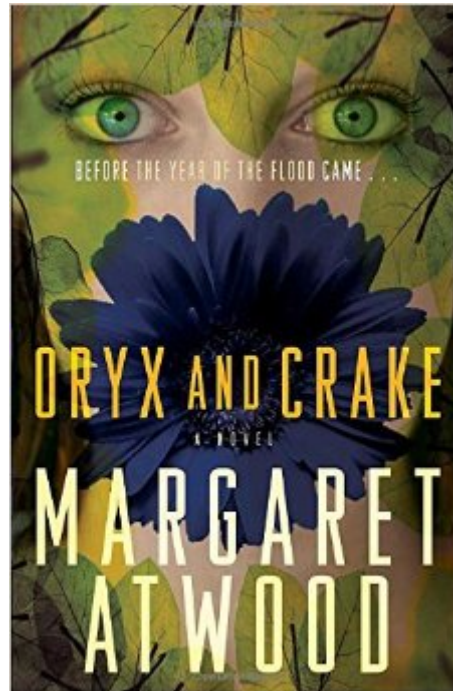




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Oryx And Crake



Synopsis

From the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Oryx and Crake* is at once an unforgettable love story and a compelling vision of the future. Snowman, known as Jimmy before mankind was overwhelmed by a plague, is struggling to survive in a world where he may be the last human, and mourning the loss of his best friend, Crake, and the beautiful and elusive Oryx whom they both loved. In search of answers, Snowman embarks on a journey with the help of the green-eyed Children of Crake through the lush wilderness that was so recently a great city, until powerful corporations took mankind on an uncontrolled genetic engineering ride. Margaret Atwood projects us into a near future that is both all too familiar and beyond our imagining.

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Customer Reviews

In *Oryx and Crake*, a science fiction novel that is more Swift than Heinlein, more cautionary tale than "fictional science" (no flying cars here), Margaret Atwood depicts a near-future world that turns from the merely horrible to the horrific, from a fool's paradise to a bio-wasteland. Snowman (a man once known as Jimmy) sleeps in a tree and just might be the only human left on our devastated planet. He is not entirely alone, however, as he considers himself the shepherd of a group of experimental, human-like creatures called the Children of Crake. As he scavenges and tends to his insect bites, Snowman recalls in flashbacks how the world fell apart. While the story begins with a rather ponderous set-up of what has become a clichéd landscape of the human endgame,

littered with smashed computers and abandoned buildings, it takes on life when Snowman recalls his boyhood meeting with his best friend Crake: "Crake had a thing about him even then.... He generated awe ... in his dark laconic clothing." A dangerous genius, Crake is the book's most intriguing character. Crake and Jimmy live with all the other smart, rich people in the Compounds--gated company towns owned by biotech corporations. (Ordinary folks are kept outside the gates in the chaotic "pleeblands.") Meanwhile, beautiful Oryx, raised as a child prostitute in Southeast Asia, finds her way to the West and meets Crake and Jimmy, setting up an inevitable love triangle. Eventually Crake's experiments in bioengineering cause humanity's shockingly quick demise (with uncanny echoes of SARS, ebola, and mad cow disease), leaving Snowman to try to pick up the pieces. There are a few speed bumps along the way, including some clunky dialogue and heavy-handed symbols such as Snowman's broken watch, but once the bleak narrative gets moving, as Snowman sets out in search of the laboratory that seeded the world's destruction, it clips along at a good pace, with a healthy dose of wry humor. --Mark Frutkin, .ca --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Atwood has visited the future before, in her dystopian novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*. In her latest, the future is even bleaker. The triple whammy of runaway social inequality, genetic technology and catastrophic climate change, has finally culminated in some apocalyptic event. As Jimmy, apparently the last human being on earth, makes his way back to the RejoovenEsencecompound for supplies, the reader is transported backwards toward that cataclysmic event, its full dimensions gradually revealed. Jimmy grew up in a world split between corporate compounds (gated communities metastasized into city-states) and pleeblands (unsafe, populous and polluted urban centers). His best friend was "Crake," the name originally his handle in an interactive Net game, *Extinctathon*. Even Jimmy's mother-who ran off and joined an ecology guerrilla group when Jimmy was an adolescent-respected Crake, already a budding genius. The two friends first encountered Oryx on the Net; she was the eight-year-old star of a pedophilic film on a site called *HottTotts*. Oryx's story is a counterpoint to Jimmy and Crake's affluent adolescence. She was sold by her Southeast Asian parents, taken to the city and eventually made into a sex "pixie" in some distant country. Jimmy meets Oryx much later-after college, after Crake gets Jimmy a job with ReJoovenEsence. Crake is designing the Crakers-a new, multicolored placid race of human beings, smelling vaguely of citron. He's procured Oryx to be his personal assistant. She teaches the Crakers how to cope in the world and goes out on secret missions. The mystery on which this riveting, disturbing tale hinges is how Crake and Oryx and civilization vanished, and how

Jimmy-who also calls himself "the Snowman," after that other rare, hunted specimen, the Abominable Snowman-survived. Chesterton once wrote of the "thousand romances that lie secreted in The Origin of Species." Atwood has extracted one of the most hair-raising of them, and one of the most brilliant. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Now that I have finished and started to digest *Oryx and Crake* I am struck by how much Atwood has to say in this book. There are so many themes, ideas and commentary in here: commentary about the social, cultural, environmental and ethical implications of genetic manipulation; commentary about the moral corruption and alienation of science, and the depersonalization of the internet and social media; commentary about sex, about male-female relationships, about poverty and war, about the angst and rebellion of adolescence; commentary about faith and religion, and about the ease with which it can be abused. And then there are the characters and the messages Atwood is using them to convey: Crake, the brilliant, well-intentioned, or not, sociopathic genius, who epitomizes the impersonality and moral neutrality of science ; Orx, enigmatic and mysteriously seductive, telling us of the ephemeral nature of sex and love; and Jimmy, alienated, seeking and at the same time rejecting acceptance and love, the quintessential human, imperfect and conflicted. Atwood has almost crammed too much in here. It overflows with her ideas and thoughts. But like most good dystopian fiction, for I think the author has forbidden us from calling it science fiction, it hits home, very thought provoking and disquieting.

I had to read this novel for a college literature class and thoroughly enjoyed it. I wouldn't consider myself an avid reader but I liked Atwood's rendition of a dystopian future. I liked it especially since I could vividly picture the world she created, which is something I haven't been able to do very well with other novels. I also liked it because I could envision the future of our world winding up the way Atwood's world did, with its genetic splicing and dicing, the separation of the rich and super-intelligent living in fortified, biodomed, compounds and those of average intelligence and not a lot of money living out in the "pleeblands," and a world where science and math are highly regarded but English and the arts have fallen by the wayside and aren't really regarded as great skills to have. Being an English major myself that really hit home especially since I feel our world has already started moving in that direction. I'd recommend that people read this book at least once. I found the plot, setting, and characters all to be compelling and believable. And I liked how Atwood kept my interest piqued throughout the entire novel. I found myself reading page after page because

I wanted to know the answers to the mysteries she laid before me. I like to know the how, what, and why of things and she hooked me well enough to keep me turning the pages, and that isn't always the easiest thing to do. And as an added note: There's a reason HBO is trying to make this trilogy into a series.

Margaret Atwood is genius. She spends majority of the book building the main character, a bold move but very necessary for the storyline. It's refreshingly apparent that any scientific processes included have been thoroughly researched and are clearly explained with great attention to detail. *Oryx and Crake* is extremely thought provoking, really pushing you to consider how a genetically modified, desensitized society could end up. It's not a fast read by any means, as it requires your full attention. She drops many clues throughout the book that really build up to the end. I would highly recommend this book to anyone who loves a good dystopian/post-apocalyptic story.

I am rating the entire trilogy here, as I know many people like to know what they are getting into when they start the first of three books. In a nutshell, Atwood's world-building, social commentary, characters, and writing are all superb in this series. She is a master and this trilogy makes all of the currently popular YA dystopia trilogies look trite and superficial by comparison. She has created a future world with just enough traits of our own to make it feel like a terrifyingly real possibility. She draws upon the current trends in genetic engineering, splicing, corporate power, increased economic division, environmental damage, and more to show how these could potentially all play out. We actually slowly learn of this world over the course of the 3 books, as the featured characters in each flash back to the past from their current lives in a post-apocalyptic world (the apocalypse in this case caused by the 'waterless flood' of a plague.) The trilogy requires patience, and is more about themes and character than plot. Each book revolves around the lives and perspective of a different major character. The major 'mystery' of how the plague was started is shared with us fairly early on, and so from that point forward, the books are more about deepening our understanding of how it all came to pass, combined with glimpses of how those left afterwards may move on. It explores good and evil, nature vs. nurture, religion and culture with finesse and subtlety. The only reason I don't feel I can rate this 5 stars is that I appreciated this series more than enjoyed it. I wanted to keep reading, because I was intrigued. But for me, it didn't have the emotional connection that makes a true page-turner, and that's the standard I use for 5 stars. So depending on your tastes, this might be a 5 star for you.

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