



## Isaac and His Devils

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From the moment of Isaac Hooker's birth, the cards seem to be stacked against him. He is large, uncoordinated, and so unappealing that his mother dislikes him on sight. As he grows older, he is sloppy and socially inept; Isaac is further isolated from his peers by his deafness, his poor vision, and the wild flights of imagination which suggest that he is slightly mad. It is not surprising that the unlikely hero of Fernanda Eberstadt's novel ISAAC AND HIS DEVILS, is as much threatened by the devils of apathy and despair as was Dr. Samuel Johnson, the eighteenth century genius who inspired Eberstadt's character. However, Isaac is blessed with insatiable curiosity, which is stimulated by his supportive father, and with boundless energy, inherited from his money-grubbing mother. After an epic battle, he emerges triumphant.

As in her first novel, LOW TIDE (1985), in ISAAC AND HIS DEVILS Fernanda Eberstadt displays an amazing skill with language. Profiting by criticism of the earlier work, however, like Isaac himself she has learned to control her excesses and therefore the prose in this novel is far more effective. ISAAC AND HIS DEVILS is particularly appealing because the characters of the novel are so sympathetic, and because although their habits may be singular, their struggles against despair are as old as humanity.

## Sources for Further Study

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