

Spinoza: The Outcast Thinker

Devra Lehmann

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A brilliant schoolboy in Amsterdam quickly learns to keep his ideas to himself. When he is twenty-three years old, those ideas prove so shocking and scandalous to his Jewish community that he is publicly denounced and expelled from his synagogue and neighborhood. The scandal shows no sign of waning as his ideas spread throughout seventeenth-century Europe, where he is almost universally reviled as an instrument of the devil. At the center of the storm, he lives the simplest of lives, quietly devoted to his work as a lens grinder and to his steadfast search for truth—an endeavor that paves the way for all that is best in modern democracies. He does not live to see the results of his efforts, but his ideas change the world.

Devra Lehmann offers young adults a clear-sighted introduction to Spinoza, the Dutch philosopher who developed some of the most radical ideas in history. Many of Spinoza's ideas seem familiar today, but an understanding of their explosive impact in the 1600s casts them in an entirely new light.





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