



## Make Way for Lucia

*E.F. Benson*

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**Make Way for Lucia** E.F. Benson  
All the Lucia novels in one volume.

## Make Way for Lucia Details

Date : Published October 1st 1988 by HarperCollins (first published 1939)

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Author : E.F. Benson

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## From Reader Review Make Way for Lucia for online ebook

### Sarika says

This is the title, but I think it might also be called Lucia in London. I think it's #2. Such a joy to return to Lucia!

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### Sonja says

My mom lent me this book last Christmas. It's one of her favorites -- she'd been talking it up to me for a long time. It's a collection of seven novels about a character named Lucia, the town she lives in, and all her wacky friends. Takes place in England in the 1930s (or is it 1940s?). I've read the first two novels, and just started the third. It's a fun read. The characters are vivid and memorable, and their exploits are funny -- very entertaining.

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### Leslie says

The GR description of this book is incorrect -- this is NOT the stage adaptation but is an omnibus edition of the complete 6 novels in the Lucia series as written by E.F. Benson.

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### Clare says

This is the all-time sure-fire depression cure! Whenever I have the blues, I dip into this book. The War of the Chintz Roses; Mapp's underhanded efforts to steal the recipe for Lobster a la Riseholme, Georgie's beard, and Diva striving to keep her place as Queen of the Fete...

A hysterical comedy of manners, set in Britain between the wars.

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### Jim Coughenour says

I'm adding this book years after I read it, but certain cherished passages inevitably recur in my fading memory, especially as I'm now reading Saki and S?seki's *I Am A Cat*.

For years I sniffed at Benson's Lucia novels, somehow imagining that I was above them, that they were the sort of thing old queens who loved Ronald Firbank would read. Well, maybe they are – but I was wrong about myself. When I pick up this doorstop of a book, I can only echo the Foreword by Anne Parrish: "although my copies are warped from falling into brooks and baths, and their pages dotted with semi-transparencies from buttery crumbs that have fallen on them from tea-times, I cannot exhaust their freshness." In my case, the pages are wrinkled & stained from juicy burgers at Hot & Hunky, dabs of wasabi and vinaigrette from the salad bar at Harvest Market.

Which is to say, these tales are addictive – and lucky is the soul who wanders into their quintessentially English pages, because she is in for hours and hours of pure malicious merriment. At 1119 pages, it wasn't long enough.

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### **Sue says**

I have just finished rereading the complete Mapp and Lucia series and, though I would have thought it beyond the bounds of possibility, I enjoyed it even more second-time around.

There are six books in the series (seven counting the included short story). Whilst each is stand-alone, they are best read in sequence and what pure delight there is in store for those at the start of this hilarious immersion into middle-class, small-town England. Though the Great War is only just behind them, the people of Riseholme and Tilling give it not a thought, so deeply mired are they in the trench warfare of their own declaration. The generals are Miss Mapp and Mrs Lucas (Lucia). The war they wage is for social dominance, their battlefields are the gardens and parlours of decorous Elizabethan and Queen Anne homes, their skirmishes are fought over recipes for red-currant fool and Lobster “a la Riseholme”, over the veracity of one’s teeth or one’s spoken Italian or one’s visiting Indian guru, and endless other matters so trivial as to be normally hardly worth mentioning, but which obsessively occupy the minds of Tilling and Riseholme with invariably complicated comical consequences. A victory is inevitably followed by a defeat which is the spur to fresh strategic campaigns and reprisals.

E.F. Benson lived in Rye (the fictional Tilling), in “Lamb House”, (Miss Mapp’s fictional “Mallards”). The town is as quaint and “delicious” as its fictional inhabitants believe it to be, as can be seen on Street-map; sadly, what cannot there be seen is spherical Diva whirring from shop to shop, Miss Mapp wreathed in awful smiles, Major Benjy infuriated at the sight of camp Georgie (“Miss Milliner”) gaily tripping down the high street, Lucia being maddeningly condescending to her subjects, all of them furious at being held up once again by dear Susan’s enormous Royce, and all of them voraciously and maliciously gossiping. They are insufferable snobs, dreadful hypocrites, unerringly selfish and completely self-centred - and I love them so, so much. Au reservoir!

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### **Barb says**

Really fun read. Fabulous and hysterical.

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### **Joan says**

I absolutely love this book. It is actually a compilation of 7 stories about Lucia and Miss Mapp. The first two stories are about Lucia which I didn't get too much out of. But when Miss Mapp enters the story in book three, it becomes the most hilarious book I've ever read. It takes place in a small British hamlet and covers the lives of certain individuals who live in the town. The busybody Miss Mapp is the center of the story and I have never laughed so much as when I read about her adventures. She is a spy, just like me. Always

checking on her neighbors to see what they are up to. I can't recommend this book enough.

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### **Dmitri says**

My life would have been much sadder had this book (these books, really) not have been in it. Went so far as to go on a pilgrimage to Tilling itself, where I learnt exactly how Mapp was able to spy on Lucia from the church steeple ....

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### **Ivonne Rovira says**

*Mapp and Lucia: The Complete Series* contains all six of the Lucia novels, which are also compiled under the title Make Way for Lucia. The novels, needless to say, are excellent -- particularly the first four. You'll laugh out loud.

This Kindle anthology contains no table of contents and is otherwise quite difficult to navigate. The font, very difficult to read, is one I haven't seen since the days of IBM Selectric typewriters. Considering *Mapp and Lucia: The Complete Series* cost a mere 99 cents, it's OK, but don't expect the usual Kindle quality. In fact, every free Kindle book I've gotten has been of higher quality. *Caveat emptor.*

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### **An Odd1 says**

Had to read in few-chapter bits, because scary in an everyday way. The main women are mean, funny until the reader imagines being victim to their bullying.

Lucia rules her small village into submission with pretensions to culture and Italian, until opera singer Olga, fluent, humble, kind, falls as a shining star. Elsewhere, Miss Elizabeth Mapp, jolly smiles outside, vengeful mean anger inside, bullies her village with demonic sweetness.

1 Queen Lucia

2 Miss Mapp

3 The Male Impersonator

4 Lucia in London

5 Mapp and Lucia

6 Lucia's Progress

7 Trouble for Lucia

Partial review for first two books.

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### **Sherwood Smith says**

E. F. Benson apparently had two obsessions: ghost stories, and high society, with an unrelenting hatred of social climbers. The distant rumbles of Bolshevism and the nearer-at-home threat of Black Shirts and

incipient Nazis don't stir him to the heat of indignation that he reserves for middle class people pretending to a rank to which they are not entitled; a great many of his short stories are savage satires of bumptious mushrooms trying to shoulder their way into society, to the extent of certain plots being revisited repeatedly.

His stories about the tempests in the teapots of Riseholme and Tilling are not silver fork novels. The denizens of these two towns all have cooks and maids, but the people are decidedly bourgeois, and get flustered in the presence of noble titles, whether the humans wearing the titles deserve it or not. There is nothing silver fork about the gleefully funny satire of Mrs. Poppit returning in triumph to Tilling with her Order of the British Empire, and her description of her triumphant visit to the king and queen.

The Lucia and Mapp stories are twenties and thirties English comedy of manners, whereas his early novel about Dodo was very much in the silver fork tradition. In fact, in some ways I think Mapp and Lucia define twenties and thirties comedies of manners in a way that even Noel Coward didn't quite achieve, judging by the number of references I've picked up in collections of letters, memoirs, diaries, and the occasional obscure reference in a cozy mystery or other type of novel of the period.

I end up taking these out and rereading them whenever, like now, I've got a cold and can't wrap my brain around anything else, but I've reread all my Austens and PG Wodehouse too recently.

I also don't read them all the way through. For example, I usually skip over *Lucia in London*, which is an entire novel about Lucia playing the snob and being made fun of behind her back. I can only stand humiliation stories if I have no sympathy whatever with the victim, and I like silly Lucia (who does have a good heart in the clinch) too much to enjoy her being slow roasted by this smug collection of duchesses and countesses. And the ultimate chapter (view spoiler) is exceptionally painful rather than entertaining.

That said, I rejoice in the foiling of Elizabeth Mapp, as she does not in any sense have a good heart. The small doings of Tilling are even more fun than Riseholme's tempests, which I think Benson realized, because he soon brings Lucia and Georgie Pillson to Tilling, whence he proceeds to pit the two female titans against each other, one winning, then the other, with generally (I am glad to say) Lucia coming out the better.

It's surprising, just how much subversive fun Benson has playing around with gender roles. There are some married couples, and a sprinkling of widows, but except for Mrs. Boucher, who managed to produce the peculiar daughters Piggy and Goosie, and Susan Poppit, whose vegetarian, suntanning daughter is around briefly in Tilling until she fades off somewhere, there is no evidence whatsoever that anyone in either Riseholme or Tilling's high society knows anything about sex.

Georgie Pillson, who at first appears to be a rather effeminate Bertie Wooster, takes on some depth and complexity during the Olga Bracely episodes (it is clear that *she*, at least, lives life to the full in all senses). Irene Coles of Tilling is unrepentantly lesbian, cavorting happily through the stories until she paints a picture so heavily ironic that it is voted Picture of the Year by the Royal Academy, a painting so jaw-droppingly awful that it is regarded as genius.

In both the marriages made in Tilling, between the horrible Elizabeth Mapp and the boozy but weak Major Benjy, and then Lucia and Georgie, it is quite clear that the female wears the pants. (Or as Lucia and Georgie decide after the Mapp-Flint marriage, they wear one trouser leg each), yet Georgie is the only one who can halt Lucia's worst high flights, and it is clear that matrimony for them is very happy in its mutual innocence. Unlike Elizabeth and Major Benjy, whose silent matrimonial duel never quite achieves a lasting truce.

Some of the best chapters are about the smallest incidents, such as the War of the Poppies, and especially the

tightly, brilliantly plotted chapter concerning hoarding. A little poking into Benson's life provides the information that Tilling is based on Rye, a picturesque town in which the most picturesque house was his, once belonging to Henry James. Mapp is given this house, where she rules in dingy parsimony until Lucia takes it over and makes it gracious. I wonder how many of the characters of Tilling are based on residents of Rye, or if Benson put together characteristics of all those he met over the course of a lifetime. One thing for sure, Lucia and Georgie, Elizabeth and Diva, Olga Bracely and all the others are distinctive and endlessly fun.

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### **Susan says**

These books present a quintessential fishbowl view of early 20th century privileged English village life. The characters are so well-drawn that they're almost caricatures. They become family; they make you crazy sometimes, but just when you're ready to kick them out, they endear themselves in a way that makes you want to hug them to your chest instead. These are literally (ha! that sounds like a pun) some of my favorite books. I would take them to that proverbial desert island with me.

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### **Denise Hay says**

"Georgie held her hand a moment longer than was usual, and gave it a little extra pressure for the conveyance of sympathy. Lucia, to acknowledge that, pressed a little more, and Georgie tightened his grip again to show that he understood, until their respective fingernails grew white with the conveyance and reception of sympathy. It was rather agonizing, because a bit of skin on his little finger had got caught between two of the rings on his third finger, and he was glad when they quite understood each other."

And that, in a nutshell, is the world of Lucia. *Make Way For Lucia* is the consolidation of all six of Benson's books, approximately half of which are set in Riseholme (based on a town in Worcestershire), and half in Tilling (which is Rye). So it's a monstrous thing once combined, and mine sits beside my bed like a Gideon bible.\* I can pick it up any time, start reading anywhere, and know exactly where I am and usually what's going to happen. Because I read it, and read it, and read it. I buy it whenever I see it in a used bookstore, and give it to someone. I have to be careful, because not everyone is going to run with it. Because ....

There is nothing of import that ever goes on. There are no children. There are no poor, at least not that we see. No one has a job. No one is particularly nice, absolutely no one is selfless, and everyone is frantically curious about what everyone else is doing. They garden, they gossip, they have tableaux, they host themed dinner parties, and when they get bored, they bring in a swami or an opera singer to stay. They are not really supposed to be realistic portraits, though they're not caricatures. It is one of the most delightful ways to pass the time you could dream up.

It is everything, I think, to do with Benson's homosexuality and his Englishness, and thus his scathing but generous wit, and his endlessly inventive ways to talk about the same thing and make it humorous all over again. I couldn't imagine a straight man able (or willing) to write this book, nor even necessarily a woman, although there is that British Club of Splendid Women of a certain age that could likely pull it off. (Elizabeth Taylor and Barbara Pym spring to mind.)

The opening paragraph is quintessentially Benson, and I think it's funny as stink. This is a desert island

book, for sure and certain.

\*My copy is about a four pound trade paperback, and although I could replace it with a hardcover I found in a bookstore, I'm sentimentally attached to this copy. I loaned it to a friend once and she reached over to pick it up off the floor, and ripped the cover off like tearing the wing off a bird. She confessed it to me right away, but she had trouble doing so because she found it all so funny. She still finds it very funny and it's been years. I still do not find it funny. The cover is back on with VERY YELLOW cello tape. Kathy, I'm talking to you. Still not funny.

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### **Chris Stanley says**

This book forever to read, but was worth it. I enjoyed the humour, and it's a very different type of read for me.

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