

"inconceivable" by ben elton essay sample

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“ Inconceivable” by Ben Elton Essay Sample

I have chosen to read the book “ Inconceivable” by Ben Elton. As I do not read books a lot I did not have any real idea what or who I wanted to do this project on when it was first set. I decided that I would prefer to read a humorous book instead of a normal fiction story book which I may easily get bored of after a while.

I did not have any authors in mind when I decided I wanted to read a comedic book, so I decided to go to a bookshop and look at a few books to see what I might like to read.

I found books by Ben Elton and decided to look at a few of them because I had known that Ben Elton is a good stand-up comedian, so his books would probably be quite an interesting read. I read a bit of several of the books and thought that “ Inconceivable” would be a good one to read purely because of the name of the book, the illustration on the front cover and the quotes from people and newspapers saying how good and funny they found the book.

“ Inconceivable” is the book that the film “ Maybe Baby” was based around. Knowing that the book had actually been made into a film also inspired me to read it since it was good enough to be a film. I read the book first and it has made me want to see the film just to see if it is as good as the book and if you get the same kind of feel for the story and the characters as you do when reading the book.

About The Author

Ben Elton was born on 3 May 1959, in Catford, South London to a distinguished academic family. Ben's father and uncle were professors at Surrey and Cambridge.

Ben was the youngest of four; he went to Godalming Grammar School, joined amateur dramatic societies and wrote his first play at 15. He wanted to be a stagehand at the local theatre, but instead did A-Level Theatre Studies and studied drama at Manchester University in 1977.

After graduating in 1980, he started on his career as a stand-up comedian, and by early 1981 had joined Rik Mayall and Adrian Edmondson at the Comedy Store in London. He was paid £15 every time he performed his comedy routine, and soon became one of the regular performers.

At first his stand-up performances were just to showcase his own work, but from there he wrote and acted in television, wrote novels and plays and now screenplays; while still performing his stand-up comedy.

He currently lives in Notting Hill, West London with his wife Sophie Gare, who he met in Australia while on tour. She plays the saxophone in an all-girl group, "The Boom Babies."

Author's Works

Ben Elton does all types of work. For example, he is scriptwriter for the TV series "Blackadder" and "The Young Ones" as well as a stand-up comedian; he also writes novels and plays which combine serious messages with many jokes.

" Stark" deals with issues about the environment, " Gridlock" with traffic policy, " This Other Eden" with Hollywood versus the environment, " Popcorn" deals with violence in the movies, " Blast From the Past" combines themes of anti-nuclear protest, unpleasantness, sexual harassment and gays in the military, and " Inconceivable" about infertility in a relationship. Recent work includes the script for the sitcom " Thin Blue Line." All of his novels have been best sellers.

Elton's work is an example of the new, alternative type of comedy, which became known in the 1980s from the Comedy Store comic club in London's Leicester Square. However, he believes his stand-up routines and writing are a carrying on of ordinary comedy: " There is no alternative and non-alternative comedy. There is only good and bad comedy. I have a particular favourite comedy double act, in which the partners used to slap each other about the face and then get into bed and spend the night together, which sounds like a very alternative act indeed. The people involved were, of course, Morecambe and Wise."

In Ben Elton's scripts and novels there are many examples of slapstick, physical humour, irony and the ridiculous, as well as jokes about sex, gender and class, all usual of comedy through time. Typically, his comedy is about the value of human life whilst he still tries to highlighting our weakness and vulnerability: " the last series of ' Blackadder' set in the First World War showed the resilience of the people in those appalling conditions. What it mocks is the recalcitrance of the generals", (Stephen Fry).

" Inconceivable"

The book that I am focussing mainly on is "Inconceivable." This book is written in quite a strange way and not in the normal way novels are written. At the beginning of the book, Lucy (the main female character in the story) suggests that her and her husband write letters to themselves to record their feelings and thoughts as they go through the experiences of trying to conceive their baby.

This means that you read the book not as a narrated story but as letters to themselves, almost like you are reading their diary. This is very clever because it means the story is told to you from two, usually very contrasting, points of view - Sam write his, Lucy writes hers, and you see the same situation from two different viewpoints. This helps you get a lot closer to the characters and how they feel, which is not the case in most stories.

Because the book is written in this way you get a lot closer to the characters. The author can describe and create the characters better in the letters because they are writing about themselves, and other characters in the story. This story only has two main characters and then another relatively important character later on in the story; this gives the author a lot of chance to create the characters so the reader gets to know them well.

Because you get the viewpoints of the two different characters in the story the author does not actually have to narrate anything, but from the opinions Lucy and Sam give of each other and the other characters you build up your own picture of the characters. This means you get more involved in the book and get a better feel for the story and the characters.

Synopsis

Sam and Lucy Bell are bright, happy couple. Sam is a TV Commissioning Editor for the BBC and Lucy works in a theatrical agency, they seem to have the perfect life. More than anything, Sam and Lucy want a baby, and so they begin an accurate schedule of lovemaking ruled by ovulation charts rather than passion. Nothing appears to work. As they start to get desperate, they hand themselves into the hands of Dr. James who suggests that IVF is the way forward.

The couple soon get bored and tired of the endless medical tests. Sam releases his stress and frustration by writing a screenplay based on his current relationship crisis: a comedy about a couple trying for a baby. Meanwhile, Lucy's hormones are all over the place and she finds herself getting more and more attracted to the star client at her agency, sophisticated and charming actor Carl Phipps.

Review

As I said before, this book is written in a very odd way. It is written as two characters in the book writing letters to themselves, not too different to the Adrian Mole diaries. The way they write these letters is a little unrealistic just to make it more sensible and easier for the reader to follow, for example, they continually "remind" themselves of things, such as their friends names and what they do, which is not something they would have to do in real life.

At the start, Lucy really wants a baby and this is clear from what she writes. She tells us she has wanted one from a very young age, and that being a

mother is where she sees her place in life. Sam on the other hand does want a child but not for the same reasons as Lucy. He wants a child because it will make Lucy happy and will be a confirmation of their love for each other. Sam at the start is not too keen on the idea of writing these letters about their feelings to themselves, he writes very little at the start, apart from a basic outline of his day, but as the story moves on, he opens up and lets us in a little more, and we can see he needs a lot of reassurance in his life.

As Sam and Lucy keep trying for a baby, the frustration that starts to build up caused by the clinical nature of their love life starts to cause arguments and bitterness between the two, and the only place they can securely let out their feelings is in their diaries. Being able to read the feelings of two people at the same time is quite powerful and exciting, as you see them struggle to keep going and keep their feelings for each other the same.

As things start to get worse they decide they have to have the tests at the hospital to find out what the problem is and sort it out. For Sam, this involves a sperm test which he really does not like the idea of; for Lucy, this involves being prodded in intimate places with various objects, as they attempt to find out why they can't conceive. It is around this time that Sam gets the inspiration for a new comedy script. At this point, the characters are excellently developed, you can see Sam has a ruthless, selfish streak in him, and you can see how much Lucy really wants this baby, and how she would make a great mother. From here, the action really starts and the book gets really exciting and almost impossible to put down.

As I mentioned before the writing of this book is brilliant, but as well as being written well it is also very well researched. Before reading this book I did not know anything about IVF treatment, this book is very informative. Ben Elton has been through the experiences of IVF treatment before, when trying to have a baby. I definitely think that if he had not gone through it all himself the book would not have been as well written.

This book is well balanced between the very funny side, and the more serious side. When it is funny, it's hilarious, but then Elton also knows when it should be serious.

I recommend this book to anyone, whether they enjoy reading or not. The only thing to make sure of is that you do not start to read it whilst you are in the middle of something important, because I guarantee it will be very difficult to put down.

Extracts

" Sometimes I feel quite desperate about it and really have to struggle not to be jealous of women who have babies, which I loath myself for. Occasionally, and I hate to write this, I'm even jealous of women who've had miscarriages. I know that sounds awful and I'm quite certain I would not say it if I had one myself, but at least I'd know I could conceive. I don't know anything. My wretched body dimply refuses to react at all."

This extract is one of Lucy's at the start of the book when she is writing about how much she wants a baby. She writes in her diary about how desperate she is and how jealous she gets of women with babies. She says

she even gets jealous of women who have had miscarriages, which seems like an extremely bad thing to say, but it just tells us how desperate she is to have a baby; it sounds like she would do almost anything to have a baby.

As well as being a very powerful extract, it is within the first letter Lucy writes to herself. This shows us that having a baby is top priority to Lucy and is the topic she has many strong feelings about, the diary being the only place she can release all these feelings.

"...God, we keep having these conversations. I think we should just tape one and put it on a loop. It's not that I don't want children. I'm not made of stone, for heaven's sake, but children are not the only thing I want. I happen to believe that when God made me he made me for a purpose beyond that of devoting my entire life to reproducing myself. To which Lucy replied that when God made me he made a million other people the same day and probably doesn't even remember my name..."

This is one of Sam's extracts about his feelings when it comes to having children. This is one of many times Sam and Lucy talk about whether they really want children or not. Sam clearly wants different things to Lucy and claims that there is more to his life than just having children. He would rather be working and making the best of his own life instead of having a child and effectively ruining all his hopes and dreams of writing the script for a film.

The way Lucy says replies to Sam's comment about God making him for a purpose just shows how much bitterness there is between the couple when it

comes to the subject of children. They have had this conversation many times so they clearly do not understand fully the way the other feels about having children; this is probably the main cause of all the arguments.

“ Carl looked incredible. Everybody turned to stare. He’s grown his hair and sideburns again and what with his dark curls and big coat he looked as if he’d just come back from writing epic poetry and fighting duels in Tuscany. Anyway, he strode straight across to me and without so much as saying ‘ hello’ or anything he kissed me on the mouth! I mean he didn’t try to slip me the tongue or anything but it was quite lippy and totally took me by surprise. Then he stood back, stared at me with his smouldering coal-black eyes and said that I looked absolutely ravishing, which I did not, although I must admit that I was wearing a new silk blouse with no bra.”

Lucy seeing another man is a main part of the story. She makes out in the story that she loves Sam more than anything and there is nothing she wants more than to have a baby with him, but as the story goes on we see that she is not so perfect and decides to see another man behind Sam’s back.

Now they have both done something very wrong in the relationship: Sam has read Lucy’s diary and written a film script based around it, which he promised he would not do, and Lucy has seen another man behind Sam’s back. All this lying and deceit makes the story a lot more interesting and exciting to read.

“ Dear Sam, Lucy and I have been back together for six months. The happiest six months of my life, despite the fact that we’ve just been through

our second IVF cycle and failed it. The doctors said that there were some signs of it having begun to work but ultimately that Debbie and Dick Two could not hang on. Lucy was very upset, of course, we both were, but we're OK. We had a wonderful holiday in India afterwards, no replacement, of course, but still absolutely fantastic and something we've always wanted to do.

I'm writing this sitting on the bed in a lovely little room in a country hotel in Dorset. Lucy is wearing nothing but a silk slip and is making my heart ache with love and desire. She's packing up a knapsack with champagne, chocolates and a big rug. It's a beautiful warm summer evening. In an hour or so we'll creep out into the night and make our way up the hill to the great and ancient chalk giant's penis. It might work, it might not. Either way, I can't wait."

This is the last letter in the book from Sam to himself. I think this is a good way to finish the book because they have just been back together for six months, this letter rounds up everything that has happened since they got back together, and it leaves the reader wondering what is going to happen to them in the future.

When I finished this book I was actually quite annoyed because I did not want it to finish like this, without telling me how it turns out, and I wanted there to be a book carrying on from this book about their life when they have their child, maybe.