



# On Chesil Beach

by Ian McEwan

Published 2007  
203 pages  
Shortlisted –  
Man Booker Prize

## Plot Summary

First Line: “They were young, educated, and both virgins on this, their wedding night, and they lived in a time when a conversation about sexual difficulties was plainly impossible.”

When Edward and Florence face each other on their wedding night, they make decisions that will have face-reaching consequences.

## Characters

Edward Mayhew  
Florence Ponting  
Lionel & Marjorie Mayhew  
Harriet & Anne Mayhew  
Geoffrey & Violet Ponting

## Setting

1962  
Chesil Beach, Dorset, England  
London, England  
Oxford, England

## Point of View

Third person  
Alternating between Edward and Florence

## Author Info

Ian McEwan was born on 21 June 1948 in Aldershot, England. He has both a BA degree and an MA degree in English Literature. He is the author of 18 books and the recipient of numerous awards, including the Man Booker Prize.

## Related Websites

[Ian McEwan](http://www.ianmcewan.com) [www.ianmcewan.com](http://www.ianmcewan.com)  
[On Chesil Beach](http://www.ianmcewan.com/bib/books/chesil.html) [www.ianmcewan.com/bib/books/chesil.html](http://www.ianmcewan.com/bib/books/chesil.html)  
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## Discussion Questions

- What do the novel's opening lines tell us about Edward and Florence and set up the rest of the book? How did your perceptions of them change throughout the subsequent pages?
- Were Florence and Edward incompatible in ways beyond sexual ones? What do their difficulties in bed say about their relationship?
- How does this story relate to our modern culture despite being set more than fifty years ago? Is there any continuity in views on marriage, sex, and identity?

