

The humbling of
humanity through
extraterrestrial
intervention: an
unlikely utopi...



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When the Overlords in Arthur C. Clarke's novel *Childhood's End* descend over mankind, humanity is immediately awestruck and completely humbled by their scientific and technological prowess. As the Overlords become more active in human society and affairs, their intelligence and pure ability to easily accomplish every human goal completely humbles humanity. Humans no longer consider themselves the most capable beings on Earth as the Overlords appear to exceed humankind in nearly every capacity. By encountering the Overlords, humankind is forced to recognize not only that they are not the only force in the universe, but that they are inferior in almost every possible way. This recognition of humanity's own inferiority allows society to evolve and become the utopia it does.

The first arrival of the Overlords puts a halt to the space race as humans realize they can never achieve the superior space-travel the Overlords have. The Overlord's first arrive when the Americans and the Germans are trying to both make it space first, but their arrival with their large and amazing ships cause both sides of the race to give up, "...he had lost the race...not by the few weeks or months that he had feared, but by millennia" (Clarke 7). The character Reinhold immediately recognizes his own technological inferiority as his life's work is completely dismantled in the matter of seconds, " the work of a lifetime was swept away. He had labored to take man to the stars, and, in the moment of success, the stars...had come to him" (7). Even aside from the recognition of humankind's inferior engineering and science, the Overlords' arrival forces humanity to see that there are " no longer alone" (8). This knowledge causes humans to see that they are not the most important beings in the universe and all of their

achievements are minuscule in comparison to what other races have achieved and can do.

When the Overlords begin to interact with humanity, everyone easily recognizes the superior intelligence of their new neighbors. Karellen's first speech to humanity exudes his sheer intelligence, "superlative genius, showing a complete and absolute mastery of human affairs. There could be no doubt that its scholarship and virtuosity, its tantalizing glimpse of knowledge still untapped, were deliberately designed to convince mankind that it was in the presence of overwhelming intellectual power" (13). Once humanity recognizes the Overlords intellectual superiority, they quickly submit themselves into the hands of their new governors. Although "local internal governments would still retain their powers...supreme decisions had passed from human hands" and few people protest this fact due to knowing that the Overlord's can offer the most intelligent, objective solution to any issue. Thus the Overlords are able to implement policy and assist in the building of what humans could never achieve on their own—peace and unity across nations. With war ended, things like "the Federation of Europe" which was just a dream for most becomes a reality, and racial discrimination and animal cruelty are ended (12). Thanks to the superiority of the Overlords and humankind's decision to humble themselves to the obviously more powerful race, a "Golden Era" sets in, and a world-wide utopia begins.

With no one person or country trying to be the superior, due to humanity accepting their own inferiority, humans are able to live their lives in comfort and bliss. Since "ignorance, disease, poverty, and fear had virtually ceased to exist", individuals can focus on learning and exploring their passions (74). <https://assignbuster.com/the-humbling-of-humanity-through-extraterrestrial-intervention-an-unlikely-utopia-in-childhoods-end/>

Once the fight for superiority ended, Earth becomes “ One World”—a planet completely united and part of one collective (74). Such a feat was made possible by “ the perfection of air transportation, everyone was free to go anywhere at a moment’s notice” (76-77). While some humans have “ lost initiative”, individual lives become filled with tranquility and passion rather than stress and tedium (13). Because of humanity humbling themselves in the sight of a greater power, humanity is able to improve themselves and have better society than ever before.

Even the Overlords making themselves known to mankind by revealing their physical appearance causes humanity to humble themselves. The Overlords are physically taller, stronger, and overall superior in form and physical ability to mankind. Even ignoring their sheer size, the Overlords possess superhuman abilities, “ a being who could read, talk, and probably do several other things at the same time” (86). The Overlords bear resemblance to “ the most terrible legends” of demonic figures—a fact that forces humanity to reevaluate what they fear and why they fear it (71). Although Karellen and his race have “ leathery wings, the little horns, the barbed tail”, humanity has no true reason to fear them—a fact that many humans recognize. Seeing that their greatest mythological fear was not truly something to be scared of causes people to humble themselves even more, for their collective consciousness is filled with wrong impressions and assumptions. By coming down to Earth, the Overlords ensure the final strike to humanity’s pride—forcing them to fully recognize their intellectual and physical inferiority and the irrationality of their deepest fears and beliefs.

Arthur C. Clarke's tale dives into and explore the possibility of a race coming to Earth who is completely superior intellectually and physically, yet lacking in one area—unconscious ability. While the Overlords possess awesome powers and abilities, their maximum abilities are known and fully explored, while humanity in the novel is like a child who still has maturing and growing to do to reach their maximum potential. In order to do so, humankind must humble themselves and dissipate their arrogance to allow humility and focus on personal betterment rather than superiority to set in. The Overlords being so obviously superior causes this change in humanity's collective belief which sets the improvement of mankind into motion.