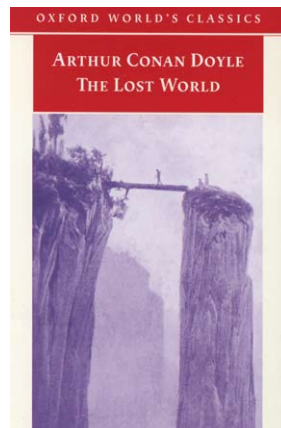
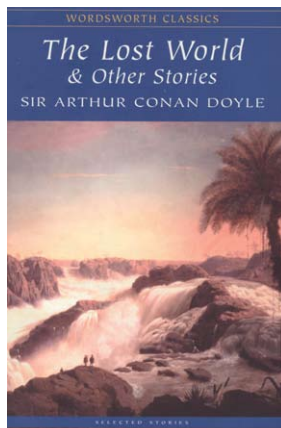
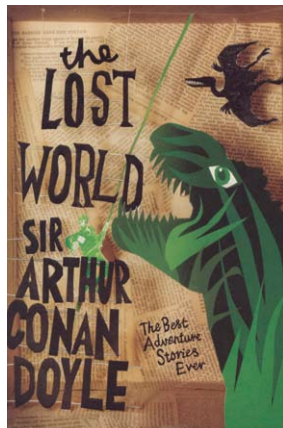


THE LOST WORLD

I HAVE WROUGHT MY SIMPLE PLAN
IF I GIVE ONE HOUR OF JOY
TO THE BOY WHO'S HALF A MAN,
OR THE MAN WHO'S HALF A BOY

The Lost World (1912) is an exciting tale of heroism and skulduggery involving bad-tempered scientists, unrequited love, hidden diamonds and dinosaurs. The plot hinges upon the irascible character of Professor Challenger who goes to South America to verify some of the observations made by other naturalists. He discovers that prehistoric creatures, long thought to be extinct, still exist on the continent. He later returns to the 'lost world' to gather the evidence that will convince his sceptical colleagues back

Modern editions of *The Lost World* (Headline, Wordsworth and Oxford University Press).

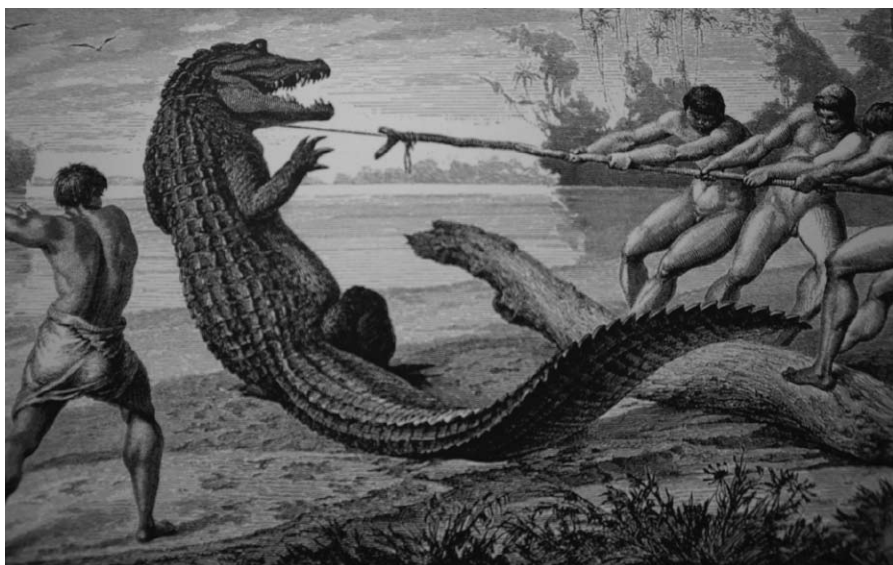


'The saurian age, when the world's inhabitants were gigantic reptiles' from *Harmsworth's History of the World Vol 1* (1907) (Bristol Libraries). Conan Doyle would have had access to many images of dinosaurs and prehistoric reptiles as reference material for *The Lost World* in popular illustrated books such as this.

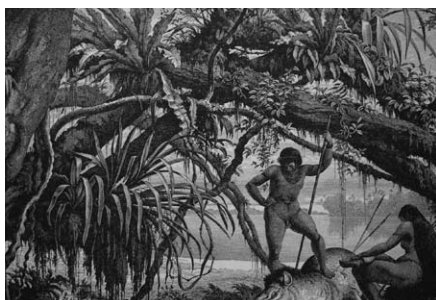
home in London of his amazing find. He is accompanied by a small party comprising reporter Edward Malone, adventurer Lord John Roxton and rival academic Professor Summerlee. The explorers reach an isolated plateau where they encounter pterodactyls and other Jurassic monsters. They are also caught up in a war between a primitive tribe of Indians and a fierce race of ape-men.

The Lost World was serialised in *The Strand* from April 1912, illustrated with photographs of Conan Doyle and his friends in the guise of the explorers, and was published in book form in October that year. The 'lost world' is a subgenre of science fiction covering those stories in which the protagonists come across a fascinating – and usually dangerous – place previously untouched by Westerners. The discovery often follows a perilous journey that has been prompted by a mysterious map or an intriguing rumour, and the more hackneyed stories feature fearful and superstitious native peoples and stiff-upper-lipped white heroes. Early lost world stories include Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1863), H Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and *She* (1887), Bulwer Lytton's *The Coming Race* (1871) and Edgar Rice Burroughs' *The Land That Time Forgot* (1924). Less typically, in James Hilton's *Lost Horizon* (1933), it is the travellers who are shown to be ignorant savages rather than the 'lost' people, and in Joseph O'Neill's *Land Under England* (1935) and Douglas V Duff's *Jack Harding's Quest* (1939), the inhabitants demonstrate superior scientific knowledge.

Lost world stories have proved popular with filmmakers, including Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993) and its sequel *The Lost*



'Caripuna Indians with tapir' from *The Amazon and Madeira Rivers* by Franz Keller (1874), left, and, above, 'Indians capturing alligator' from Edward Whymper's *Travels Amongst the Great Andes of the Equator* (1892) (Bristol Libraries). The indigenous peoples of South America suffered disease and exploitation following European colonisation. The character of Lord John Roxton in *The Lost World* is thought to be partly based on that of Conan Doyle's friend the Irish diplomat Roger Casement who exposed social injustices when he was consul-general in Rio.

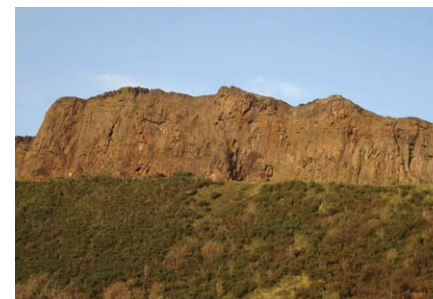


World, both based on novels by Michael Crichton. Conan Doyle's own novel was first released in a film version in 1925 starring Wallace Beery and Bessie Love. The dinosaurs were created using the same stop-motion animation that was later used in *King Kong*. Before the film's release, Conan Doyle had shown a clip from one of the animated sequences at a gathering of magicians in New York that included Harry Houdini. Many in the audience were convinced they were watching an apparition of actual dinosaurs cavorting in a primeval swamp!

Conan Doyle's name has also been linked to a much more elaborate hoax, the fossilised remains of Piltdown Man which were discovered not far from Crowborough around the time *The Lost World* was being serialised. This creature was thought to provide the missing



Below: 'Part of the exterior of the crater of Cotopaxi' from *Travels Amongst the Great Andes of the Equator* by the mountaineer and wood-engraver Edward Whymper (1892) (Bristol Libraries). Such dramatic images of South American expeditions had captured the popular imagination in the late nineteenth century.

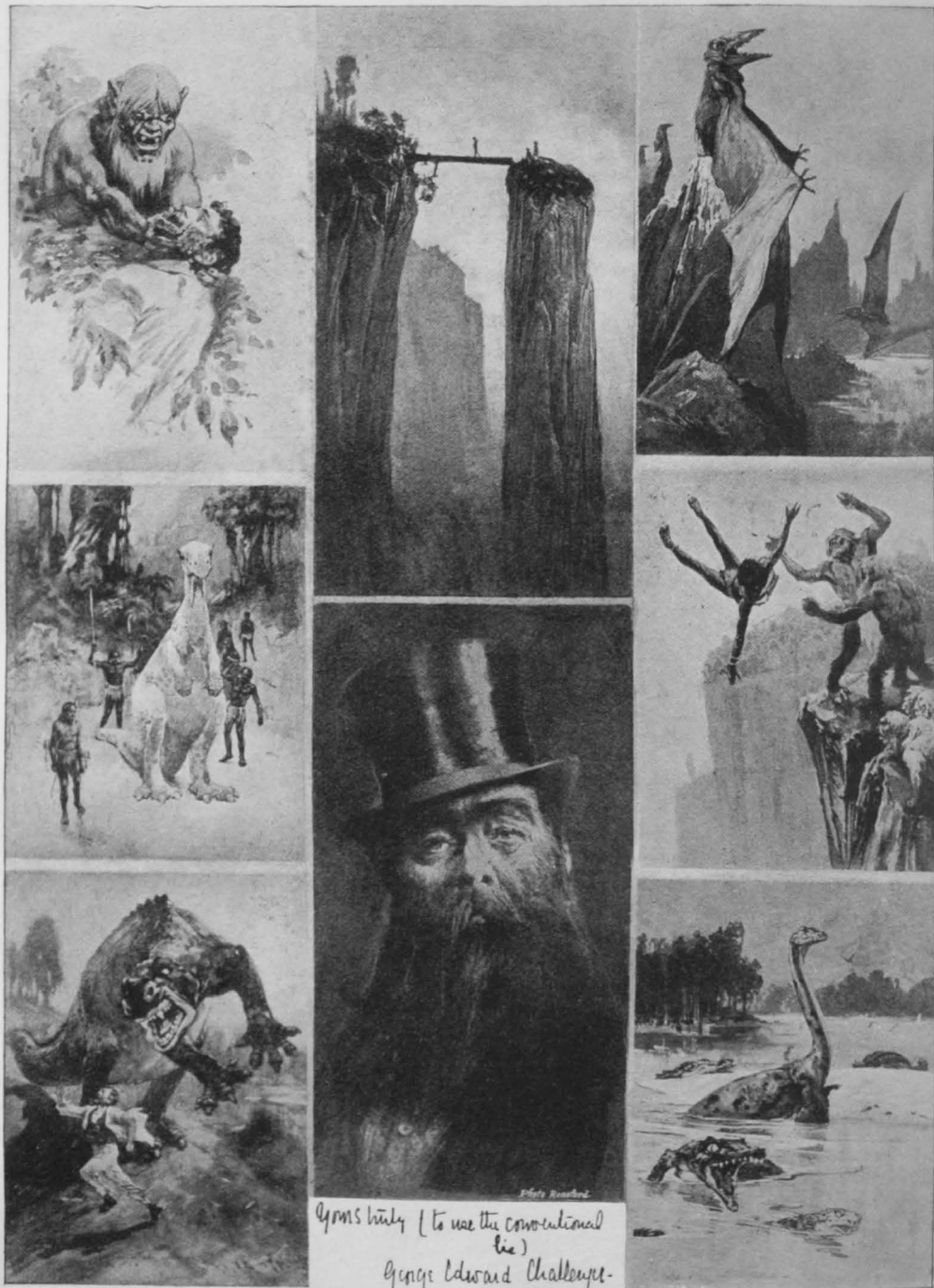


Above: As well as South America, Conan Doyle found inspiration for the descriptions of the landscape of *The Lost World* closer to home in the form of Salisbury Crags, Edinburgh (Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust, 2008).

evolutionary link between apes and humans. It would be 40 years before the fossil was discovered to be a fake. Although Conan Doyle did know the man who uncovered the find, Charles Dawson, sending him a letter of congratulation, he is unlikely to have been involved with what has been called 'the science fraud of the century'.

With *The Lost World*, Conan Doyle was deliberately setting out to write 'a sort of wild boy's book', as he described it to his friend Roger Casement, a change of pace from his previous fiction. He was fascinated by the field of exploration and complained jokingly at a Royal Societies Club luncheon that with the world's far-flung places already mapped 'the question is where the romance-writer is to turn when he wants to draw a vague and not too clearly-defined region' (this sentiment is echoed by Malone's editor in the book).

The Amazon basin still retained its mysteries, however. At a Royal Geographical Society talk in 1911, Conan Doyle met Colonel Percy Fawcett, who had charted the South American interior. During their conversation, he quizzed him about the topography of the Ricardo Franco hills, which later provided some of the inspiration for his descriptions of the plateau in *The Lost World*. Fawcett eventually disappeared without trace in 1925, supposedly searching for a legendary 'lost' white civilisation in Brazil. Conan Doyle must also have read the work of the naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace, who had undertaken an extensive expedition to the Amazon in the mid-nineteenth century, accompanied by Henry Walter Bates, as it is the findings of these two explorers that Challenger is putting to the test in his own South American journey.



“ THE LOST WORLD.”

The Leader of the Explorers, with some of their Adventures.

Left: Illustration from *The Strand's* serialisation of *The Lost World* (1912) (City of Westminster Libraries/Mirrorpix).

Below: 'Buttressed tree', right, and, left, 'Halt under a giant of the primeval forest (Madeira)' from *The Amazon and Madeira Rivers* by Franz Keller (1874) (Bristol Libraries). Europeans were fascinated by the scale and lushness of the vegetation of the Amazonian region which seemed to belong to an ancient, prehistoric world rather than the nineteenth century.

Conan Doyle was equally fascinated by dinosaurs. He enjoyed fossil-hunting and discovered several fossilised iguanodon footprints in a quarry close to his home (the travellers come across a family of these creatures in the book). One of his principle sources for information on dinosaurs was Sir Edwin Ray Lankester's *Extinct Animals* (1905), which Challenger refers to in order to identify Maple White's drawing. Lankester, who had been keeper of Natural History at the British Museum, was proud to be associated with the novel and was an admirer of Conan Doyle's work, despite his vigorous opposition to spiritualism.

The belligerent Edinburgh-educated Challenger was partly based on Conan Doyle's own personality, and partly on that of William Rutherford, his former professor of physiology, an eccentric, heavily bearded man with a booming voice. Challenger went on to star in further stories, of which the best is probably *The Poison Belt*, published the following year and seen by some as an attack on the complacency that was leading Europe to war. Challenger ranks alongside Sherlock Holmes as one of the great characters of British fiction.

