

A selection of reviews

Below are extracts from reviews of Ian McEwan's novel. Read through and discuss them, using the following activities to help you. You need to explain all of your ideas and be able to provide evidence to support your opinions:

1. Think about which one most closely reflects your own feelings about the novel;
2. Consider which one is furthest from your own impressions of the text;
3. As you discuss each review consider why a reviewer chose these particular words and phrases.
4. Make a list of words and phrases that spring to mind when you think about the novel; try to shape these into a short review of your own.

1	Ian McEwan has triumphantly developed into a writer of outstanding subtlety and substance ... Written with superb exactness, complex, suspenseful, reflective and humane ... <i>Sunday Times</i>
2	In <i>Saturday</i> [McEwan] is at his best – thoughtful, eloquent, yet restrained. <i>Financial Times</i>
3	<i>Saturday</i> develops into a sinuously plotted drama conforming to the classical unities of time, place and action. It also includes a series of brilliantly vivid tableaux ... <i>The Times</i>
4	Remarkable ... McEwan has given us the most observant, responsive, comprehending account of what life in London is like right now ... <i>Saturday</i> is wonderfully involving and affecting on every page. <i>Evening Standard</i>
5	A profound and urgent novel ... never less than surprising. <i>Observer</i>
6	A detailed portrait of an age, of how we live now ... It offers something transcendent, impossible to dissect. <i>Daily Telegraph</i>
7	He is the master clockmaker of novelists, piecing together the cogs and wheels of his plots with unerring meticulousness ... In <i>Saturday</i> ... these characteristic virtues of structural elegance and coherence are on prominent display <i>New York Times Book Review</i>
8	<i>Saturday</i> is a tightly wound tour de force of several strands – a Hitchcockian thriller, an allegory of the post-9/11 world, the portrait of a very attractive family, and a meditation on the fragility of life and all that we most value. <i>Washington Post</i>
9	<i>Saturday</i> , a brilliant, understated coupling of style and substance ... is a stunning novel ... a whole life compressed into the metaphor of a single day: birth at dawn, midlife at midday and death at night. <i>Chicago Sun-Times</i>
10	<i>Saturday</i> showcases McEwan's almost effortless gift for weaving contrapuntal themes into a narrative – the relationship between rationality and creativity, the survival of happiness in the wake of incalculable violence, the necessity for fiction in a world of fact. All shadow the story without intrusion <i>Salon</i>
11	The joy of this novel is in the writing, not the subject matter. <i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>
12	<i>Saturday</i> is a jewel of cold passion, narrative rhythm, control and perfection ... a brilliant and memorable novel <i>Corriere della Sera</i>