



The Year of the Child

Bel Mooney

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Bel Mooney has taken twelve children from different parts of the British Isles and observed them over a year as they play, learn and grow. She saw Denise being born, watched Gemma, the daughter of a company executive, at her nursery school and heard the fears of the parents of Donald, a West Indian child from Birmingham. She saw David in preparatory school and Melanie in her comprehensive; talked to a fourteen-year-old Asian boy about his experience of race, and to a ten-year-old Welsh boy about family violence.

The twelve chapters in *The Year of the Child* mirror the stages in a child's development from total dependence to independence and self-awareness and the beginnings of a critical attitude to the world around ? a world in which he or she, whatever the social background, has had very little personal choice. *The Year of the Child* makes a valuable contribution to social history, describing six boys and six girls from different parts of the British Isles and from three broad social groups; it goes beyond journalism and social comment to become a re-enactment of what the author calls 'that cyclical loss of innocence which is at the root of human experience'.

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