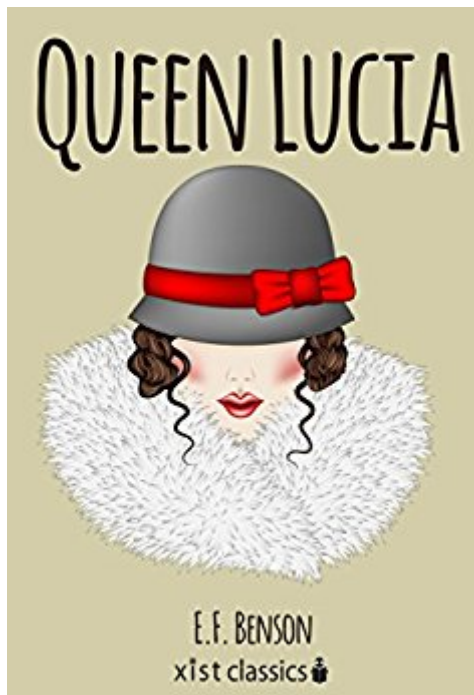


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Queen Lucia (Xist Classics)



Synopsis

Meet Queen Lucia, the character that inspired the BBC show, *Mapp and Lucia*. “The hours of the morning between breakfast and lunch were the time which the inhabitants of Riseholme chiefly devoted to spying on each other.”

• E.F. Benson, *Queen Lucia*

E.F. Benson’s *Queen Lucia* is a delightful and humorous novel about upper-middle-class British people in the 1920s and 1930s, set in the seaside town of Tilling.

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Customer Reviews

When Jane Austin wrote *EMMA*, she boasted gleefully that she had created a heroine that no one

would like. E.F. Benson must have felt confident that his most enduring character - the inimitable Lucia - would be as cordially disliked by modern readers. Lucia reigns as Queen of the village of Riseholme NOT by virtue of beauty, breeding, wealth, achievement, brilliance, or charm but by sheer gall and determination. Like all successful politicians, she's convinced of her fitness to rule and she generally convinces her subjects, although mutiny is always on the boil. Indeed, the simmering resentment of other Riseholmites against Lucia's iron control and their periodic rebellions (always swiftly and cunningly squelched by the resourceful Lucia) is the main theme of the book. Ironically, Lucia's downfall comes at the hands of the one person (newcomer Olga Bracely) who has NO interest in over-throwing her. Benson was noted for his brittle humor and sharp social satire, but in his six Lucia novels he created characters that the reader cares about while richly enjoying their pettiness, snobbery, and absurdity. Lucia and Peppino and Georgie and Daisy and Lady Ambermere are all big frogs in a little pond and never, EVER do or say anything intrinsically interesting, and yet they ARE interesting. They are so endlessly fascinated with themselves and each other that the reader (against his better judgement) gets caught up in the excitement. The Lucia series has a small, but devoted following which grows every time a reader stumbles on one of them and gets hooked like a large-mouth bass. They are pure guilty pleasure and who can't use some of that?

But isn't everything? Long before we had the Housewives of the world, we had Lucia. But alas for us her world had gotten lost: obscured. I have quite forgotten why or how I discovered this series by E.F. Benson but I am glad I did. Set in a fantastical English village before WWI where no-one works except at gossip, dinner parties, gardens, and piano recitals Lucia and crew fill their days with trivial, nonsense and anything petty. Hardly a recipe for deep thinking! But damn if I didn't get hooked. And let's face it, the above mentioned mentioned Housewives of Beverly hills or Miami or New York are just as plain! It's a great book between heavier fare. And you just might get a glimpse of people in your own circle of friends and insight to their hearts.

When reading a book the reader should ask himself what was the author attempting to accomplish and did he succeed. I dare say that Mr. Benson set out to write a brilliant and entertaining satire and social commentary and he certainly accomplished this. The mark of great satire is that it stands the test of time, and this story of the social world of a, I assume, Midlands English town could have been written today and transplanted to any affected American suburb today. Yet the characters do not lose their unique English personalities, pretensions and attributes. It rang true then and it rings

true now. Delicious are the leitmotifs of speaking Italian (which Lucia and her husband can't) and the visit of an opera diva to their little world. Where another writer may have sullied the experience of "the queen" and her fate, Benson makes certain that social mores triumph but without too much rancor.

This is the initial novel in Benson's series depicting the deliciously backstabbing maneuvers of small village life. I had read one of the later titles ["Miss Mapp"] before reading this one, and I believe the books must get even more delightful as the series advances. Brew some tea and cozy up with Benson's novels--and if you recognize a part of your very own self in some of the characters, shake your head and say you must be imagining things.

I have read all E. F. Benson's Lucia and Mapp books several times, and they remain as fresh, hilarious and charming as they were on the first reading. The citizens of Riseholme and Tilling, with their projects and passions, gossip and rivalry both love and hate the bossy Lucia, but they always find they simply cannot do without her---and neither can I.

Intriguing that this book was first published in 1920, and that the writer so entertainingly describes the guru who comes to the village teaching yoga poses, and talking the Maharishi language, which we think of as a 60s onward New Age phenomenon. It is a very funny portrait of a certain type of village life very post WW1, and yet in some ways so much of our own time. A quick light read.

This is a decent book for light amusement. The characters are silly and fun. The setting and outlook is like a time capsule. It's a good book for bedtime as it is engaging but not a page turner to keep one reading into the wee hours.

I love the Lucia books by E F Benson! I am totally hooked on these and will probably read all before I am finished. The time period, the interesting little village with all the eccentric populace, descriptions, inane situations - it is fascinating to me! And when Lucia and Miss Mapp meet up....Whoa!!

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