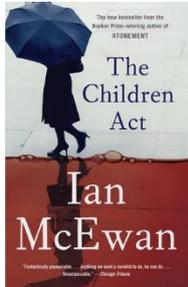


BOOK GROUP 2

MAY 2022

ARTICLE FOR THE U3A WEBSITE

THE CHILDREN ACT – IAN MCEWAN



It was agreed by everyone that this was an exceptionally engaging novel. Ian McEwan explores a range of issues in contemporary society affecting the judiciary and the way it operates. His main protagonist is a diligent hard working female judge (Fiona) in her late fifties faced with the plight of Adam, a clever 17 year old boy facing almost certain death unless he has a blood transfusion that is disallowed by his Jehovah's Witness family's interpretation of scripture. Neither Adam nor his parents want the transfusion to go ahead but, as a minor, the law has the power to make the final decision.

Meanwhile the judge and her partner of 40 years are trying to resolve their own relationship crisis. They have been together for 40 years, had no children and both lead busy lives with different lifestyles. He is an exponent of freeform jazz. She is a musician who closely follows the rules in classical playing, as she does in the interpretation of the law. Presented constantly with emotive arguments and having to be dispassionate and analytical, using pure objectivity and a rigid application of the law whilst restraining one's own emotions must be exhausting, leaving little to help her cope with her own personal dilemma when her husband decides he wants to have an affair with a younger woman.

Fiona visits Adam in hospital and discusses her role in his future and makes her decision. The intricacies of the High Court, the very ill but strangely seductive 17 yr old Adam Henry character pressured by loving parents whose extreme religion forbids blood transfusion, is brilliantly clever. It must be a pretty rare person who makes it to be a good High Court Judge. Having to read, know, remember and balance so many details, then to finally play God must be an enormous pressure. No wonder they are well paid - surgeons of the legal world!

Some of our members' comments:

"A good read for group discussion coincidentally following our previous novel re: Mormon living. When a good read is this good it's like looking through windows into other worlds, thought provoking enjoyable entertainment"

"Having read a couple of Ian McEwan's novels I knew I was in for a treat with The Children Act. I remembered enjoying the film / TV drama of this story but the writing is so good I got much more involved. How the author develops the parallel plots and ideas of a tired marriage, the tireless workings of Fiona's mind eased by playing classical piano is really good. The unforeseen almost maternal love that childless Fiona compulsively feels for Adam is beautifully intimate"

"I was very impressed with McEwan's knowledge of the subject and how he translated it into the story. It was interesting that he wrote it from a female angle. I will definitely read more of his books"

"I didn't particularly like "Atonement" so was pleased to find that this made a more favourable impression. It was an easy read without being predictable, having surprising twists and interesting characters"

"The Children Act was one of the best books I've read. We learnt about the two sets of beliefs – the Court of Law and the Jehovah's Witness religion but the novel was more about the people involved and the effects caused by the judgement made"

"Brilliant writing!"