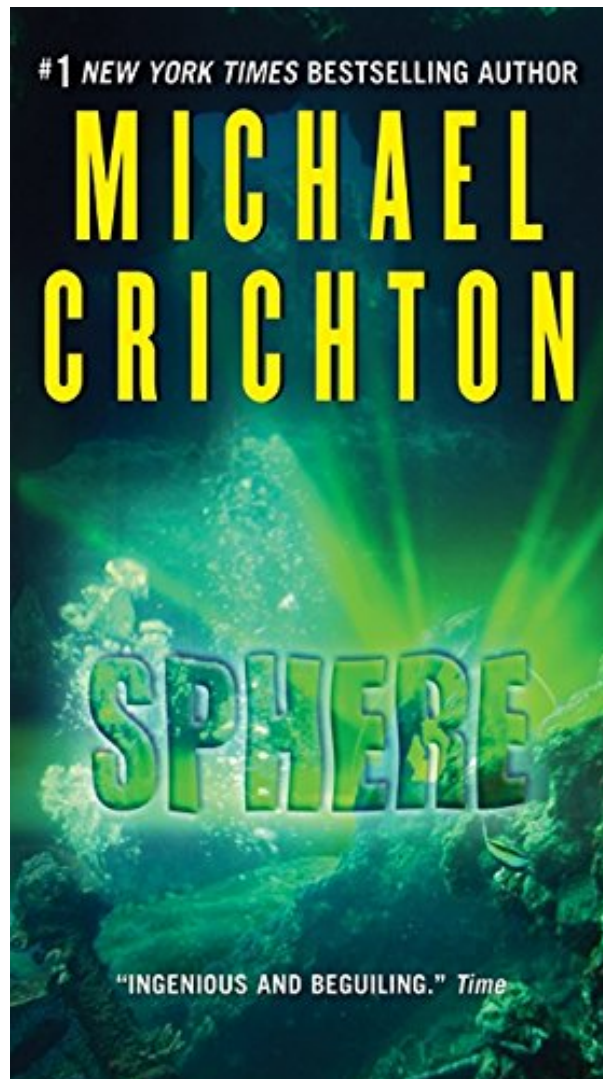


SPHERE BY MICHAEL CRICHTON



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SPHERE

"INGENIOUS AND BEGUILING." *Time*

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Amazon.com Review

Jurassic Park author Michael Crichton is possibly the best science teacher for the masses since H.G. Wells, and Sphere, his thriller about a mysterious spherical spaceship at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean, is classic Crichton. A group of not-very-complex characters (portrayed in the film by Sharon Stone, Dustin Hoffman, Samuel L. Jackson, and Queen Latifah) assemble to solve a cleverly designed roller coaster of a mystery while attempting (with mixed success) to avoid sudden death and expounding (much more successfully) on the latest, coolest scientific ideas, including the existence of black holes. Somehow, Crichton manages to convey the complicated stuff in utterly simplistic prose, making him, as his old pal Steven Spielberg puts it, "the high priest of high concept." Yet there is more to Crichton than science and big-ticket show biz. He is also, as any reader of his startling memoir Travels knows, a bit of a mystic--he is entirely open to notions spouted by spoon-bending psychics that most science writers would scorn. Sphere is not only a gratifying sci-fi suspense tale; it also reflects Crichton's keen interest in the unexplained powers of the human mind. When something passes through a black hole in Crichton's fiction, a lesson is learned. The book also contains another profound lesson: when you're staring down a giant squid with an eyeball the size of a dinner plate, don't blink first.

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for some 300 years. When the four scientists, who carry their emotional minority baggage of sex, color, and age along with them, descend to the deep in their submersible, they discover the wreck to be no less than a spaceship from the future that fell through a black hole, defying time and space. Strange things begin to happen as one by one the cast of characters diminishes. Disappointing. Literary Guild dual main selection. Marion Hanscom, SUNY at Binghamton Lib.
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“Ingenious and beguiling.”

—Time

“Crichton keeps us guessing at every turn in his best work since *The Andromeda Strain*.”

—Los Angeles Times

“Sphere may be Crichton’s best novel, but even if it ranked only second or third, it would be a must for suspense fans.”

—Miami Herald

A classic thriller from #1 New York Times bestselling author Michael Crichton, *Sphere* is a bravura demonstration of what he does better than anyone: riveting storytelling that combines frighteningly plausible, cutting edge science and technology with pulse-pounding action and serious chills. The gripping story of a group of American scientists sent to the ocean floor to investigate an alien ship, only to confront a terrifying discovery that defies imagination, *Sphere* is Crichton prime—truly masterful fiction from the ingenious mind that brought us *Prey*, *State of Fear*, and *Jurassic Park*.

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Most helpful customer reviews

49 of 58 people found the following review helpful.

A gripping, suspenseful, fast-paced science fiction thriller

By Daniel Jolley

I was recently surprised to find this novel on one of my shelves; I saw the movie adaptation of the novel recently but did not remember owning the actual book. The movie was full of promise but ultimately disappointing, so I was pretty curious to see how good a read the actual novel was. *Sphere* is my first Michael Crichton novel, and I have to say I was quite impressed with Crichton's prowess. There are some logical flaws and inconsistencies in the plot, but Crichton is an incredibly gifted storyteller; I eagerly breezed through this novel in short order. While it is heavy on dialogue, the story touches on a number of aspects of the human personality while mixing in some profound if problematic science fiction in the process. This is a fast-paced thriller that definitely registers impressively on the suspense meter, particularly during the climactic late chapters. While the ending is something of a letdown, the story leading up to it is gripping and fascinating, and important clues and plot points are presented with much more subtlety and effectiveness than what you will find in the movie adaptation.

The novel is built around an incredible discovery; in the middle of the South Pacific, lying all but buried on the bottom of the ocean, rests a spacecraft of unknown origin. Psychologist Norman Johnson, the author of a secret government paper on Recommendations for the Human Contact Team to Interact with Unknown Life Forms (a less than serious paper he wrote primarily for the money) is called to the site, where he is informed that he will be part of a team of scientists sent to study the mysterious craft. Alongside him are an irascible Navy project commander, a brilliant, young astrophysicist/planetary geologist, a complicated female zoologist/biochemist, and a noted mathematician/logician. This unlikely team of deep ocean explorers soon find themselves in an artificial habitat resting alongside the location of the mysterious ship. Their exploration of the site yields more questions than answers, as the ship turns out to be an American spaceship from the future. The truly enigmatic discovery onboard, though, is a giant sphere of unknown composition. As the

story unfolds, the team of explorers finds themselves effectively stranded on the ocean floor for a period of some days, and strange and frightening things begin to happen after one scientist somehow enters the sphere. The scientists find themselves in communication with a supposedly alien entity who calls himself Jerry; whoever and whatever Jerry is, he seems to have the power to manifest remarkable physical creations and changes in reality. The habitat and the team inside it soon comes under attack by such dangerous creatures as giant squid and killer jellyfish, but the problems eventually internalize themselves inside the group dynamic, a group that is shrinking in size as time goes by. The mysterious Sphere imparts an amazing power to those who enter it, a power that such individuals may not even be consciously aware of wielding. Ultimately, the last remnants of the research team begin pointing fingers at one another and take steps to insure their own individual survival in the face of an unquantifiable threat, making this novel a gripping psychological thriller based in a fascinating science fiction environment.

Once the team arrives in the underwater habitat, nonstop action ensues. One emergency after another challenges the crew, and the group dynamic of the team ebbs and flows along with each jarring crisis. Along the way, we see ever more clearly into the minds and ways of thinking of our main characters, and a significant amount of ideas are expressed concerning the human condition. Crichton provides for no obligatory rest areas along the way, as he takes the reader for an incredible ride that had me turning pages hand over fist in anticipation of what was to come. Some of the science is questionable, but Crichton surely makes it all sound more than plausible. The only real problem with the novel is a logical breakdown of sorts in the concluding chapters. Still, the desperate attempts of the remaining explorers to survive, when they cannot even trust one another, make for a riveting reading experience. Sphere is by no means a perfect novel, but I found it captivating and basically addictive up until the somewhat disappointing ending. The movie adaptation takes significant liberties with the original story, so I would urge you not to let the movie's failings prevent you from immersing yourself in this eminently readable novel.

21 of 23 people found the following review helpful.

Good Crichton, not his best

By Derek Armstrong

Intriguing as always, exciting from the first page, strong for the first 2/3rds and less "editorializing" than usual, but it's just not as good as his higher concept novels. But it's still very enjoyable all the way through, and as always makes you think. It feels a little dated now, but I re-read it last week and enjoyed it just as much as the first time. Sphere should definitely be a part of any Crichton fan's library. Skip the movie, though. Here, the science is less "convincing" than in Jurassic Park (which is mostly convincing, but stretched) and Prey (which is better writing and fun, but not convincing). But that doesn't matter, because Crichton can write an adventure like few others (as long as character isn't important--character's here take backseat to concept and science). Pace, as always is good. More a rollicking adventure than "something to think about" (typical of later novels) and quite enjoyable on that level. It's the kind of novel you'll tear through in a weekend at most. And that's a good thing.

36 of 44 people found the following review helpful.

Extremely Enjoyable Popcorn

By Gary F. Taylor

You've got to give it to Michael Crichton: he writes one heck of a page-turner. Open one of his books with the idea that you'll just read a chapter or two before bedtime and you'll suddenly be bleary-eyed at three in the morning. And although this particular title, which is somewhat less well known than such Crichton novels as THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN and JURASSIC PARK, it still packs a bestseller wallop.

The premise is classic Crichton. In his younger days, psychologist Norman Johnson was approached by the United States government to write a report on the psychological impact of an encounter with extra-terrestrials--and now, on the basis of his rather flippant recommendations, he finds himself en route to a possible UFO crash sight on the floor of the Pacific ocean. Once established with his colleges in an

underwater habitat, the government team encounters a mysterious space craft that contains a still-more mysterious sphere, and those who come into contact with it undergo an unexpected change.

The writing is crisp and clean, the hard science is handled quite skillfully, and Crichton plays out his story at a breathless pace: yes, a page-turner if ever there was one. Still, it is worth noting that SPHERE displays Crichton's weaknesses as clearly as it does his strengths. Strictly speaking, Crichton hasn't had an original concept in some thirty years, and just as he rehashed his screenplay for WESTWORLD into the novel JURASSIC PARK, so does he rehash THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN into SPHERE. The novel also contains both the foundational sexism and ambiguous conclusion so typical of Crichton's work.

Ultimately, SPHERE is popcorn: we've all had it before and you can't make a truly satisfying meal of it. But it is tremendously enjoyable all the same, and where is SPHERE is concerned... well, you'll eat every kernel in the bowl.

GFT, Amazon Reviewer

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