprawling science-fiction epic, "The Legend of Galactic Heroes" is a massive saga spanning 10 main novels and several side-stories. It has been adapted into multiple mediums, including animation, film, manga, audio drama and ballet. My review will be brief and--aside from a minor comment on the events of the previous book, so please don't worry--spoiler free. On the series as a whole....Much like the venerable "Mobile Suit Gundam" franchise, the Legend of the Galactic Heroes is sometimes referred to as the "Star Wars of Japan." Though, personally, given the scope, scale and themes of the story I find Frank Herbert's Dune to

be a more suitable analog. The Legend of the Galactic Heroes is best described as a "Historical Epic / Space Opera." Tanaka writes less as a storyteller and more as a historian. Characterization is sparse (but adequate) and the story moves at a fairly swift pace whose course is charted just as much by the (sometimes anticlimactic) whims of history as the dramatic arcs of its characters. As is so often the case in our own histories, the cast of relevant characters is enormous, though many find themselves mere bit players. The focus of the narrative is on two protagonists: Reinhard von Lohengramm, a brilliant admiral serving the autocratic Galactic Empire; and his equal-but-opposite, the genius Yang Wen-li, in the democratic Free Planets Alliance. The galaxy-spanning war between these two nations serves primarily as a backdrop for the conflict between these two men who, despite their many similarities, adhere to opposite political ideologies.

This is the biased review by a fan of the LoGH anime series. It's also important to remember this book is 30 years old. It has aged fairly well, but this is not a recent work. You have been warned. While I found the first book in the LoGH series enjoyable, the second volume, *Ambition*, is an improvement on multiple fronts. By virtue of being a continuation of an existing story, the book was not bogged down by excessive world building or the lengthy history lesson that started volume 1. The net result was a quicker pace and more "real" plot surrounding the primary characters. In addition to maintaining the large cast from *Dawn*, the second book piles on even more new faces. This abundance of characters could be a problem for readers who are not already familiar with the LoGH universe. Even with my own familiarity of the series, I needed to look up some of the more obscure characters, ships, and locations. While LoGH has many excellent characters, I feel that the plot tends to supersede character development. Thankfully, as the story progresses, characters that are introduced with no more than a name and title are slowly given definition. Perhaps Yoshiki Tanaka was still discovering the characters for himself. I'm hopeful that by the time the series ends, the characters will have gained the same well-rendered definition of their anime counterparts. LoGH doesn't have many important female characters, but *Ambition* takes a step in the right direction by focusing a little more on the few that it does have. I've wondered before whether, if the book were being written now, it would feature more women in officer-level roles. Since the story has a huge cast already, it'd only be fair to give a few of them (Dusty Attemborough?)

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