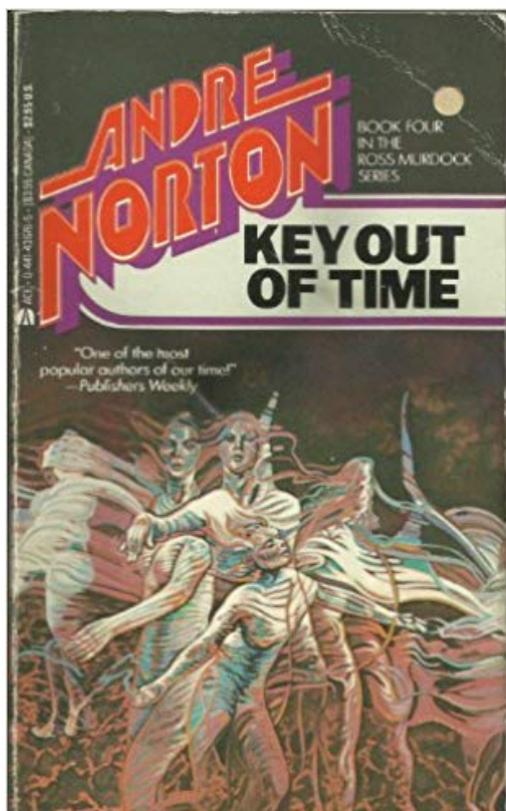# Key Out Of Time *by* Andre Norton

ISBN: 0441436765
ISBN13: 978-0441436767
Author: Andre Norton
Book title: Key Out Of Time
Publisher: Ace (February 1, 1984)
Language: English
Category: Science Fiction
Size PDF version: 1881 kb
Size ePUB version: 1714 kb
Size FB2 version: 1551 kb
Other formats: lrf lrf azw doc

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Reviews of the Key Out Of Time *by* Andre Norton

Celace
Unfortunately, I'm going to have to rate Andre Norton's "Key Out of Time" at a Not Very Good 2 stars out of 5. I'm assuming that since this is the 4th book in her Time Traders series, you've already read the first three and are familiar with her writing. For the most part, the writing here is similar, though Ross is more angry, and there are actual mis-steps in the writing (a gun that miraculously appears and then disappears again, ocean dolphins swimming up a river). Slightly bigger problems than that exist in the how and why of things: 1) somehow, at the start, they're sucked through a time gate (including part of the gate, itself) and that's not really explained, and 2) the "Baldies" are

attacking a planet, yet they do it at a tactical level instead of either just ignoring or dropping an asteroid on the Bronze Age natives. What I thought would be the biggest problem with the book is that Norton folds magic into this 4th book of the series even though it's all been high-tech (for the 50s and 60s anyway) science fiction until now. I'm not happy with that. But, I could have kept a 3 star rating with it since Norton has a whole series (Witch World) in a similar vein. But, the issue that pushed my rating over the edge into Not Very Good territory is that the ending is just not satisfying and is incomplete (I can't explain that since it would be a spoiler). This is especially bad since this book is the last of the pure Norton "Time Traders" books. The next one ("Firehand") is a shared writing one and didn't come out until 1994 ("Key Out of Time" was written in 1963). So, 2 stars it is.

The books in Andre Norton's "Time Trader" series are:

1 and 2: Time Traders: The Time Traders & Galactic Derelict
3: The Defiant Agents
4: Key Out of Time
Goodman
Originally posted at Fantasy Literature.

Key Out of Time is the fourth book in Andre Norton's TIME TRADERS series. Ross Murdock is once again the hero (he was not present in the previous book). This time he's on the planet Hawaika which is being settled by the United States. Ross is accompanied by Gordon Ashe and, because this planet has a lot of ocean, Karara, a Polynesian girl who has telepathic dolphin companions.

When Hawaika turns out to be different from what they expected, Ross, Ashe and Karara begin to investigate. What happened to the people who used to live there? Could the enigmatic aliens they call the "Baldies" have anything to do with their disappearance? The trio decides to go back in time to learn about the planet's history, but when the time gate is destroyed in a storm, they end up in the past with no way to get back. There they get split up, have separate adventures, get caught in the middle of a war between the two native races, meet some witches who are a lot like the witches in Norton's WITCH WORLD series, and discover that the Baldies have been tampering with the planet. Will the Time Traders find each other again? Can they help defeat the Baldies? Can they get back to their own time?

I've always found it fascinating that Alice Mary Norton's young adult science fiction adventures, which she wrote in the 1960s under the name Andre Norton, were so clearly written for young men, the main target audience for young adult science fiction at the time. In fact, I've heard several men who loved these books when they were teenagers say they would never have picked one up if the name "Alice" had been on the cover. They report that they were quite surprised when they found out years later that Andre Norton was a woman. Perhaps that's because Norton mostly conforms to expectations — most of her protagonists are young men and men are always in leadership positions. But, unlike many of the male authors of her age, Norton's female characters are strong and competent, even if they don't break out of normative gender roles. Here she gives us Karara, a talented young woman who, despite Ross Murdock's concerns, is perfectly capable of being a Time Trader.

After recently reading a couple of the previous books in the TIME TRADERS series, Key Out of Time feels a little redundant. Though it's a new setting, so many of the same elements are used — two primitive races on a deserted planet being manipulated by the aliens, telepathic animals helping the modern humans, scary wild animals to fight, Time Traders getting separated by some sort of disaster, Time Traders getting captured by people who may or may not be enemies.... However, Key Out of Time still makes an appealing adventure story for young adults and I wouldn't hesitate to

recommend it to anyone who likes old young adult science fiction adventures. Karara and her dolphins are a nice addition, and this is classic Andre Norton.

I enjoyed the audio version read by Mark F. Smith. You can purchase the Kindle version for free (it's in the public domain) and then add the narration for $2.99. Quite a bargain!
Wafi
This is a classic example of how Andre Norton crafts a story. Take some interesting characters, give them an important mission with the clock ticking to rush them along, and then let them loose on some alien world without them having the proper preparation, due to that ticking clock, and let them fend for themselves in dangerous situations. Ok, so the plot elements are essentially the same as the previous book in this series, The Defiant Agents. It's a series, that's why the plot elements are so much alike. Andre Norton fans understand that when they read one of her books they are in for a well told tale. She shares that same ability that Edgar Rice Burroughs possessed; the ability to return again and again to familiar plot elements, usually with different characters on different worlds, but essentially the same formula, and then tell a great story. Serious fantasy, sci-fi, or adventure aficionados recognize that the story is the most important thing, tell a good story and readers will willing accept the rehashing of familiar plot development schemes, time and time again. I never get tired of reading this sort of stuff. It usually takes a chapter or two to get the plot rolling, but, once Ms. Norton has laid out the ground work for her story, the story takes off and the reader just keeps turning the page. You want to know what happens next, and you want to know how the story is going to end. Very few writers have ever had the good fortune to maintain the loyalty of their readers to the extent Ms. Norton did in her lifetime, and beyond.

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