

**Title:**

The Differences In The Various Versions Of "I Am Legend"

**Word Count:**

538

**Summary:**

Richard Matheson's classic "I Am Legend," widely regarded as being the earliest concrete example of zombie apocalypse

fiction, has notably suffered many alterations in the three movie adaptations of its plot. However, all adaptations

thankfully retain the concept of a bacterial agents that combines high antibiotic resistance, rapid transmission rates, and effects that turn the infected into vampire-like beings.

**Keywords:**

antibiotic resistance

**Article Body:**

With the recent relative success of the third attempt at making a big screen adaptation of the novel, some might find now to

be an appropriate time to discuss the merits of Richard Matheson's apocalyptic science fiction classic, "I Am Legend." The

main vehicle of the story, which has remained virtually consistent throughout all the adaptations, is a strain of bacteria

that combines two dangerous traits. The first is an antibiotic resistance so potent that no antimicrobial drug or

bacteriophage could be used to effectively counter it. The second would be the notable effects it has on those who have

become infected, as well as how the ones who died of the infection continue to "live." Humans killed by the infection begin

exhibiting traits associated with mythical vampires, such as an aversion to sunlight and garlic.

The bacterial agent is not fully explained in the novel itself, which prefers to delve into the lead character, Robert

Neville, and his research into the effects of the plague. Like most book-to-movie adaptations, "I Am Legend" suffers in the

translation from literary form to on-screen action. The movie adaptations of the original novel, Charlton Heston's "The Omega

Man," Vincent Price's "The Last Man On Earth," and Will Smith's "I Am Legend," all eliminate the duality of the infected

survivors. Whereas the infected are not divided in the movies, the novel shows that there are two groups of infected. The

first are vicious, vampire-like killers that consist primarily of the dead that have become reanimated by the bacteria. The

second are the still-living infected, who Neville takes pains to kill along with the already dead.

The incredible antibiotic resistance of the pathogen is shown by the novel to have made it nearly absolute in wiping out the

human population. The only signs the novel shows of hope for the human race are Robert Neville, the only human to show signs

of immunity to the infection, and a colony of infected humans who claimed to have found a way to ward off the infection's

effects. It is noted by some that, while the infected to manage to maintain some semblance of civilization in their colonies,

it is portrayed by the novel to collectively show signs of psychopathy. The novel does not discuss how the infection's

effects are being countered, but the relative absence of advanced laboratories and the bacteria's antibiotic resistance may

mean that the treatment is herbal in nature.

One final detail about the translations from novel to movie would be the final

resolution. In all the adaptations of the

movie, Neville is granted hope from his despair and loneliness by finding some sort of cure for the bacteria's effects,

generally by extracting an antidote from his own immune blood. In the novel, there is no such hope given. Neville is captured

by the still-infected, who have come to see him as a nightmarish monster, and publicly execute him. The title of the novel is

explained during Neville's final thoughts, wherein he realizes the rather ironic nature of the new society's perception of

him. In the same way that vampires are a legend to modern humans, Neville had become a legend to the infected people he so

ruthlessly killed in their sleep.