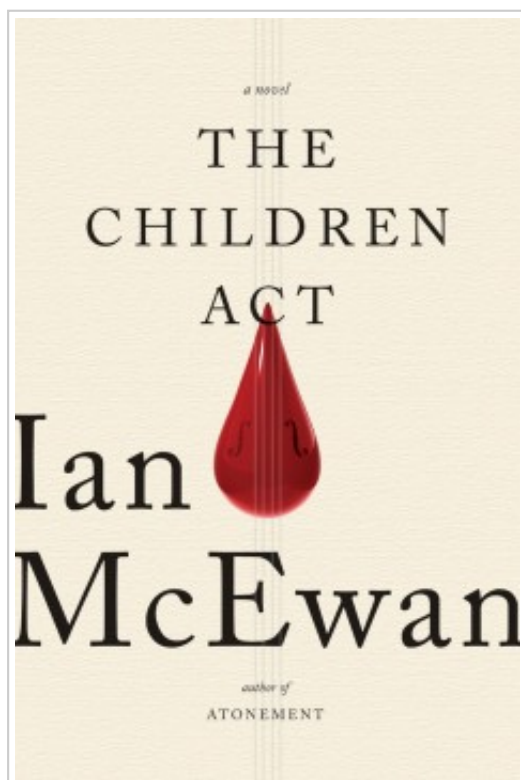


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The Children Act

by Ian McEwan

Price: \$25.00(Hardcover)

Published: September 09, 2014

Rating: 0.0/5 (0 votes cast)

From the Publisher: Fiona Maye is a leading High Court judge who presides over cases in the family court. She is renowned for her fierce intelligence, exactitude, and sensitivity. But her professional success belies private sorrow and domestic strife. There is the lingering regret of her childlessness, and now her marriage of thirty years is in crisis.

At the same time, she is called on to try an urgent case: Adam, a beautiful seventeen-year-old boy, is refusing for religious reasons the medical treatment that could save his life, and his devout parents echo his wishes. Time is running out. Should the secular court overrule sincerely expressed faith? In the course of reaching a decision, Fiona visits Adam in the hospital—an encounter that stirs long-buried feelings in her and powerful new emotions in the boy. Her judgment has momentous consequences for them both.

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What We Say

After a lesser effort or two, author Ian McEwan is in top form with "The Children Act." His latest novel focuses on High Court judge Fiona Maye, a respected figure at the top of her profession. In five vivid sections, McEwan effortlessly enters the mind of this intelligent, sophisticated and yes wise woman who is blindsided when her husband of many years demands the right to have an affair. She throws herself into her work -- indeed, work and the disturbing after-effects of one challenging case are the reasons she's pulled back from him in the past few months. But here is where McEwan strikes gold. Maye thinks deeply and thoughtfully about her marriage, always analyzing the various stances of her and her husband with self-aware anger, compassion and insight. But she does that even more with the bewildering and heartbreaking cases on which she must rule, such as conjoined twins who will die unless they are separated though only one will survive the operation, two little girls fought over by a mother who has rejected her husband's narrow faith and most of all a teenage boy whose parents refuse a blood transfusion that would save his life on religious grounds. Each case is compelling, indeed fascinating as Maye pours over the details and looks for the relevant facts that will guide her decision. We wrestle with the same issues, marvel at her clear-headed way through these moral minefields and rather fall in love with her in the process. It's no surprise when one of the people affected by her ruling perhaps does the same. McEwan works on many levels here, but above all it's a wonderful portrait of a 59 year old woman at the top of her profession who is complex, vulnerable, charming and in that very British way perhaps reserved to a fault. I look forward to Emma Thompson's Oscar-winning performance a few years from now. Meanwhile, enjoy this work that is nearly the equal of his masterpiece "Atonement." -- Michael Giltz

[Less](#)

What Others Say

"Absorbing."
—**The New Yorker**

"McEwan presents a ferociously intelligent and competent woman struggling to rule on a complex legal matter while feeling humiliated and betrayed by her husband ... a notable volume from one of the finest writers alive."
—**Ron Charles, The Washington Post**

"A short, concise, strong novel in which a judge's ruling decides the fate of a teenage boy in ways she never intended or imagined ... it's a book that begins with the briskness of a legal brief written by a brilliant mind, and concludes with a gracefulness found in the work of few other writers."
—**Meg Wolitzer, NPR**

"A quietly exhilarating book ... The Children Act chronicles the recalibration of a 30-year marriage after it has fallen out of balance."
—**Mona Simpson, Los Angeles Times**

"Haunting ... a brief but substantial addition to the author's oeuvre."
—**Entertainment Weekly, A-**

"[The Children Act's] sense of life-and-death urgency never wavers ... you would have to go back to Saturday or Atonement to find scenes of equivalent intensity and emotional..."