



THE  
CHILDREN'S  
BOOK



A NOVEL

A. S. BYATT

BOOKER PRIZE-WINNING AUTHOR OF POSSESSION

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# The Children's Book by A.S. Byatt

A.S. Byatt

Shortlisted for the Guy Booker Prize, a spellbinding novel, right away sweeping and intimate, from the Booker Prize-winning writer of *Possession*, that spans the Victorian period during the global struggle of 1914-1918, and facilities round a recognized children's e-book writer and the passions, betrayals, and secrets and techniques that tear aside the folk she loves. When Olive Wellwood's oldest son discovers a runaway named Philip sketching within the basement of the recent Victoria and Albert Museum—a gifted working-class boy who can be a personality out of 1 of Olive's magical tales—she takes him into the storybook global of her relatives and friends. But the pleased bacchanals Olive hosts at her rambling nation house—and the separate, inner most books she writes for every of *The Children's Book* her seven children—conceal extra treachery and darkness than Philip has ever imagined. As those lives—of adults and youngsters alike—unfold, lies are revealed, hearts are broken, and the dangerous fact concerning the Wellwoods slowly emerges. yet their own struggles, their hidden desires, will quickly be eclipsed by way of a ways larger forces, because the tides flip throughout Europe and a golden period involves an end. Taking us from the cliff-lined beaches of Britain to Paris, Munich, and the trenches of the Somme, *The Children's Book* is a deeply affecting tale of a unique family, performed out opposed to the great, rippling tides of the day. It's a masterly literary success via considered one of our so much crucial writers.

I savored this novel each night for the two months or in order that I chipped away at its bold length. A.S. Byatt has written a whopping, inimitable masterpiece of a heavy passed Victorian England succumbing to the blithe, jaunty Edwardian period which in flip supplies method to the disillusionment and terror of trench conflict and international warfare. I. Byatt, so unapologetically erudite, provides us a labyrinthine novel that's either devastating and whimsical. It really is choked with complexity and contradictions, tales inside stories, and an abundance of detail, either historic and literary, in order that humans and items d' paintings virtually develop into palpable. Byatt could *The Children's Book* be a bit pedantic *The Children's Book* at times, and during this paintings she is frequently overly descriptive and makes use of authorial elucidation too much, in order that it kind of feels she's doing our learn paintings for us, specially in regards to ancient background. Generally, though, her *The Children's Book* lavish descriptions and exposition paintings simply because we are invited, via her garrulity, to stay during this global she has equipped and conjure it in response to her special instructions. Moreover, whilst she interrupts her narrative fervor it's constantly exposition bearing on ancient and social mileposts or evidence in regards to the arts and crafts movement, artwork nouveau and pottery. It is pardonable, maybe appropriate, simply because a lot of the radical facilities round modernization --- the shift in artwork and politics clear of Victorian values to modernist paintings and liberal politics. There are such a lot of appealing sentences within the kid's ebook and the narrative brims with flesh and blood characters and ideas you can mull over and over, that she greater than makes up for any shortcomings. Suffice it to claim that, in my humble opinion, she has created not anything lower than an Edwardian epic. As in *Possession*, Byatt totally monitors her huge educational talents. during this work, she writes pastiches of worldwide warfare I poems and *The Children's Book* Victorian kid's tales. The radical is so brilliantly infused with fairy

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The Children's Book stories and kid's literature starting from Perrault and the Brothers Grimm and ETA Hoffman to J.M. Barrie, Rudyard Kipling, and Kenneth Grahame that I am still, weeks after finishing, understanding the intertextuality. Fairy stories, allusions, and sinister stories of youngsters easily inundate the reader. During the German marionette master, Anselm Stern, Byatt alludes to the darker strength of fairy stories, and paintings in general, a strength that would ultimately result in the demise of 1 of the characters. It's also via Stern and his relations that Byatt offers German English family at the eve of WWI and delves into the avant-garde German artwork and political scene. On the middle of the unconventional are 5 households and a forged of dozens, tied jointly in *The Children's Book* a number of methods (blood, art, friendship, politics). Byatt lines their lives and entanglements via greater than two decades and several other locales, evoking the effervescence of the 1900 Paris World's Fair, the haunting loneliness of Romney Marsh and Dungeness, the bustle of London, the subversive edges of Bavaria, and finally, the killing fields of Belgium. Vivacious and tasty Olive Wellwood, a kid's writer and mom of 7 (modeled after E. Nesbitt [remember 5 childrens and It?]), is initially the crucial concentration of the work, yet Byatt usually shifts among the households and deftly illuminates the lives of either mom and dad and children. Olive and her husband Humphrey Wellwood are socially revolutionary Fabians, intellectuals, writers, and proponents-not-quite-agitators for social justice, and via them Byatt portrays the complexities of marriage, sexuality, what it skill to be a father and what constitutes motherhood. The Wellwoods also are a car for the writer to *The Children's Book* discover the dissonance among creativity and kinfolk life, the harmful toll of creativity and art, in addition to the melding of the political with the personal. Byatt fleshes out the eldest Wellwood children, the Peter Pan-like Tom who by no means desires to develop up; serious, tenacious Dorothy; and violent suffragette Hedda, whereas glossing over the remainder of the brood. Olive offers every one baby a fairy tale of his/her personal that's evidently an allegory for the kid's life. As a foil for Olive and Humphrey's exuberant family, Byatt provides us Humphrey's brother and sister-in-law: the London Wellwoods --- Basil, a banker and Katharina, a prosperous German heiress, besides their kids Charles/Karl and Griselda. Basil and Katharina are every thing Olive and Humphrey are not: fascinated about social conventions, conservative, wealthy, and a part of the outdated Victorian establishment. Charles and Griselda, though, insurgent opposed to their parents' beliefs and dabble in feminism, anarchy, and socialism. via Charles/Karl, especially, Byatt develops a topic facing hidden identities, masked identities and transformation, as Charles turns into the anarchist Karl. There's the tense and tragic Fludd family, with their laudnum-addicted, vacuous mom and (in)famously bizarre, brilliant, and wanton sculptor father who damages his daughters, Pomona and Imogen, in numerous merciless ways. Geraint, the oldest sibling of the family, manages to flee the marshes and dilapidated Fludd home, entrenching himself within the London international of finance. Patriarch and artist Benedict, like Olive Wellwood, embodies the harmful self-absorption and self-destruction artwork can engender. His model of fatherhood squarely aligns him with Bluebeard or the wolf in Little crimson using Hood, yet during the novel Humphrey, Prosper Cain, and different male characters will, to various degrees, echo this characterization. In juxtaposition to Benedict Fludd is significant Prosper Caine, a curator on the South Kensington (Victoria and Albert) Museum in London, and a professional within the ornamental arts, who befriends the Wellwoods and Fludds. *The Children's Book* he's the embodiment of Victorian chivalry and philanthropy, and it truly is his charitable activities that frequently boost the plot. probably the deus ex machina of the story, he's possibly a piece contrived. Prosper's daughter and son turn into a part of the forged of youngsters that fill the novel, as readers watch all of

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them circulate from the buoyant naivete of youth into hapless adulthood. the most effective threads during this novel includes Philip Warren (and finally his sister, Elsie), apprentice and inheritor to Benedict Fludd, The Children's Book and an escapee from poverty and the lead-filled air of the potteries. even supposing the Victorians invented the concept that of childhood, the concept that The Children's Book kids have been developmentally diverse from adults and will be allowed to play, explore, roam approximately and communicate freely utilized basically to heart and higher type children. within the kid's Book, Philip and Elsie (and Olive and Violet, via flashbacks) are the one glimpse readers get of what early life is like for impoverished Victorian children. In a awesome and poignant starting scene, Cain's son Julian and Olive's son Tom seize Philip within the basement of the Victoria and Albert Museum, (where he has been sound asleep for weeks) with a stack of expertly rendered drawings of the museum' holdings. Eventually, upon getting to The Children's Book know Philip's unprecedented expertise with pottery, Olive and significant Cain set up him with the Fludd family, the place he in a timely fashion makes advancements in Benedict's pottery studio, operating his approach as much as grasp craftsmen and artist. Philip's sister Elsie finally runs clear of the potteries and joins him on the Fludd's home, and turns into a spotlight of Byatt's narrative essentially as a result of her courting with Herbert Methley, (modelled on, it seems, the promiscuous Mr. H.G. Wells) a lubricious libertine who has a knack for impregnating younger women. Elsie's redemption is The Children's Book available in the shape of her own fairy godmothers, 3 girls from round the marshes who aid her turn into an autonomous Edwardian "New Woman" within the vein of Ibsen or G.B. Shaw. And so the tale goes. And goes. all of the solution to Belgium and the desktop weapons and ditches and mass casualties of worldwide struggle I. Our Edwardian summer season is over; the kids were sacrificed, marching to battle for the fairy story beliefs of honor, country, duty, and glory.

## **The Children S Book**

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