

**Wieland Schwanebeck, M.A.**

**What We Need Is a Hero:  
British Adventure Fiction**

**Mo (5)**

**WIL B321**

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Detailed requirements to be announced in class

Rugged-looking tough guys, damsels in distress, rare gems to be (re)claimed for the British Empire – few literary genres found as many fans during the Victorian Age as the genre of adventure fiction, and very few have remained as popular to contemporary readers (and cinema-goers). A surprisingly great number of adventure stories show similarities across cultures and different periods, pointing to the adventure tale as a paradigm of the most archaic story structure: a lone hero who must travel across borders and overcome great obstacles before he can return home.

This seminar will look at the genre of adventure fiction from a variety of angles, using H. Rider Haggard's classic tale, *King Solomon's Mines* and its protagonist, Allan Quartermain, as a case study.

Amongst the topics that will feature in our discussion are genre elements, aspects of story grammar which date back to the origins of structuralism, and other basic narrative categories. Moreover, we will analyse adventure tales from a gender-oriented angle (putting the hero's masculinity under scrutiny), look at some well-known filmic representations, and also address some of the rather questionable aspects of Quartermain's African exploits from a postcolonial perspective.

Please buy the following edition:

H. Rider Haggard: *King Solomon's Mines*. Oxford: OUP, 2008. [ISBN 978-0199536412]

Some more excerpts from other texts (both primary and secondary literature) will be available in a reader at the beginning of term.

You can join this course whether you have already attended the introduction to literary studies or not. You do not have to register beforehand – if you are interested in joining this class, just be there for the first meeting.