



# The Fifth Child

*By Doris Lessing*

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Doris Lessing's contemporary gothic horror story—centered on the birth of a baby who seems less than human—probes society's unwillingness to recognize its own brutality. Harriet and David Lovatt, parents of four children, have created an idyll of domestic bliss in defiance of the social trends of late 1960s England. While around them crime and unrest surge, the Lovatts are certain that their old-fashioned contentment can protect them from the world outside—until the birth of their fifth baby. Gruesomely goblin-like in appearance, insatiably hungry, abnormally strong and violent, Ben has nothing innocent or infant-like about him. As he grows older and more terrifying, Harriet finds she cannot love him, David cannot bring himself to touch him, and their four older children are afraid of him. Understanding that he will never be accepted anywhere, Harriet and David are torn between their instincts as parents and their shocked reaction to this fierce and unlovable child whose existence shatters their belief in a benign world.

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## The Fifth Child By Doris Lessing Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

The married couple in this novel pull off a remarkable achievement: They purchase a three-story house with oodles of bedrooms, and, on a middle-class income, in the '70s, fill it to the brim with happy children and visiting relatives. Their holiday gatherings are sumptuous celebrations of life and togetherness. And then the fifth child arrives. He's just a child--he's not supernatural. But is he really human? This is an elegantly written tale that the *New York Times* called "a horror story of maternity and the nightmare of social collapse . . . a moral fable of the genre that includes Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and George Orwell's 1984."

#### From Publishers Weekly

A smug, conservative couple's fifth child (after four model children) inspires fear and horror. "The implications of this slim, gripping work are ominous," wrote PW. Lessing indicts those in authority who refuse to acknowledge responsibility for the violence inherent in mankind.

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#### From Library Journal

Mildly eccentric English couple Harriet and David Lovatt are the contented parents of four healthy children. Suddenly, their peace is forever shattered by their fifth child, Ben, a fiercely malevolent goblin-child with a penchant for violence. It is suggested that Ben is a throwback to earlier, precivilized time, that he represents a random settling of neanderthal-like genes that all humans carry. Only Harriet tries to civilize the boy, and he gradually learns to function on a primitive level and even collects a band of similar outcasts about him. Unwanted, they leave their homes to wander England like modern-day troglodytes. Society's complicity with their fate is a reflection of its callousness. Not major Lessing but sensitive and strangely compelling nevertheless. Laurence Hull, Cannon Memorial Lib., Concord, N.C.

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### Users Review

#### From reader reviews:

##### Gladys Dearth:

Have you spare time for any day? What do you do when you have much more or little spare time? Yep, you can choose the suitable activity regarding spend your time. Any person spent their very own spare time to take a wander, shopping, or went to typically the Mall. How about open as well as read a book allowed The Fifth Child? Maybe it is to become best activity for you. You understand beside you can spend your time using your favorite's book, you can smarter than before. Do you agree with their opinion or you have other opinion?

##### Lester Magno:

Information is provisions for anyone to get better life, information nowadays can get by anyone in everywhere. The information can be a understanding or any news even a huge concern. What people must be consider if those information which is inside the former life are challenging be find than now is taking seriously which one is acceptable to believe or which one the actual resource are convinced. If you receive

the unstable resource then you understand it as your main information you will see huge disadvantage for you. All those possibilities will not happen within you if you take The Fifth Child as your daily resource information.

**Naomi Taylor:**

Are you kind of hectic person, only have 10 or 15 minute in your morning to upgrading your mind skill or thinking skill also analytical thinking? Then you have problem with the book compared to can satisfy your limited time to read it because all of this time you only find guide that need more time to be examine. The Fifth Child can be your answer as it can be read by you who have those short extra time problems.

**Francis Lopez:**

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