

The Stand

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This article is about the novel. For the television miniseries, see [The Stand \(TV miniseries\)](#).

For other uses, see [Stand \(disambiguation\)](#).

"Project Blue" redirects here. For anime series, see [Project Blue Earth SOS](#).

The Stand



First edition cover

Author(s)	Stephen King
Country	United States
Language	English
Genre(s)	Post-apocalyptic novel
Publisher	Doubleday
Publication date	September 1978
Media type	Print (Hardcover)
Pages	823
ISBN	978-0385121682
Preceded by	The Shining
Followed by	The Dead Zone

The Stand is a [post-apocalyptic horror/fantasy novel](#) by [American author Stephen King](#). It demonstrates the scenario in his earlier short story, *[Night Surf](#)*. The novel was originally published in 1978 and was later re-released in 1990 as *The Stand: The Complete & Uncut Edition*; King restored some text originally cut for brevity, added and revised sections, changed the [setting](#) of the story from 1980 (which in turn was changed to 1985 for the original paperback release in 1980) to 1990, and updated a few [pop culture](#) references

accordingly. *The Stand* was nominated for the [World Fantasy Award for Best Novel](#) in 1979, and was adapted into both a [television miniseries](#) for ABC and a [graphic novel](#) published by [Marvel Comics](#).^{[1][2]}

The book is dedicated to King's wife, [Tabitha](#): "For Tabby: This dark chest of wonders."

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[\[edit\]](#) Plot summary

[\[edit\]](#) "Captain Trips"

The novel is divided into three parts, or books. The first is titled "Captain Trips" and takes place over nineteen days, with the escape and spread of a human-made *superflu* ([influenza virus](#)) known formally as "Project Blue", but most commonly as "Captain Trips". The virus is developed at a [U.S. Army](#) base, where it is accidentally released. While the base tries to shut down before any infected person can escape, a security malfunction allows a guard and his family to sneak out. Unfortunately, they are already infected, and set off a [pandemic](#) that kills an estimated 99.4% of the world's human population, as well as that of domesticated animals, such as horses and dogs.

King outlines the total breakdown and destruction of society through widespread violence, the failure of [martial law](#) to contain the outbreak, and eventually the death of virtually the entire population. The human toll is also dealt with, as the few survivors must care for their families and friends, dealing with confusion and grief as their loved ones succumb to the flu.

The expanded edition opens with a prologue titled "The Circle Opens" that offers greater detail into the circumstances surrounding the development of the virus and the security breach that allowed its escape from the secret laboratory compound where it was created.

[\[edit\]](#) "On the Border"

Intertwining cross-country odysseys are undertaken by a small number of survivors in three parties, which are drawn together by both circumstances and their shared dreams of a 108-year-old woman from [Hemingford Home, Nebraska](#)^[3], whom they see as a refuge and a representation of good in the struggle of good versus evil. This woman, Abigail Freemantle, or "Mother Abigail", becomes the spiritual leader for the survivors. Mother Abigail directs them to [Boulder, Colorado](#), where they struggle to re-establish a [democratic](#) society.

Meanwhile, another group of survivors are drawn to [Las Vegas, Nevada](#) by [Randall Flagg](#), an evil being with supernatural powers; he exists in the story to represent the opposite influence of Mother Abigail. Flagg's governance is brutally [tyrannical](#), using [crucifixion](#), [dismemberment](#) and other forms of [torture](#) to quell dissent. Flagg's group is able to quickly reorganize their society, restore power to Las Vegas, and rebuild the city with the many technical professionals who have migrated there. Flagg's group launches a weapons program, searching the country for suitable arms.

In Boulder, the democratic society of the "Free Zone" is beset with problems: Mother Abigail, feeling that she has become prideful due to her pleasure at being a public figure, disappears into the wilderness on a journey of spiritual reconciliation. Meanwhile, one of the survivors builds a [dynamite](#) bomb in response to feelings of disconnection and unrequited love, while another survivor crudely rigs it to destroy the Free Zone's leadership. Shortly before the explosion, Mother Abigail returns, much to the relief of the survivors.

[\[edit\]](#) "The Stand"

The stage is now set for the final confrontation as the two camps become aware of one another, and each recognizes the other as a threat to its survival, leading to the "stand" of good against evil. There is no pitched battle, however. Instead, at Mother Abigail's dying behest, Stu, Larry, Ralph and Glen set off on foot towards Las Vegas on an expedition to confront Randall Flagg. Stu breaks his leg en route and drops out. He encourages the others to leave without him, telling them that God will provide for him. Glen, Ralph, and Larry soon encounter Flagg's men, who take them prisoner. When Glen rejects an opportunity to be spared if he kneels and begs Flagg for his life, he is shot on Flagg's order by one of his men. Flagg gathers his entire collective to witness the execution of the other two, but before it can take place, Trashcan Man arrives with a [nuclear warhead](#) and a giant glowing hand—"The Hand of God"—detonates the bomb, destroying Flagg's followers and the two remaining prisoners.

Stu, with the aid of Glen Bateman's dog "Kojak" (formerly "Big Steve") and Tom Cullen, survives injury, illness, and a harsh Rocky Mountain winter. The three of them arrive back in Boulder soon after the birth of Fran's baby. Although the baby falls ill with the superflu, he is able to fight it off. In the end, Stu and Fran decide to return to Maine, and the original edition of the novel ends with the two of them questioning whether the human race can learn from its mistakes. The answer, given in the last line, is ambiguous: "I don't know."

The expanded edition follows this with a brief [coda](#) called "The Circle Closes", which leaves a darker impression and fits in with King's ongoing "wheel of [ka](#)" theme. Randall Flagg, using the alias "Russell Faraday", wakes up on a beach somewhere in the South Pacific, having escaped the atomic blast in Vegas by using his dark magic (although Flagg does not

remember how he got to the beach or what his real name is, and it is suggested that he does not even remember the events in America), and begins recruiting adherents among a preliterate, dark-skinned people, who worship him as some sort of god.

[[edit](#)] Characters

Main article: [List of The Stand characters](#)

[[edit](#)] Background

In his non-fiction book *Danse Macabre*, Stephen King writes about the origins of *The Stand* at some length. One source was [Patty Hearst](#)'s case. The original idea was to create a novel about the episode because "it seemed that only a novel might really succeed in explaining all the contradictions".

The author also mentions [George R. Stewart](#)'s novel *Earth Abides*, which describes the odyssey of one of the last human survivors after the population is decimated by a plague, as one of the main inspirations:

With my Patty Hearst book, I never found the right way in . . . and during that entire six-week period, something else was nagging very quietly at the back of my mind. It was a news story I had read about an accidental CBW spill in Utah. (. . .) This article called up memories of a novel called *Earth Abides*, by George R. Stewart.

(. . .) and one day while sitting at my typewriter, (. . .) I wrote—just to write something: The world comes to an end but everybody in the SLA is somehow immune. Snake bit them. I looked at that for a while and then typed: No more gas shortages. That was sort of cheerful, in a horrible sort of way. ^[4]

The Stand was also planned by King as an epic *The Lord of the Rings*-type story in a contemporary American setting:

For a long time—ten years, at least—I had wanted to write a fantasy epic like *The Lord of the Rings*, only with an American setting. I just couldn't figure out how to do it. Then . . . after my wife and kids and I moved to Boulder, Colorado, I saw a *60 Minutes* segment on CBW (chemical-biological warfare). I never forgot the gruesome footage of the test mice shuddering, convulsing, and dying, all in twenty seconds or less. That got me remembering a chemical spill in Utah, that [killed a bunch of sheep](#) (these were canisters on their way to some burial ground; they fell off the truck and ruptured). I remembered a news reporter saying, 'If the winds had been blowing the other way, there was [Salt Lake City](#).' This incident later served as the basis of a movie called *Rage*, starring [George C. Scott](#), but before it was released, I was deep into *The Stand*, finally writing my American fantasy epic, set in a plague-decimated USA. Only instead of a hobbit, my hero was a Texan named Stu Redman, and instead of a Dark Lord, my villain was a ruthless drifter and supernatural madman named [Randall Flagg](#). The land of [Mordor](#) ('where the shadows lie,' according to [Tolkien](#)) was played by Las Vegas. ^[5]

King nearly abandoned *The Stand* due to [writers' block](#).^[6] Eventually, he reached the conclusion that the heroes were becoming too complacent, and were beginning to repeat all

the same mistakes of their old society. In an attempt to resolve this, he added the part of the storyline where Harold and Nadine construct a bomb which explodes in a Free Zone committee meeting, killing Nick Andros, Chad Norris, and Susan Stern. Later, Mother Abigail explains on her deathbed that God permitted the bombing because He was dissatisfied with the heroes' focus on petty politics, and not on the ultimate quest of destroying Flagg. When telling this story, King sardonically observed that the bomb saved the book, and that he only had to kill half of the core cast in order to do this.

[[edit](#)] *The Complete & Uncut Edition*

The Stand: The Complete & Uncut Edition

Publisher	Doubleday
Publication date	May 1990
Pages	1152
ISBN	978-0385199575

In 1990, a new unabridged edition of *The Stand* was published, billed as "The Complete & Uncut Edition". Published in hardcover by Doubleday in May 1990, this became the longest book in Stephen King's oeuvre at 1152 pages. When the novel was originally published in 1978, Doubleday believed the readers would be averse to such a long book, and *The Stand* would be a bigger seller if it was much shorter, and Stephen King cut approximately 500 pages (around 150,000 words) from the original manuscript. This edition reinstates the deleted pages, as well as updates the setting from the 1980s to the 1990s. This new edition features a new preface by Stephen King, and illustrations by [Bernie Wrightson](#). Additionally, Doubleday published a deluxe edition of *The Stand: The Complete & Uncut Edition*, limited to 1,250 numbered copies and 52 lettered copies. This edition, known as the "Coffin Box" edition due to the book being housed in a wooden case, was signed by Stephen King and Bernie Wrightson. ^{[7][8][9]}

[[edit](#)] Adaptations

[[edit](#)] Live-action

Main article: [The Stand \(TV miniseries\)](#)

A movie adaptation of *The Stand* was in [development hell](#) for 10 years. During the '80s Stephen King had planned a theatrical film, with [George A. Romero](#) directing and himself writing, not trusting somebody else with the project. However writing a workable screenplay proved difficult, due to the novel's length. King talked about adapting it for television but was informed that the [television networks](#) did not "want to see the end of the world, particularly in prime time." Eventually King allowed screenwriter [Rospo Pallenberg](#), who was a fan of *The Stand*, to write his own adaptation on the novel. Pallenberg's script would clock the film in at close to three hours while still staying true to the novel. Everyone liked the script; however, just as it was about to finally come together, [Warner Brothers](#) backed out of the project.^[10]

[ABC](#) eventually offered Stephen King the chance to make *The Stand* into a 8-hour [miniseries for television](#). King wrote a new screenplay (toned down for television). The [miniseries](#) was broadcast in 1994, directed by [Mick Garris](#) and starring such actors as [Gary Sinise](#), [Molly Ringwald](#), [Rob Lowe](#), [Miguel Ferrer](#), [Laura San Giacomo](#), [Ossie Davis](#), [Shawnee Smith](#) and [Ed Harris](#).

In January 2011, it was announced that [Warner Bros.](#) and [CBS Films](#) will be developing a feature length film adaptation of *The Stand*.^[11] There is currently no official release date. In July 2011 it was reported that the film may be a trilogy, and that [David Yates](#) is considering directing.^[12] On August 10, Warner Bros. has finalized the deal for Yates and [Harry Potter](#) screenwriter [Steve Kloves](#) to re-team for a multi-movie version of *The Stand*.^[13] However, in October 2011, it was reported that both Yates and Kloves had left the project due to Yates feeling the project would work better as a [miniseries](#) and that actor/director [Ben Affleck](#) was Warner Bros. new choice for the project.^[14]

[\[edit\]](#) Comics

Main article: [The Stand \(comics\)](#)

[Marvel Comics](#) adapted *The Stand* into a series of six, five issue [comic book miniseries](#).^[1] The series was written by [Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa](#) and illustrated by [Mike Perkins](#). Colorist [Laura Martin](#), letterer [Chris Eliopoulos](#) and cover artist [Lee Bermejo](#) were also on the staff. The first issue of *The Stand: Captain Trips* was released on September 10, 2008.^[15]

[\[edit\]](#) Music



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[Progressive rock](#) band *Shadow Circus* has created a series of songs about the main events in *The Stand*, and in whole the tracks come to a full 33-minute [progressive rock](#) epic titled "Project Blue". The tracks can be found on their latest [CD](#) *Whispers and Screams* and the track listing can be found in the audio portion of their [website](#).^[16]

A more concise nod to *The Stand* has been recorded as the title track on the album [Among The Living](#) by [Anthrax](#), a thrash/speed metal band whose love of King's work has been well documented.^[*citation needed*]

A soundtrack to the mini-series was released at the same time of the ABC special four night broadcast. It contains the instrumental guitar music and orchestrations of "Snuffy" Walden and other artists.

In 1983, the alternative rock band [The Alarm](#) released the song, "The Stand," with lyrics directly inspired by the novel. The lyrics follow the travels of [Randall Flagg](#), in much the same way The Rolling Stones had "Sympathy For The Devil."

[\[edit\]](#) See also

- [Earth Abides](#), an early post-apocalyptic novel which inspired King.
- [The Dark Tower](#) series. The concept of the villain Flagg as an extradimensional evil or [Antichrist](#) figure, capable of appearing in multiple later works of fiction by King, was introduced in *The Stand*.
- [The Lord of the Rings](#), the epic fantasy trilogy that also inspired King. He said he wanted to recreate this with "an American setting."
- [Swan Song](#), a later work of post-apocalyptic fiction by [Robert R. McCammon](#).

[[edit](#)] References

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[[edit](#)] External links

- [The Stand](#) publication history at the [Internet Speculative Fiction Database](#)
- [Bookpoi](#) - How to identify first edition copies of *The Stand* by Stephen King.
- [The Stand](#) at Worlds Without End

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