

Star Wars' Expanded Universe: From A 121 Minute Movie to 154 Books

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Summary

This collection combines my nostalgia of checking Star Wars books out of the library as a kid with my ongoing desire for characters whose stories never end. In 1977 George Lucas created the world of Star Wars and since then authors have fleshed out its universe with every detail imaginable. Taking inspiration from a 121 minute movie these authors have explored every nook and cranny offered to them and then invented many of their own. As long as Star Wars books are being published my collection will continue growing and the story will never end.

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It all started 18 years ago on January 31st 1997. It was my seventh and a half birthday and my Dad took me to see Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope which was being rereleased in theaters. George Lucas had been re-editing his movie trilogy to include CGI special effects that weren't possible when he had first made them. Needless to say my young mind was blown away. Star Wars took everything I loved as a kid, threw it into a big blender and mixed it up into a delicious smoothie of wonder and awe. It had knights and magic mashed up with space and lasers, what could possibly have been better? Over the next couple months he took me to the rest of the trilogy and I found myself hooked on the world of Star Wars.

When I was young, every few weekends my parents would take me and my sister to the Dubuque Public Library. After having witnessed the majesty of the Star Wars trilogy I discovered a new section of the library: The Star Wars books! I've always loved books, but I've also always hated endings. Endings meant that all the characters I had grown attached to over the course of days, or weeks ceased to exist. In my mind they might as well have died. The end result would still be the same. That's the feeling I had when I left the theater after Return of the Jedi. I was pumped up. The rebellion had finally defeated the Emperor, taken down Darth Vader, and destroyed the Death Star (again). I turned to my dad and excitedly asked "So what happens next? What's Luke's next adventure?" My dad laughed and said "Nothing happens that was the end of the story. There're no more movies." I didn't like it, but I had to accept it. My acceptance need not last long as I found that section of Star Wars books shortly after. Suddenly an entire galaxy was opened before me ready to be explored.

Over the next couple of years I read every Star Wars book that the library had to offer. My favorite story was Timothy Zahn's Thrawn Trilogy, which introduced me to the villain Grand Admiral Thrawn, a blue skinned humanoid and the de facto leader of what was left of the Empire. In a weird way he was the character I identified with the most. He was cool and collected, precise and intelligent, there was just something that drew me to him. As a result rather than imitating Luke or Han I would pretend to be an imperial officer in total command over my troops pacing the bridge of his star destroyer with my hand clasped behind my back. Since those days I've done research into the Star Wars novel phenomenon and the wild success of Zahn's trilogy is largely responsible for jump starting the expanded universe. Before Zahn's novels were published in the early nineties there were only a handful of Star Wars books, but after they were published the market exploded with 5-10 plus books being published every year. The great thing about the Star Wars books were that they made the Star Wars universe feel alive. Sure every book had an ending, but when one book, or series of books ended it wouldn't be long before another was published that picked up where the previous one left off. I had found my story without end. I could always count on new and exciting adventures for my favorite characters: more Jedi training for Luke, more smuggling for Han, and more subtle political maneuvering for Leia.

By this point though I had yet to actually start collecting any books. Sure I had read about every Star Wars book published at the time, but I didn't own any. That changed when I read *Rogue Squadron* the first book in the X-Wing series. I loved the book and couldn't wait to read the next one, but to my dismay it wasn't at the library the next time I went. My mom saved me from my despair and bought me Wedge's Gamble, the second book in the series, and thus a collection was born. The X-Wing series was my first collecting focus, but I got distracted before

completing it. There was a brand new series starting called the New Jedi Order and after reading the first book Vector Prime and having to deal with the death of a major Star Wars character it became my new collecting focus. I acquired and read the first thirteen novels of the series before I got distracted again. I was entering high school and was focusing more and more on competitive swimming and my Star Wars collection, sadly, fell by the wayside.

Ten years, that's how long my collection lay dormant, gathering dust on a bookshelf, forgotten. Then just last year Disney, in light of their new Star Wars movie coming out, announced that all the books of my childhood would no longer be canon and would instead be a kind of alternate universe. This brought on two developments: it reminded me of my love for these novels and gave me an endpoint to collect towards. There were times over the past ten years when I had considered continuing my collection, but with more and more books being published every year it seemed an impossible task to ever catch up. Now I had my end point to strive toward. Before I could move my collection forward though, nostalgia drew me back to the past. All those wonderful novels that I'd had such fond memories of reading as a child, well, I had never actually collected any of them. They were at the top of my to-do-list. Over the last year, through eBay, Amazon, and local Half Price Books I managed to double the size of my collection and out of 43 books in chronological order, from the *Truce at Bakura* to *Traitor*, I am missing only three.

I very recently had the opportunity to meet another important author from the early days of the expanded universe. Besides Timothy Zahn, Kevin J. Anderson had the biggest hand in setting up and building on the Star Wars universe. He was a guest at this year's Planet Comicon in Kansas City. I brought four books from my collection and bought three more of them from his booth. He was very friendly and more than happy to sign my books while I nervously gushed

about how important his Jedi Academy trilogy was to my childhood. He signed each book with a special little phrase that related to that particular book. I even got to attend a panel where he talked about how he got into writing and what it was like working on the Star Wars novels in the early nineties.

The ultimate goal of my collection is to own every book in the Star Wars expanded universe. Due to Disney's acquisition of the Star Wars brand they decided to take all of the currently published Star Wars books and remove them from continuity and relabel them all under the banner "Legends." It is disappointing because I hate endings, but the fact that there is now an ending means that my collection has a feasible end goal. Right now I have 47 books, which may seem like a lot, but is really only a beginning. At final count there are over 150 official Star Wars books, not including any books classified as being for young readers. My collection, as it stands, is made up of almost entirely cheap paperback editions. I'm more interested in just having a copy of each book, regardless of condition, as long as it is readable. For me book collecting isn't about rarity, condition, or format, but about gathering together books I enjoy reading and want to read again. When I've finally completed this massive collection I hope to be able to sit down and read the entire series from start to finish, in chronological order, so I can finally experience the massive galaxy that has been so lovingly fleshed out from a 121 minute movie to 154 books.

Bibliography

Allen, Roger MacBride. *Ambush at Corellia*. New York: Bantam, 1995. Print.

The first book in the Corellian Trilogy. Corellia is the planet that Han Solo comes from and as a kid I was a big Han Solo fan. I also have two books about his adventures before the movies that I didn't include in the collection. In this story Han attempts to take his kids on a vacation to the system he grew up in, but his evil cousin Thrackan Sal-Solo holds the whole system hostage.

Allen, Roger MacBride. *Assault at Selonia*. New York: Bantam, 1995. Print.

The second book in the Corellian Trilogy.

Allen, Roger MacBride. *Showdown at Centerpoint*. New York: Bantam, 1995. Print.

The third book in the Corellian Trilogy.

Allston, Aaron. *Enemy Lines: Rebel Dream*. New York: Del Rey, 2002. Print.

The first book in the Enemy Lines Duology and the eleventh book in the New Jedi Order series.

Allston, Aaron. *Enemy Lines: Rebel Stand*. New York: Del Rey, 2002. Print.

The second book in the Enemy Lines Duology and the twelfth book in the New Jedi Order series.

Allston, Aaron. *X-Wing: Iron Fist*. New York: Bantam, 1998. Print.

The sixth book in the X-Wing series.

Allston, Aaron. *X-Wing: Solo Command*. New York: Bantam, 1999. Print.

The seventh book in the X-Wing series.

Allston, Aaron. *X-Wing: Starfighters of Adumar*. New York: Bantam, 1999. Print.

The ninth book in the X-Wing series.

Allston, Aaron. *X-Wing: Wraith Squadron*. New York: Bantam, 1998. Print.

The fifth book in the X-Wing series and the first one written by new series writer Aaron Allston.

Anderson, Kevin J. *Champions of the Force*. New York: Bantam, 1994. Print.

The third book in the Jedi Academy Trilogy. Signed by the Kevin J. Anderson with the inscription “– A Jedi Knight in training.”

Anderson, Kevin J. *Dark Apprentice*. New York: Bantam, 1994. Print.

The second book in the Jedi Academy Trilogy. Signed by the author Kevin J. Anderson with the inscription “– Beware the dark side.”

Anderson, Kevin J. *Darksaber*. New York: Bantam, 1995. Print.

A standalone story wherein a group of Hutts (the big slimy worm people) steal the Death Star blueprints and use them to build a super weapon which consisted of only the big laser part and none of the station. They call it the Darksaber and attempt to hold the galaxy hostage with it. The galaxy calls their bluff and when the Hutts attempt to fire Darksaber it blows up in their face. I managed to get this copy signed by the author Kevin J. Anderson. The inscription he left me changed my life forever: “-- Never trust a Hutt.” I never have since.

Anderson, Kevin J. *Jedi Search*. New York: Bantam, 1994. Print.

The first book in the Jedi Academy Trilogy. Signed by Kevin J. Anderson with the inscription “– May the force be with you.” This trilogy was really influential to me when I was a kid. It was just full of the kinds of things that excite a young boy’s imagination. The spirit of a long dead Sith Master taking over Luke’s body. A new super weapon called the Sun Crusher that could destroy an entire solar system by making the star go supernova. And a powerful young Jedi who has to fight his way back from the dark side of the force to ultimately save the day.

Cunningham, Elaine. *Dark Journey*. New York: Del Rey, 2002. Print.

The tenth novel in the New Jedi Order series. Dark Journey is the story of Jaina Solo as she tries to deal with the death of not only her younger brother Anakin, but her twin brother Jacen.

Denning, Troy. *Star by Star*. New York: Del Rey, 2001. Print.

The ninth novel in the New Jedi Order series and also includes the novella Ylesia which was originally released as an e-book.

Hambly, Barbara. *Planet of Twilight*. New York: Bantam, 1998. Print.

Keyes, Greg. *Edge of Victory: Conquest*. New York: Del Rey, 2001. Print.

The first book in the Edge of Victory Duology and the seventh novel in the New Jedi Order series.

Keyes, Greg. *Edge of Victory: Rebirth*. New York: Del Rey, 2001. Print.

The second book in the Edge of Victory Duology and the eighth novel in the New Jedi Order Series.

Kube-McDowell, Michael P. *Before the Storm*. New York: Bantam, 1996. Print.

The first book in the Blackfleet Crisis Trilogy.

Kube-McDowell, Michael P. *Shield of Lies*. New York: Bantam, 1996. Print.

The second book in the Blackfleet Crisis Trilogy.

Kube-McDowell, Michael P. *Tyrant's Test*. New York: Bantam, 1997. Print.

The third book in the Blackfeet Crisis Trilogy.

Luceno, James. *Agents of Chaos: Hero's Trial*. New York: Del Rey, 2000. Print.

The first book in the Agents of Chaos Duology and the fourth novel in the New Jedi Order series.

Luceno, James. *Agent of Chaos: Jedi Eclipse*. New York: Del Rey, 2000. Print.

The second book in the Agents of Chaos Duology and the fifth novel in the New Jedi Order series.

McIntyre, Vonda N. *The Crystal Star*. New York: Bantam, 1995. Print.

Rusch, Kristine Kathryn. *The New Rebellion*. New York: Bantam, 1996. Print.

A standalone story that really show the New Republic coming into its own as a government. No government is perfect and the New Republic which started out as a rebellion against the Empire has to deal with a growing rebellion of their own.

Salvatore, R. A. *Vector Prime*. New York: Del Rey, 1999. Print.

The opening novel of the long running New Jedi Order series. Two words: Chewbacca dies!

Stackpole, Michael A. *Dark Tide: Onslaught*. New York: Del Rey, 2000. Print.

The first book in the Dark Tide Duology and the second novel in the New Jedi Order series.

Stackpole, Michael A. *Dark Tide: Ruin*. New York: Del Rey, 2000. Print.

The second book in the Dark Tide Duology and the third novel in the New Jedi Order series.

Stackpole, Michael A. *I, Jedi*. New York: Bantam, 1998. Print.

A standalone story featuring Corran Horn an X-Wing pilot and main character in Stackpole's X-Wing series. This story had a significant impact on my as a child as it is one of the few Star Wars books I distinctly remember checking out of the library and loving. I bought a hardcover copy of this novel specifically because that's the format I remembered the library book being.

Stackpole, Michael A. *X-Wing: The Bacta War*. New York: Bantam, 1997. Print.

The fourth book in the X-Wing series. In this story an Empire leader has taken control of the planet that produces bacta. Bacta is that liquid healing substance that you can see Luke floating in *The Empire Strikes Back*. The Rogue squadron has to take down the leader and regain control of the bacta. Again this is what I love about the Expanded Universe because authors can pick up on tiny little details from the movie and fully flesh them out.

Stackpole, Michael A. *X-Wing: Isard's Revenge*. New York: Bantam, 1999. Print.

The eighth book in the X-Wing series and the return of series creator Michael Stackpole.

Stackpole, Michael A. *X-Wing: The Krytos Trap*. New York: Bantam, 1996. Print.

The third book in the X-Wing series.

Stackpole, Michael A. *X-Wing: Rogue Squadron*. New York: Bantam, 1996. Print.

The first book in Michael Stackpole's X-Wing series. Wedge Antilles the leader of the X-Wing squadron's that took on the Death Star forms a new squad called the Rogue Squadron. Their mission: to take back the capital planet Coruscant. I love this series because it exemplifies the idea behind the whole expanded universe. Just because the Emperor is dead does not mean the Empire just evaporates. There is still a lot of galaxy left to liberate. I picked this up just a couple weeks ago from a Half Price Books. I was so excited to finally fill this glaring hole in my collection.

Stackpole, Michael A. *X-Wing: Wedge's Gamble*. New York: Bantam, 1996. Print.

The second book in the X-Wing series and the beginning of my Star Wars collection. I remember reading the first book in the series from the library and loving it. To my dismay they did not have the second so I had to buy it and thus my collection was born.

Stover, Matthew. *Traitor*. New York: Del Rey, 2002. Print.

The thirteenth novel in the New Jedi Order series and the final book chronologically in my collection. This is the point where I stopped collecting in high school. I'm not entirely sure why I stopped here. The story takes place almost entirely in one room and from the perspective of one character, Jacen Solo son of Han and Leia, after having been captured by the Yuuzhan Vong. I think the use of first person point of view and heavy introspection was too much of a change from the action I was used to at the time. Having now reread it a decade later I find it much easier to understand and am looking forward to what happens next.

Tyers, Kathy. *Balance Point*. New York: Del Rey, 2001. Print.

The sixth novel in the New Jedi Order series.

Tyers, Kathy. *The Truce at Bakura*. New York: Bantam, 1994. Print.

The chronological start to my collection and the first novel in the timeline directly following the Return of the Jedi movie. It is significant because it details the transition from Rebel Alliance to the New Republic.

Wolverton, Dave. *The Courtship of Princess Leia*. New York: Bantam, 1995. Print.

A standalone story that takes place about 4 years after the end of the movies. Han and Leia have been a couple all this time, but the relationship has yet to be solidified. Leia as a high ranking diplomat in the New Republic is proposed to by a wealthy prince. The fact that she almost accepts the proposal is what finally drives Han to take action and marry Leia. It's great because the movies left Han and Leia's relationship open ended, but the Expanded Universe seals the deal for fans.

Zahn, Timothy. *Dark Force Rising*. New York: Bantam, 1993. Print.

The second book in the Thrawn Trilogy.

Zahn, Timothy. *Heir to the Empire*. New York: Bantam, 1992. Print.

The novel that started it all. *Heir to the Empire* is the first book in the Thrawn Trilogy, which reignited Star Wars popularity and is almost solely responsible for the explosion of Star Wars: Expanded Universe novels throughout the nineties till now. It's important to me because it introduces my favorite Star Wars villain Grand Admiral Thrawn.

Zahn, Timothy. *The Last Command*. New York: Bantam, 1994. Print.

The third book in the Thrawn Trilogy. This was actually the first book in the trilogy that I added to my collection. Unfortunately on this particular trip to the store it was the only book in the series available. I've never been a fan of starting at the end, but I knew I had to buy it while I had the chance.

Zahn, Timothy. *Specter of the Past*. New York: Bantam, 1998. Print.

The first book in the Hand of Thrawn Duology.

Zahn, Timothy. *Vision of the Future*. New York: Bantam, 1999. Print.

The second book in the Hand of Thrawn Duology.