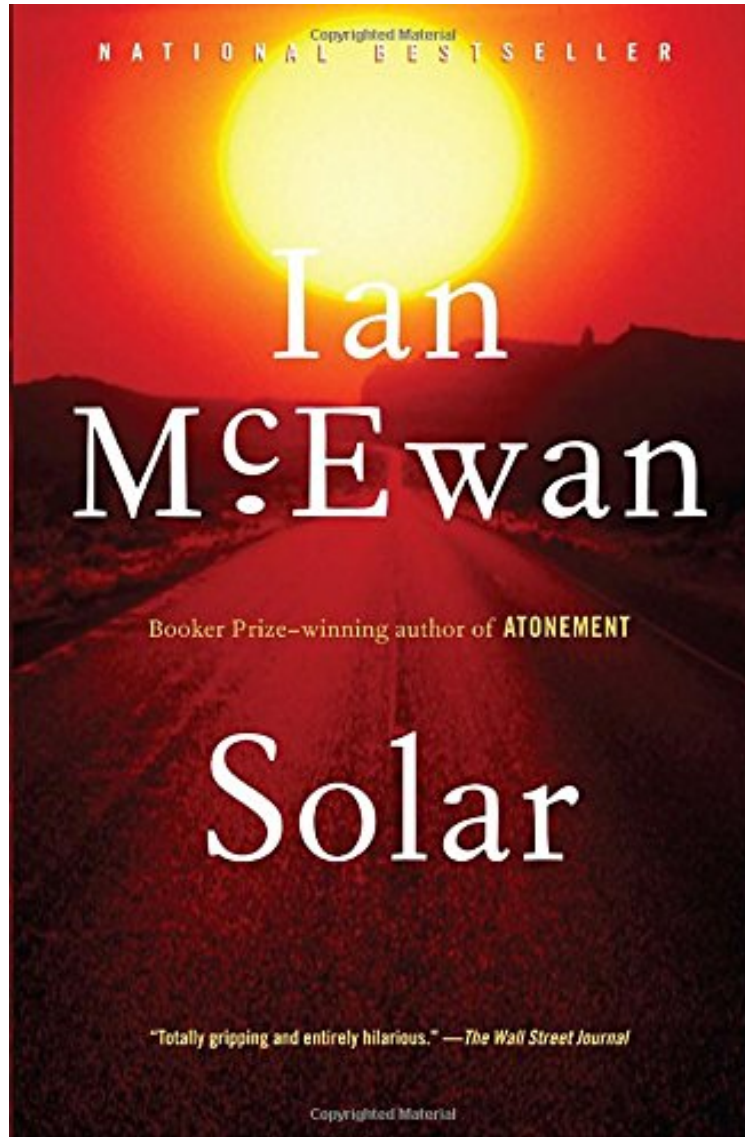


(Free read ebook) Solar

## Solar

*Ian McEwan*

*ePub | \*DOC | audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF*



#213911 in Books Ian McEwan 2011-03-08 2011-03-08 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.00 x .72 x 5.201, .59 #File Name: 0307739538332 pages Note about the author. | File size: 23.Mb

**Ian McEwan : Solar** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Solar:

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. The Unpleasant Michael Beard By Timothy Haugh Let me just preface this review by saying that I am a fan of Mr. McEwan. I consider his novel, *Atonement*, to be one of the truly great books of recent years. I've also read and enjoyed a number of his other works. That said, I find this novel, *Solar*, to be a disappointment. As a strong prose stylist, McEwan's books are always interesting to read and there are well-

done features to this story. In it, he shows his facility with modern science and its impact on social problems, something he's done in previous books as well. This time around, the subject is global warming. Wisely, he stays away from taking a specific stance on the issue even as Michael Beard, his Nobel prize-winning physicist lead character, takes a "lucky" opportunity to explore the issue in his work, thereby putting it before the reading in a subtle way. On the other hand, this book suffers from two features also present in some of his previous novels, but not to the extent that they impact the story as negatively as they do here. The first is a plot point. Like many excellent novelists, McEwan's novels often turn on a strange event or an odd, coincidental encounter. Sometimes this works very well--I am thinking of Briony's lie in *Atonement*, for example. Sometimes this works less well, as in the break-in that nearly ruins the last quarter of his otherwise excellent book, *Saturday*. (Spoiler alert-->) Here, we have an accidental death that for reasons I still don't quite understand or believe, Beard disguises as a murder. Unfortunately, this happens rather early in the story, is important for everything that follows, and, therefore, decreases whatever enjoyment can be found in the rest of the book. The second problem is something that bothers me personally, but may be less important to other readers. I do not like books where there is, essentially, not a single likeable character with hardly even a redeeming quality. Michael Beard, for example, is almost completely pathetic--a Nobel prize-winner living off his laurels, guilty of intellectual theft, a serial divorcer, a serial adulterer, an absent father, obese, slovenly... Just an all-around poor specimen of a human being. As Beard is the overwhelming personality in this novel, it is rough going, but even the minor characters--mean-spirited ex-wives, abusive boyfriend of ex-wife, pathetic girlfriends, abandoned daughter, grasping colleagues--there's barely a thing to like about the bunch. These are not people with whom I want to spend my time. Which is too bad, because McEwan's talent is immense. Even with my disappointments, I had no trouble making it to the end of the book. I am hoping, however, he reins in some of his impulses next time around for a tighter, more pleasurable experience.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Scoundrel. By Steven Daedalus

What does a self-pitying, fiftyish, overweight, balding, Nobel Laureate physicist do once he's past his prime? Well, if you're Michael Beard, the protagonist of "Solar", you can lie abed and achieve a kind of solitary rapture by eating loads of ice cream and masturbating while your wife betrays you with another man. You can witness the accidental death of one of your graduate students, steal his ideas about solar energy, and frame another man for the student's demise. After all, he was balling your current wife too -- she's the fifth -- and you owe nobody anything. You can do all this in England but achieve your apotheosis at an experimental solar panel site in a remote corner of New Mexico. I happen to live in that remote corner and Ian McEwan certainly got his geography right. I gather that his physics are sound as well. Anyway, the jubilee comes to a crashing halt at the end and the reader is left somewhere in the neighborhood of the hero, about to be assaulted by two women in a shabby motel room, with everything left hanging. Other reviews have criticized the nature of the principal character but though he has his faults -- and they're pretty nasty ones -- he's also smart and self confident. And, after all, we must cut him some slack. In physics, when you're fifty or so, you're not only over the hill, you're WAY over the hill. Physicists' careers don't follow the same trajectory as that of Grand Masters who can play tournament-level chess into their 80s. It sounds rather dismal, I know, but underneath it all, it's actually quite funny in a very understated and British way. It reminded me a little of "The Ginger Man", not in style but in its general deadpan perspective on human nature. (There are few grace notes in the prose.) I'll give just two examples of the comedy, one subtle and the other obvious.

Before boarding his train, Beard buys a package of potato chips ("crisps") and looks forward to some self indulgence as he bundles his luggage into the racks and sits down at a table across from a young man in punk garb. Beard gazes with eager anticipation at the package of potato chips on the table. The man across from him reaches forward and rips open the pack. Shocked, Beard stares at him, extracts a few chips and begins to chew. The other man does the same. This silent contest continues until Beard detains, at which point he discovers his own bag of chips in his overcoat pocket.

Example two. Beard is on some arctic expedition that requires multiple bulky layers of clothing in a climate where the temperature is 20 degrees below zero. Half way to his destination he has to pull his snowmobile over and relieve himself, removing both pairs of gloves and struggling to open his zippers before his fingers freeze. His fingers don't freeze but his penis sticks to one of the zippers and he must pour brandy over it to free it. However, his penis is not only white but bone white, like a Christmas tree ornament. He tucks himself back into his clothing and mounts his snowmobile. He hears something in his lap crack. As he bounces along, he's able to feel an ice-cold cylindrical object wriggling down the inside of his trousers. He gives this development a good deal of thought before he reaches a point at which he can remove his clothing and find out what it is. I'll leave it at that. It's not a very long book and I found it to be very amusing at time, with some pathos mixed in. There is an extensive section of acknowledgements, unusual in a novel, that includes physicists and cites some of the professional literature.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Warning: Note that this review gives away the plot.... By P. Gleeson

This is a version of the setup in Amsterdam, where the hypocritical and dishonest plotting of a deeply flawed main character leads, too predictably, to his death (in the last paragraph). I don't know: it's well-written, of course, but this seems to be a little bit of an obsession with McEwan. Hard to stay involved with a main character who's morbidly obese, sloppy, dishonest, hypocritical and a drunkard who cares little for anything except cashing in on his fame, which he no longer deserves, and screwing anything that walks. I do understand that satire doesn't focus on the good, honest and brave, but in McEwan's case it all seems a bit

repetitive.

A best-selling work of wit from the Booker Prize-winning author, *Solar* brilliantly traces the arc of a Nobel Prize-winning physicist's ambitions and self-deception. Dr. Michael Beard's best work is behind him. Trading on his reputation, he speaks for enormous fees, lends his name to the letterheads of renowned scientific institutions, and halfheartedly heads a government-backed initiative tackling global warming. Meanwhile, Michael's fifth marriage is floundering due to his incessant womanizing. When his professional and personal worlds collide in a freak accident, an opportunity presents itself for Michael to extricate himself from his marital problems, reinvigorate his career, and save the world from environmental disaster. But can a man who has made a mess of his life clean up the messes of humanity?

From Publishers Weekly  
In the afterglow of winning a Nobel Prize, Michael Beard lives a dismal life marked by multiple marriages, figurehead positions, and his own gluttony. However, after his most recent wife leaves him, Beard attempts to start living life to the fullest. He stumbles into this new life with a great deal of fanfare and catastrophe: covering up murder, nearly losing his penis to frostbite, and devising a plan to harness the power of the sun to save the planet. Roger Allam's English accent and gravelly voice balances a range of characters and emotions, especially Beard's arrogance and self-righteousness. More importantly, Allam's straightforward delivery of Beard's zany adventures enhances the humorous quality of McEwan's text. A Doubleday hardcover ( \$24.95, Feb. 1). Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.  
From Bookmarks Magazine  
Critics expressed decidedly mixed opinions about McEwan's latest work--and perhaps it's no surprise that he was better-reviewed on his UK home front. While most critics on either side of the pond praised the author's intelligent plot (especially his command of science) and ample storytelling gifts, the majority agreed that *Solar* is not his best novel to date. A few commented that the several narrative strands, which take place over more than a decade, do not cohere; Beard's jaunt to the North Pole, for example is interesting but tangential. Tired jokes, a rushed climax, and Beard's own piggish character felt claustrophobic to others. But most contentious of all was the satirical, comic tone superimposed on the very serious subject of climate change. Though *Solar* is a worthy inquiry into truth, morality, and the future of humanity, some critics could not get past McEwan's approach.  
From Booklist  
Customarily, McEwan's novels spring from a catastrophic incident in someone's life, either a calamity that causes physical distress or a psychological trespass that causes emotional instability. For instance, in *Enduring Love* (1998), a man plunges to his death from a balloon, and in the aftermath, one witness continues to menace another witness. On *Chesil Beach* (2007) centers on an emotionally devastating wedding night. In his new novel, McEwan outdoes himself in terms of catastrophic occurrences. The protagonist, physicist Michael Beard, won a Nobel Prize several years ago and has been resting on his laurels ever since. A serial cheater, he is now married to his fifth wife, who leads a totally separate life, indicating her complete disdain for his wandering eye. His lack of effort in applying himself to either career or fidelity only increases our dislike of him. Even he says of himself, "No one loved him." An accidental death in which he was involved and which he covered up, a politically incorrect statement aired before a professional audience, and his usurpation of the research of a deceased colleague: readers are taxed to even care about these crises. This draggy novel stands in stark contrast to its many beautiful predecessors, but McEwan is regarded as a major contemporary British novelist, so expect demand on that basis. --Brad Hooper