



The Immortality Factor

Ben Bova

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Provocative, gripping, startling: bestselling author Ben Bova delivers a knockout read with his trademark blend of cutting edge science and unrelenting suspense....

Some see stem-cell research as mankind's greatest scientific breakthrough. Others see a blasphemous attempt to play God. Suddenly, the possibility of immortality exists. Two brothers, both doctors, stand on opposite sides of the controversy. To Dr. Arthur Marshak, his work is a momentous gift to humanity. To Dr. Jessie Marshak, it is a curse. Between them stands a beautiful, remarkable woman both brothers will do anything to save.

Somehow, before it's too late, Arthur and Jessie Marshak must bridge the gap that divides them...on an issue that could mean nothing less than life or death for millions.

The Immortality Factor Details

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Author : Ben Bova

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From Reader Review The Immortality Factor for online ebook

Cj W says

I think I liked it.

I think that it could have flowed slightly better than it did, because of all of the 'past to present' context, it was slightly difficult to keep up, until I got the flow down.

Could be my fault though.

The emotion of the the story is very good and very real however.

I also, agreeing with some of the characters in the book, that you cannot simply look at a scientific advancement as nothing more than that.

You MUST, as a human being in a world like ours, think about the social and economical effects of every single thing you do.

Whether it's Hybrid cars, or buying Twinkies.

Let alone trying to re-grow organs in a human being, as these scientists are aiming to do.

I also love the brother relationship between 'Arby' and Jess.

Their part of the story shows a true ideology, that no matter how hard life is, no matter whats happened, no matter what rifts are between you, you can, if both are loving and willing, come together and support each other through the battles.

So that was a nice touch.

Anyways, It's definitely worth picking up and reading.

It makes you think about your own moral and ethical ideologies, and how, if you were forced to be effected by something such as a heart issue, or lung issues, would that therefore change your ideologies??

For a lot of people, No, it wouldn't.

- CJ

Christopher White says

I didn't care too much for this book. I won't call it lousy, but it was a Texas sized disappointment. The premise was for scientists to use a 'science' court to prevent a horde of religious zealots from having veto power over scientific progress. Amid throngs of protesters floating around the venue like bergs in the ocean, the alcaides of bioresearch argue their positions before a jury of their peers--other scientists. The court competes for attention against a televangelist who spews his theories for his supporters to nosh on, placing them in a zen-like trance of opposition to what he calls 'God's plan', the kiss of salvation after lives of dutiful suffering. Barely worthy of an eye-roll emoji, this story has too much litigation, and not enough relationship

exploration. 3 stars.

Natalie says

Really interesting concepts being examined in this story. I found myself caught up in the narrative, but I could tell that it was written in the 90s because the gender interactions seem a bit outdated.

Rhonda says

This is really the story of two brothers and how they are torn apart and brought back together all over a woman. Of course there is more to it than that but the characters are what matter.

The story is told from the point of view of most of the major players but mostly from the viewpoints of the two brothers. It could get a little confusing reading it because of how the timeline was jumped along but as I kept reading, things became much clearer.

This story is classified as science fiction but considering how far science has come I don't think we are too far off from what this story revolves around: organ and limb regeneration thanks to a scientific breakthrough. As well as a way to destroy cancer.

All in all it was a good read, just not quick. I'd recommend it to anyone who enjoys character driven stories with a sci-fi taint.

Sarah Ratner says

The book starts off with Bova warning you that, "this is not a science fiction novel". Since this was my first time reading one of his books, I didn't even know he was a science fiction author. And you couldn't tell from the book. I thought the book captured your attention really well and the plot line was full of twists and turns, and heartaches the characters felt, that you felt too. The novel is about two brothers who end up on opposite sides of a "science court" trial, the trial arguing the morality of testing a new drug to regenerate limbs on humans. The book ends with a surprising twist, that leaves you hanging, but is also completely satisfying.

Shellie (Layers of Thought) says

Original review by John posted at Layers of Thought.

A thought-provoking novel on the possibilities, rights and wrongs of stem-cell research and associated medical science.

About: The Marshak brothers are both brilliant doctors - Arthur focusing on leading-edge research and Jesse focusing on trying to help poor and disadvantaged sick people. While Jesse goes on to win a Humanitarian of the Year award, Arthur covets the Nobel prize.

Arthur is now head of a research laboratory, pushing back the boundaries of medical knowledge and techniques. In particular he and his team are making great strides in working out how to regenerate limbs and organs – and in the process have caused great angst among many religious groups, conservatives and people concerned about ethical and moral aspects of the research. Most importantly, as far as the arc of the story is concerned, Arthur's own brother becomes opposed to the research.

In order to try and clear the way ahead for his work, Arthur manages to convene a "science court", designed to help the scientific community pass judgment on the validity of the research. Inevitably the court sessions become something of a circus, straying far beyond the scientific issues and attracting the attention of powerful lobby groups, politicians and the media.

As the court proceedings come to a head, the story examines the conflict and dynamics between the brothers, some of the troubling aspects of the research and the corporate goings on in the company that owns Arthur's laboratory.

John's thoughts: This is great subject matter and the plot is nicely teed up, but somehow the book never quite took off for me. The main problem was the characters – they felt a bit two-dimensional and some of their motivations and actions just weren't quite believable. In particular the relationship between the brothers and the woman they both love just didn't feel realistic.

I do like the way that the story explored various aspects of the controversial subject matter, but even then some issues are brought up but never come close to any sort of resolution or meaningful debate, a case in point being animal experimentation and vivisection. In most instances Bova made it quite clear what his views were on issues, but on the use of animals in research I have no idea what he thinks.

I'd never read a Ben Bova novel before, and he had come highly recommended, so I was a bit disappointed with this read. It was still ok, but I was expecting so much more. I'd say this is one for Bova lovers and anyone with an interest in issues around stem-cell research. I'd rate it three stars.

Gossymotto says

This is the first book I have read from Ben Bova. I just picked it up off the shelf at the Library. The title and story-line caught my interest but the book never quite lived up to what I was hoping for. The story gets off to a slow start and I found myself putting this book down for days at a time. It's a long book but it goes into so much mundane detail that the actual story never seems to get going until finally, about 300 pages in, it started to get really interesting but then it just kind of dies out in the end. I kept reading because it had the promise of a good unexpected ending and it did take some twists near the end but they weren't that exciting.

I guess I was looking for more Michael Crichton type details in regards to Science but this was more a story of two brothers and the conflicts between them. Like the rating says, it was okay.....

Tina says

Soft ending. Thought-provoking scenarios on topics of great debate-- feminism, animal rights, abortion,

Chelsea Carter says

I'm going to start trying my best to write any review for the books I read right after reading them so that how I feel is still fresh on my mind. This particular book was a very long rollercoaster ride for me. I went from loving it to hating it to loving it again several times due to the characters and their mindsets about "touchy issues". The story itself was very interesting and held a lot of value intellectually. Being used to high fantasy, I found myself grudgingly pushing myself through anything to do with droll board meetings and dinner dates filled with polite conversation. Luckily, the book makes up for the annoyingly boring details of every day life with scientific theories that are intrepid and attention-grabbing. I also have to add that the personal relationships and romantic interactions between the characters were not overly sappy and seemed to me to be entirely plausible. There's nothing I value less than a relationship that is no where near realistic (i.e. romance novels of any kind). My main struggle (beyond this book being non-fantasy) was the personal narrations of the main two male characters Arthur and Jesse who, in my opinion, are some of the worst human beings on the planet. Okay, yes that is an exaggeration, but I can be honest that there were way too many times that I found myself wishing they were real so that I could slap them. Whenever they managed to do anything to win me over, this pair of brothers always managed to spit on something I morally or mentally value. I do understand that not everyone holds the same set of beliefs that I do or has the same life experiences, but how many times should it really be okay for someone to pity themselves? Pity seemed to be all Jesse ever wanted and Arthur (thankfully not as often) was right alongside him. So many times as I read I found myself saying out loud, "Cry me a river, geez." due to the victim mentality these two men share. Now, on a parallel note, the two main female characters of the book, Pat and Julia, were some of the most empowering people I'd ever read about. They stuck to their guns and stood up for themselves despite what anyone else thought. They lovingly corrected Arthur and Jesse probably dozens of times throughout the story. At the end of the book I was more than convinced that opposites do attract. Thank goodness Ben Bova redeemed Arthur and Jesse by writing alongside them two strong women.

Darion D'Anjou says

"The Immortality Factor" is a great source of insight into the state of the biotechnology industry, both technically and politically. The story does an excellent job of highlighting the scientific challenges faced with such cutting edge technological promises as cloning, regeneration, elimination of cancer, and more, and it frames these hot button items within the context of the heavily polarized political and social environment, which pose just as much if not more of a threat to scientific progress than the scientific challenges themselves.

Because the book is so detailed on both the political and scientific fronts, I learned a lot about the complex, layered way the biotechnology process works, from researching and developing a new biomedical technology, through the political and administrative phases of getting a new product out to the public.

I would have given higher marks if the story had been more readable and more entertaining. Very short chapters, sometimes only two pages, change perspective and person in the telling at rapid fire. I found this disconcerting as the pacing of the perspective changes were often too short to satisfy my engagement with the current character and perspective, before moving on. Normally I can handle these quick shifts, but the

pacing failed to maintain a rhythm that I could trust would bring me back to that part of the story in timely fashion.

I had to start and stop reading this book 4 or 5 times to complete, and I am glad I finished it, for the biotechnology industry insights it gave me. I would only recommend this read to those who are true biotechnology nuts like me. Others just looking for an entertaining science fiction read should stay clear.

Resa says

Very interesting so far. I can already tell I am going to love this book. It is about a regenerating firm owner defending his company in court, while his brother is against it. What will happen when the brother's girlfriend possibly needs stem cells?

This book continues to pull me in! I can tell it is going to be great.

This book was more than I could have imagined it would be! It is #2 on the best books I have read this year. (1 being reserved for Niffenger).

I promise you, you will love this book. Please read it! (Misty, Tara, Brandy, Krista) I really want to talk about it with someone.

The setting: a scientist set up a science court to deem whether regenerating organs was Scientifically probable. The results of this court will affect funding and red tape etc.

Every chapter switches points of view. So the first chapter is in the court room, the next is in the lawyers mind...five chapters later back in the courtroom.

The only thing that bothered me was it was a bit bias. You can't talk about the issue of potential stem cell use without giving the radical conservative side, I know, but the author did a great job slamming the conservative mother screaming "murderer!" too much.

I felt that it was an attack on religion. How the author sees religions viewpoint.

I am against regenerative organ growth, however, I am not that picket fencer.

I can be as logical as the lawyers are precieved, when I tell you why I do not belive scientists should continue pursing immortality.

But overall, excellent book. Even though it is fiction, I am sure the issue of regenerative organs has already came up and probally been trampled on by scientists racing for immortality.

Brandy: You have to read this, wait until you met Max. If I got jerked up by him, you will probally throw the

book in mud.

Lynnelle D. Bolton says

Ben Bova is one of my favorite authors

This work is a bit different than much of his later efforts. I'm trying to fill in my Ben Bova reading. I've missed many of his early works and I am not disappointed in those efforts so far. The book starts out slow, but becomes riveting near the end.... and I hate court procedurals.

Eric says

Ben Bova is known more for hard science fiction, but this novel is set in the real world. The scientific principles are straight out of current research trends, reactionistic anti-science forces might as well have been pulled from yesterday's headlines, and Congressional opportunism rings true as well.

Overall, this was a quite engaging read - Bova ties several believable characters into the novel and Arthur's and Jesse's character development and motivations are well developed. The conceit of a "science court" seems a little contrived, but the adversarial judge character makes a solid point about the efficacy of "court-like" proceedings even when they are not legally binding.

The manner in which the author switches between multiple first-person viewpoints for all past events, and a third-person narrative for the current time is a little disconcerting at first, but once the reader starts to become accustomed to keeping track of which character is speaking it's pretty easy to follow.

Research like this (and other unrelated topics) will be disruptive in the next century, fundamentally altering social structures and breaking a lot of the mechanism of the social contract. Thinking towards that future ahead of time with ideas like the science court might give us a little better chance of making it through those disruptions.

Donna says

Arthur is a scientist researching first the possibility of using stem cells to heal spinal cord injuries and then this research spins off into a means to allow tissue to regenerate which would mean injured people being able to regrow limbs or damaged organs. His brother, Jesse, is a doctor who spends his time working for humanitarian causes.

Arthur fell in love and brought his fiancée home only to have Jesse and the fiancée fall in love. Their marriage puts a strain on the relationship between Arthur and Jesse. The relationship is just starting to heal when Jesse's wife has a miscarriage and Arthur blames it on Jesse's dragging the wife over to Africa for 2 months for a UN mission.

Jesse shares inside info on Arthur's research with a religious leader who is running a charity event for Jesse's hospital. The leader starts a media storm opposing the research and Jesse is dragged into testifying for the opposing side.

This is more a story about conflicted family relationships than Bova's normal sci fi but it is well written and a

good read.

Fredrick Danysh says

A medical novel that is not science fiction. A panel of scientists hold a trial on the regeneration of body parts that centers on two brothers and their love of the same woman. It addresses moral and ethical issues of medicine.
