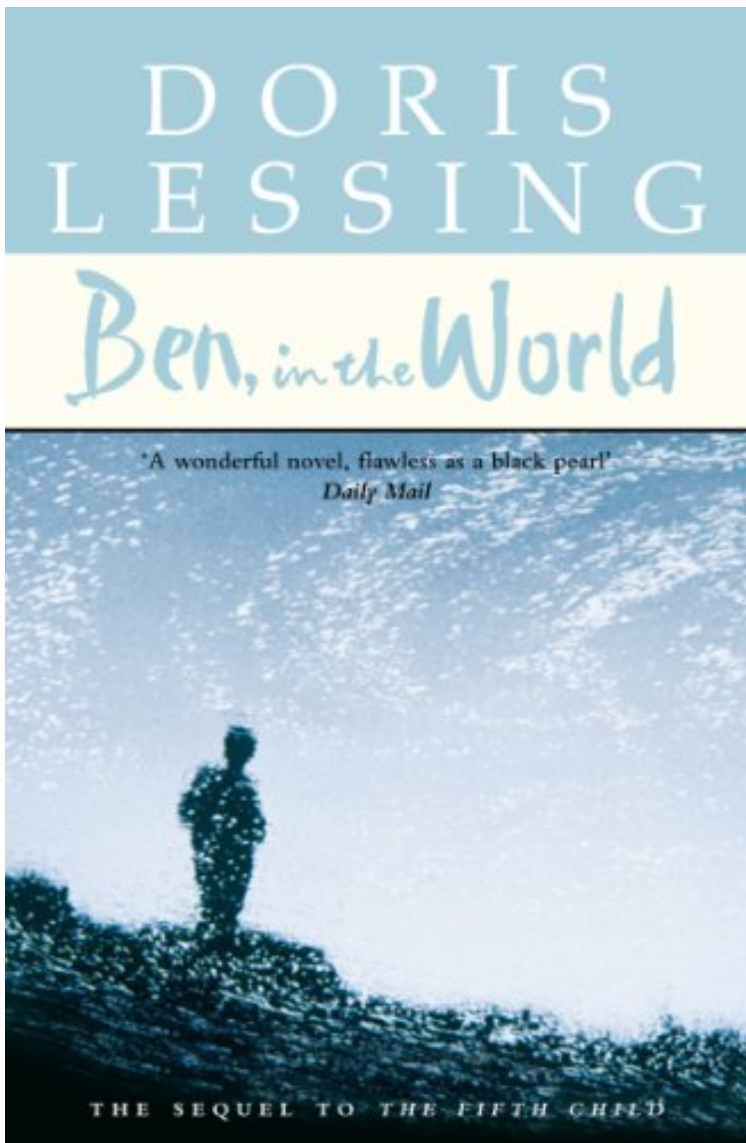


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Ben, in the World



Par Doris Lessing
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Par Doris Lessing : Ben, in the World before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ben, in the World:

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Description : Description du produit Ben Lovatt can never fit in. To those he meets, he seems awkward: too big, too strong, inhumanly made. He baffles and he terrifies: those who do not understand him want him locked up. His own mother locked him up; then, guilty, she liberated him. But her unyielding love for him corroded their family; this fifth child broke the home into bits. And now he has come of age and again finds himself bewildered and alone. He searches in the faces of those he meets to see the hostility there, or the fear, or more rarely the kindness. Occasionally a gentler, less fearful person to fit understands his need, how hard he is trying it in. Mostly people make use of him, and he finds himself in the south of France, in Brazil, and in the mountains of the Andes, where at last he discovers where he has come from and who his people are. The Fifth Child is one of Doris Lessing's most powerful and haunting books. In this sequel, Ben Lovatt is loosed on the wider world; how that world receives him, and how he fares in it, will keep the reader of Ben, in the World enthralled and on tenterhooks until its dramatic finale.

Presentation de l'auteur From Doris Lessing, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, the sequel to one of her most celebrated novels, *The Fifth Child*. *The Fifth Child*, Doris Lessing's 1988 novel, made a powerful impact on publication. Its account of idyllic marital and parental bliss shattered by the arrival of the feral fifth child of the Lovatts made for unnerving and compulsive reading. That child, Ben, is the central character of this sequel, which picks up the fable at the end of his childhood and takes our primal, misunderstood, maladjusted teenager out into the world. He meets mostly with mockery, fear and incomprehension, but with just enough kindness and openness to keep him afloat as his adventures take him from London to the south of France and on to South America in his restless quest for community, companionship and peace. Lessing employs a plain, unadorned prose fit for fables; again, we have a childlike perspective at the heart of the book; again, the world in all its malevolence and misapprehension swirls around at the edge, while, occasionally, a strong character steps forward to try to set a good example.

In a 1957 short story, "The Eye of God in Paradise," Doris Lessing brought to life a disturbed and disturbing child, a "desperate, wild, suffering little creature" who bit anyone who approached him. This child haunted not only the story's protagonist but the author. She first revived him in a powerful 1988 novel, *The Fifth Child*, pondering this strange offspring of an otherwise idyllic middle-class family. Who, or what, was Ben? Beast, goblin, throwback, alien, or a "normal healthy fine baby"? Lessing wrestled with these questions without ever quite managing to answer them. She takes them up again, however, in *Ben, in the World*. Now 18, but looking 35, Ben is estranged from his family, forced to find his way in a basically hostile world. His yeti-like appearance invariably evokes fear or amusement. And his other habits (including an appetite for raw meat) hardly allow him to blend into the crowd: He would catch and eat little animals, or a bird.... Or he stood by the cow with his arm around her neck, nuzzling his face into her; and the warmth that came into him from her, and the hot sweet blasts of her breath on his arms and legs when she turned her head to sniff at him meant the safety of kindness. Or he stood leaning on a fence post staring up at the night sky, and on clear nights he sang a little grunting song to the stars, or he danced around, lifting his feet and stamping. After three fictional encounters, Lessing knows Ben well. She constantly intervenes to direct the reader's response to him, to the people who surround him, and to his (sometimes unlikely) experiences in Europe and South America. His misery and alienation remain the focus of the novel. Yet they are offset by the odd individuals who offer Ben their friendship--and finally, by his wayward quest to find people like himself. --Vicky Lebeau

From Publishers Weekly When it appeared more than a decade ago, *The Fifth Child*, Lessing's powerful novel about a boy who was a freakish throwback to a primitive stage of existence, was justly praised as a shocking and memorable speculation about what happens when society is confronted with a human anomaly. This sequel continues Ben Lovatt's story, but with decidedly inferior narrative resources. Ben has run away from his upper-middle-class British family, who were humiliated by this genetic aberration. He is now 18, but with his fearsomely developed chest and arms, his squat and hairy body and his feral face, he appears to frightened observers to be a man in his 30s. Ironically, Ben himself is terrified of society. Unable to read, to handle money, to decipher even the simplest of situations, he is helpless, lonely and desperate. He realizes he must control the blood-red tides of rage that engulf his brain, lest he kill the adversaries who torment him.

But in a series of lurid adventures in a plot that seems to have been made up in fits and starts, Ben is betrayed by nearly everyone. Only three women are kind to him: one is old and terminally ill, the other two are prostitutes. People who have power and money abuse him, notably an American scientist doing research in Rio de Janeiro, where bewildered Ben has been transported by a down-and-out filmmaker, who picked him up in Paris after Ben was used as a dupe in a cocaine smuggling operation. It's obvious that Lessing is making a social statement about how intellectuals acting in the name of art or science cruelly exploit simple people who can't defend themselves. The plot achieves bathetic melodrama in the deserted mining country of interior Brazil, where poor Ben, "knowing [he is] alone, used but then abandoned," meets his grisly fate and brings this soap-operatic story to its long-foreshadowed, tragic close. (Aug.-- alone, used but then abandoned," meets his grisly fate and brings this soap-operatic story to its long-foreshadowed, tragic close.

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