



The Insect Farm

Stuart Prebble

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An eerie debut suspense novel that explores how little one man may know his own brother--and his own mind.

The Maguire brothers each have their own driving, single-minded obsession. For Jonathan, it is his magnificent, talented, and desirable wife, Harriet. For Roger, it is the elaborate universe he has constructed in a shed in their parents' garden, populated by millions of tiny insects. While Jonathan's pursuit of Harriet leads him to feelings of jealousy and anguish, Roger's immersion in the world he has created reveals a capability and talent which are absent from his everyday life.

Roger is known to all as a loving, protective, yet simple man, but the ever-growing complexity of the insect farm suggests that he is capable of far more than anyone believes. Following a series of strange and disturbing incidents, Jonathan begins to question every story he has ever been told about his brother--and if he has so completely misjudged Roger's mind, what else might he have overlooked about his family, and himself?

As the accidents at home multiply and tragedy strikes, a startling picture emerges. One of these brothers is a killer, and the other has no idea.

The Insect Farm Details

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Author : Stuart Prebble

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Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Thriller, Suspense

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From Reader Review The Insect Farm for online ebook

Jansie says

This was less about an insect farm and more about relationships... between spouses, friends, enemies and family. The insect farm plays an important role, but don't be put off if you're not the sort that likes bugs. It was a quick, easy read, but left some questions, which I imagine was the author's intention. I suspected that I knew who was guilty, but there were some twists that I was not expecting. 3.5 stars.

Jack says

This book has an intriguing plot, no doubt, but it's another book about men and their quest to own women - their bodies, their sex lives, their careers. I'm just so tired of this narrative.

Lisa says

Full Review at Tenacious Reader: <http://www.tenaciousreader.com/2015/0...>

The Insect Farm by Stuart Prebble is a fascinating look into one man's life, and his relationship with his brother. Jonathan is the younger brother of a much better looking, but also simple minded Roger. Much of this book revolves around their relationship and the impact it has on Jonathan's life.

Jonathan is trying to live a normal life. He goes to college, falls in love and seems to be headed there. But, his insecurities can make it difficult. And then he is called back home, leaving the "typical life" behind.

As a reader I couldn't help but theorize while reading this, trying to solve the mysteries that accrue during the story. And while I got some right, I got others wrong. There is a bit of unpredictability in this. We are seeing things from Jonathan's perspective, so we only get the information he is aware of and finds important.

This is not a speculative fiction book and I am honestly not sure what I'd classify it as. Maybe mystery? It is more of a introspective look at the relationship between the brothers. From the description, I expected a creepier, more suspenseful book. But, I really enjoyed the book for what it is. And it definitely has a dark edge to it, sometimes books without any sort of supernatural element can actually be much more disturbing because it is a look into what humans are capable of.

After finishing, I chatted about this book with another reader. I loved getting to do this, because it is a book that really can cause speculation and deeper observation into the motivations of characters. After you finish, you can't help but still try to puzzle all the pieces together and look back at the entire story from the beginning and wonder about so many things that happened early on. Trying to decide if there were ulterior motives that you might have missed on the initial read.

Hannah (Vamp of Savannah) says

DNF 13%

Just a big ol' bowl of ehhhh.

S_Mowat says

I finished the book last night and was okay with it.

After reading a review about how the prologue connected to the book itself (which it didn't at a glance) I enjoyed the story much more.

I found the over all book a little repetitive, with Jonathan's constant complaining and distrust of Harriet which made him rather unlikeable to me. And the rituals of waking up Roger although that is probably used to portray his autism, because they seemed to happen so close together.

The twists were very obvious, and no spoilers, but the reveal didn't seem like a reveal, more like a confirmation of everything that had happened.

It reads rather quickly (when reading it), but I never felt connected and went long periods without picking it up.

Eeva says

I'm very conflicted when it comes to this book.

On one hand it was a very enjoyble read, the plot was very interesting and huge YAY for an unreliable narrator that was FINALLY properly constructed!
so props for you, Stuart!

My main problem is with the ending.

It was obvious who's the killer like 5 minutes after the murder. Even though, I really enjoyed following the main chracter and was curious if the police will find out who'd done it.

The ending was very anticlimatic, I was really expecting something horrible happening to Jonathan, and when the moment came I was all like "wait, what? That's all?".

The only chracter that I couldn't stand was Harriet. She was insufferable!

I know that we all think that everything that we say when we're teenagres is so damn profoud, so wonderful, that we're all misunderstood. Yeah, I know that. But her jazz/blues/opera metaphor was so far-fetched that

the only thing I wanted to do was to punch her in the face.
Just shut up, you sound like Paulo Coelho!

It was very exciting to see how police worked in the 70s. I have no idea if any of it is showing how it really was, but if it is, then I'd be surprised that ANY crime was solved.
It was also very interesting when you get to think that if this crime happened now it would be all so different.

Joanne Moyer says

Roger is Jonathan's older brother and though he has a mental handicap, he is always sure to protect Jonathan and keep him safe from childhood bullies or anyone else who may want to hurt or upset him, as an older brother should.

As they age they each have their own desires and obsessions, Jonathan's is his wife Harriet and Roger's is his insect farm. Circumstances lead to Jonathan becoming Roger's guardian, he refuses to have him put into a 'home' and changes his life plans to take care of his brother. While thought of as a 'simple' man, Jonathan is often surprised at Roger's lifelong dedication to and his knowledge of the workings of his insect farm and wonders how much he knows of what is going on in Roger's mind, how much Roger really knows about what is going on around him and how much he may be involved in the events of their lives.

The Insect Farm is a well written psychological thriller that asks the question how well do we really know the people closest to us ... the ones we think we know the best

Melissa Kulkarni says

I liked this book. I finished reading it a few days ago and I'm still thinking about it. It's not really about a serial killer brother like the book sleeve suggests. It's more about the 2 brothers and their relationship.

arianna says

honestly, wow. this book has left me speechless. i honestly don't think i've ever read anything like this book. it's hard to even wrap my head around some of the concepts in the book. i really enjoyed reading this, but it wasn't really a thriller as it was marketed until about 2/3 of the way through.

i found most of the characters to be entirely unlikable, but that honestly didn't take away from the story itself. i didn't like the protagonist/narrator at all, because he was domineering and controlling and jealous with every turn of the page. his only redeeming quality was how much he cared about his mentally handicapped brother and his strength to care for him after everything they went through together.

i disliked harriet as well, because from the very start she seemed to me a very stereotypical john green type character, even when she was older. when they first met as kids, her and john (not even sure if that's his name because he was so unforgettable as a narrator) were nothing alike. she was a manic pixie dream girl that everybody lusted over, and her only personality trait was...there were none. the only things we knew about her was her overuse of the word "darling", her parents were rich, and her ability to play the flute.

the reason why i'm giving this book four stars though is entirely revolving around roger. his character was so incredibly complex, and the entire plot surrounding his parents and the insect farm and his day to day life

fascinated me. as someone who is not handicapped or has ever had someone in my life with a mental handicap, i cannot speak to the true nature of his condition, especially because we aren't even told the exact diagnosis in the story.

however, roger was a deep and well thought out character. i found myself deeply emotionally invested in him, and he both terrified me and made me want to cry. he definitely broke my heart more than once.

i do feel like some people can misconstrue this plot and roger's involvements in the turning points of the story as demonizing those with a mental or cognitive or behavioral disorder, but i did not find that to be the case at all. i feel like roger was someone who was in the wrong place at the wrong time and cared possibly a little too much about his brother, and never truly learned right from wrong due to the extremely ignorant upbringing of his parents.

the way in which the author explained the death of the parents honestly felt like a huge cop out, and i was so incredibly disappointed. i felt like it was utterly pointless to have gotten to that point only to figure out there was no fucking point to their deaths other than to cause pain to their sons. they were selfish and cruel and didn't care for their children.

overall, while i didn't enjoy being in the mind of the narrator, i found that this story was ultimately satisfying in the end. i felt like everything did wrap up nicely and it is one that will honestly stick with me for a long time. i would recommend this to anybody who wants to read about the human psyche and learn more about complexity in characters.

i received this book for free from a goodreads giveaway in exchange for an honest review. my review is full of my honest opinions and is in no way biased.

Patty says

Two brothers, Jonathan and Roger, Roger has some learning disabilities, mental issues. We never really know just what is wrong with Roger. I think this book would have been far more interesting if we could have heard what Roger was thinking. But the story is from Jonathan's perspective only, he is the narrator. Jonathan takes care of his brother Roger after the death of their parents, which he will do for his entire lifetime. But prior to their parents' deaths, Jonathan meets Harriet and they go off to college together and they get married. Jonathan has a bit of a jealous streak. Roger has an insect farm where he spends the majority of his time. The premise of the story is how well do you ever know anyone, especially your mentally handicapped brother. I guess where I felt the story fell down is, hey why don't you ask your brother...but then where would the story be. There are parts that I really like about this book but his descriptions were overly explained, and I found it repetitive and a bit boring, but I still liked the entirety of the story.

Ellen Gail says

I have a lot of thoughts on this one, and I'm pretty sure they all contradict each other. So if this review makes very little sense, it's because my feelings about *The Insect Farm* make very little sense.

This is the story of Jonathan Maguire and his brother Roger, who has an unidentified mental disability. The plot is set in 1960s/70s England as Jonathan grows up, goes to school, gets married, etc. To give away too much of the plot would fall into major spoilers category, but let's just say it's mainly a family drama, with a

side of mystery and a few plot twists thrown in.

While overall I guess I liked the second half better (maybe? I don't know! I warned you, my thoughts on this are a mess), the first half does a good job with Jonathan's younger years. I thought the early chapters did a great job showing how egocentric childhood often is. Jonathan is completely enraptured by the joys of summer camp as a young boy and doesn't give much thought to his brother at home, but is hurt by the thought that maybe Roger didn't constantly miss him either. It also did a good job of showing the pretension of the teen years. God, teenage Harriet was insufferable, which was the point I think. What teen doesn't think that their thoughts are monumentally big and priceless, that no one has ever felt this way before?

What didn't work for me was Jonathan as the narrator / main character. I never got attached to him or felt much for him at all. Really, none of the characters wowed me. I can forgive a million faults in a book if it has at least one character that captures my heart. This one didn't. I also wasn't enamored of the writing. It wasn't bad, but I just wasn't a fan personally.

My other big issue was (view spoiler)

That said, I never once considered not finishing it. Even when it annoyed me, or failed to completely connect, I was still interested to see how it would end. Long story short, I liked it but I didn't.

The Insect Farm was a freebie from Goodreads First Reads. Thanks Goodreads!

Clarabel says

Un roman vraiment étrange mais envoûtant. C'est l'histoire d'une relation fraternelle très forte et qui inspire un profond malaise, pourtant cela se lit d'une traite et nous entraîne dans les méandres d'une psychose paranoïaque qu'on ne voit pas venir et qui nous scotche aux pages du bouquin. Clap your hands. **3.5 stars**

<http://blogclarabel.canalblog.com/arc...>

C Solis-Sublette says

I found this psychological narrative in the science fiction section of the bookstore, which is what peaked by interest. At first, I thought the novel had been misplaced. The insect farm, itself, does play an important role in the novel. It is a setting, yes, but - in many ways - a character by way of community/microcosm. But does that warrant its placement in the sci-fi genre? As I read on, and the story unfolded, it began to make a little more sense. The insect farm does play a more important role than it appears because of what it reveals about its caretaker/owner - Roger. Roger, we discover, has a God-complex; it comes from serving as God to this microcosm - the insect farm. And that complex makes all the difference in how the novel plays out.

When I was at OSU I took a class in Disability Studies - which involved the representation/portrayal of disabled characters in literature. I wonder how this would fare in that class. We have a character presented with something akin to Downs Syndrome but - more highly functioning. The author does a good job in creating this Downs Syndrome character as complex - something that would break down the stereotype of how we tend to view this population of people. So, in that regard, the novel is very interesting in character development of the "abled" and the "not so abled".

Really, this is a story about two brothers and their father (what story isn't?). It's about the choices they make and the effects of these choices (both short-term and long-term) as they make their way in the world and consider what family is and what family should be.

And there is music. Musicians. Artists/scientists and all that entails. It is, really, very interesting. Anyone interested in psychological novels would enjoy it - I think. Hard core sci fi readers may not find it as interesting as the sci fi is definitely "soft" but...someone interested in the subtleties of the science and how science can affect human lives and the human psyche more than we probably think/realize should enjoy the story.

There is some interesting theological and philosophical discussion that could take place around this novel too.

Kathy says

This book started out fairly slowly for me. I am not a fan of traditional love stories, but as the love became more unconventional, the characters took on much more interesting personas. This book is a very good mix of love, hate, and all the life that happens in between. The only reason for 3 stars was because of the amount of time it took to get started and the fact I had it all figured out before the end; however, the book is a good read. As one of the characters says toward the end, "We move in mysterious ways."

Anne Fast says

The Insect Farm was a terrific read. The novel revolves around the obsessive lives of the Maguire brothers. Jonathan's obsession is Harriet who eventually becomes his wife and Roger's is insects and has created a world for them in a shed.

The novel follows the lives of two brothers. Jonathan who leads a normal life and Roger who is "simple" and views the world as a child would. As the brothers grow older Jonathan moves on to university and Roger remains engrossed in his insect world.

A house fire claims the lives of the brothers' parents and Jonathan leaves university to stay and take care of Roger. Jonathan and Harriet marry but Harriet resides at university 300 miles away. This puts a strain on their marriage and Jonathan is worried that Harriet is cheating on him.

I'm not continuing to review this to the end of the book as I do not want to ruin the ending of the novel.

However I was not prepared for the ending. I went back to the prologue and then "WOW" it hit me. I got it! I received a copy of Insect Farm for free from Goodreads First Reads.

Lynn Williams says

3.5 out of 4 stars

<https://lynnsbooks.wordpress.com/2015...>

've had a few days to reflect on The Insect Farm by Stuart Prebble and yet in spite of the extra time for reflection my thoughts are still a bit of a jumble.

The Insect Farm brings to us the Maguire brothers, Jonathan and Roger. Even though there is something of an age difference the two grow up with a strong bond and are virtually inseparable – up to a point. The point

where Jonathan becomes interested in girls and having a social life and Roger's ambitions take a completely different turn. Roger is a very simple character, I can't remember whether this is ever elaborated upon in the book but basically put he will never be mentally capable of looking after himself as he remains in an almost perpetual childlike state. As the two mature and Jonathan takes on everyday pursuits that lead him away from the home Roger starts to collect insects and what starts out as a random collection of ants and the like turns into a major project with more exotic creatures kept behind glass. At this point in the story you can see the traits of obsessiveness in both boys. Jonathan becomes completely besotted with his girlfriend and future wife, Harriet, and Roger spends every day at the shed nurturing his insects. It all has this feeling of looming disaster – with creepy crawlies!!

Then catastrophe strikes and the boys' parents die in an unfortunate accident. Jonathan chooses to put his plans for university on hold and return to look after his brother, effectively putting a few hundred miles between himself and Harriet and thereby setting in motion a series of events that become almost inevitable.

What I really liked about this story was the narration. The tale is told by Jonathan whose voice flows and is really quite compelling and there is an ever mounting sense of 'things about to go horribly wrong' that frankly makes you race through the book. Jonathan is the main character and I enjoyed reading his story. Roger and Harriet we only get to see through Jonathan's eyes which might not be totally reliable after all as we are only getting his side of the story. As the book progresses we start to have a few hints of mistrust, some that may be simple misunderstandings and others created by the suspicions of others, for example, the police. There are also a few snippets of things that appear to be laying a trail of cookie crumbs – a trail that falsely led me straight to a dead end and an unsuspected dead body. Okay, I knew there was going to be a murder from the book description but it still came a little bit out of the blue for me!

I'm not sure whether this is a criticism or not really but I expected this book to be a lot more psychologically chilling and to be honest it just wasn't. Now, that's not to say I didn't like the story or the style of writing, because I did, it just really wasn't what I was expecting so whilst I didn't have goosebumps I was still compelled to turn the pages fairly quickly. In one respect I feel like this is somehow a missed opportunity because there is clearly a lot of scope here to be a good deal more creepy but then on the other hand I did enjoy it – conflicted! And that's my conundrum, I think because I was expecting something more dark and foreboding I couldn't help feeling a tad disappointed – whilst at the same time being faced with the contradictory feelings of having liked the read overall. I guess it goes to show how much your own expectations can muddy the water sometimes.

The other thing that did occur to me was that the ending was too rushed. We have this really well told story that sucks us in, paints a picture and carefully sets out its stall but then suddenly it's like the story bolts out of the gates with its pants on fire and events flick forwards at a furious rate similar to the digits flying round the clock on Well's Time Machine. Again, I think this was simply too rushed and it all seemed to be to fit in with one thing, concerning Roger's ability to remember things, which on reflection just doesn't gel for me. I can't elaborate further because it would be a spoiler.

I suppose the other puzzle that has me pondering is whether or not Roger was quite as 'simple minded' as everyone really thought or was he more calculating. I'm not sure I really know the answer to that or not – part of me finds it a bit much to have had this character who throughout the book has needed constant care, even though he can clearly look after a whole range of different insects, who now at the conclusion suddenly seems to be a good deal more astute than previously suspected. There's another quibble – if Roger is more intelligent than he makes out why would he be content to live in this way for the largest part of his life? Anyway, nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition. I'll have to think on it some more, is the end a bit of a blunder or is it quite clever and is the author leaving certain decisions up to the reader? I'm not sure I really have the answer and because I'm struggling to find my own resolution it leaves me feeling somewhat unsettled. I don't think I'm the sort of person who needs spoon feeding and I enjoy the opportunity to figure things out and find my own lightbulb moment but at the moment I feel like I'm in the dark.

In spite of my criticisms I did enjoy this but I think because of my own expectations I didn't love it as much as I expected and so if you're intending to read this just be aware that this isn't a dark, chilling, psychological thriller with insect horror thrown in – more subtle mystery murder..

I received a copy of this from the publishers through Netgalley for which my thanks. The above is my own opinion.

Bev says

Jonathan and Roger Maguire are brothers. They lead fairly normal lives, with Roger, the elder, being mentally challenged.

Roger builds an insect farm. He purchases varieties of insects, and observes their behaviour. Jonathan, our narrator, attends an out of town university, together with his girlfriend Harriet. The boys are obsessed, Roger with his insect farm, and Jonathan with beautiful flautist Harriet.

Described as a psychological thriller, the pace of this is somewhat gentle.

[Read my full review here.](#)

Natalie says

I received a free copy of this book through the Goodreads Giveaway program in exchange for an honest review.

'The Insect Farm' is the story of Jonathan and his older brother Roger. Roger has an unidentified mental handicap that gives him a youthful glee for Jonathan's cheesy jokes, an obsessive enthusiasm for insects, and a blank stare he can hide his secrets behind. The story is told from Jonathan's perspective - he meets a girl, goes off to college, then his parents die and he has to move home to take care of Roger and Roger's insect farm. The opening scene is totally creepy, and the story is definitely a thriller.

I read 90% of this book in one sitting: it is well written and the plot flows well, which made it pretty easy to devour. The story was a little bit lacking in character development (hence the four star review), but I liked the way the author used Roger as a mouthpiece for analogies in the book. It reminded me a lot of 'House Rules' by Jodi Picoult, combined with the Tell-Tale Heart, so I found the ending fairly predictable, but it was an enjoyable read. I found the Roger character fascinating - the whole point of the story is that Roger is unreadable, even by his brother, the person who knows him better than anyone else. I would have loved to have read chapters from Roger's perspective, simply because I am beyond curious about what goes on in his head, but peeking behind that curtain would have ruined the main thematic drive of the plot.

Four stars.

Anne Goodwin says

When his parents die in a house fire, Jonathan Maguire decides to give up his studies at Newcastle

University and move back to London to live with his brother. Six years older but with the mind of an eight-year-old, Roger has little understanding of the workings of the social world, but is an expert on the community of insects he breeds in glass-fronted cages in a garden shed. Despite their age difference, the boys were extremely close as children and Jonathan is determined to do the right thing by his brother, but his loyalty comes at a cost. Not only does he give up his degree, but it means separation from his girlfriend, Harriet, a talented flautist much admired by young men. Their marriage, just before Harriet returns to university after the summer break, does little to assuage Jonathan's suspiciousness and jealousy, especially when she is the only woman in a classical quartet that includes his nemesis, Brendan Harcourt, who has never attempted to hide his attraction to Harriet. With Harriet's support, and the occasional fiery confrontation, Jonathan seems to be learning to manage his emotions, when Roger reveals something he witnessed between them after a performance by the quartet.

Full review <http://annegoodwin.weebly.com/annecdo...>

Kate~Bibliophile Book Club says

I've had *The Insect Farm* on my TBR shelves for a year but I've just never gotten round to it. A couple of weeks ago I decided it was there long enough, and that I needed to get it read.

I don't know what I was expecting when I picked up *The Insect Farm*, but what I read definitely wasn't it! And not necessarily in a bad way either! Just in that kind of, what's really going on here, way!

I'm not going to dissect the plot, but I will say that the blurb above is not an accurate representation of what goes on in the book, in my opinion. While that is by no means a bad thing, in terms of pacing etc it left me starting off on the back foot a little. I had been expecting one kind of story and got another.

The Insect Farm is most definitely a slow burner as regards any kind of thrilling element, but there is something and nothing happening all the time during the book. If I'm honest, the book didn't pick up for me until maybe 2/3 of the way through, but from there on it definitely kept my attention.

The titular insect farm almost became another character as it featured quite often. The dark, damp soil and mazes of tunnels were most definitely creepy to read about. If, like me, you don't like bugs all too much, then this one will give you the shivers at times. However, the presence and almost hypnotic power of the insect farm and its effect on the characters is an interesting aside.

So, *The Insect Farm*. All is not what it seems with this one. Elements of the macabre, mixed with domestic noir make for a slightly more unusual take on a thriller.

Recommended.
