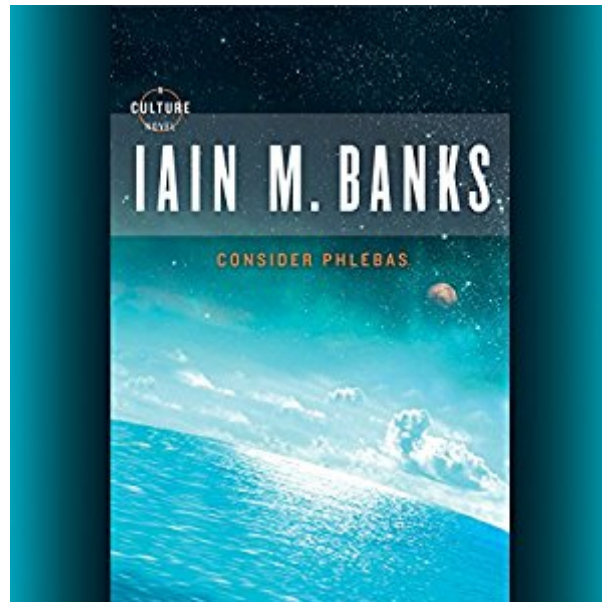


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# Consider Phlebas



## Synopsis

The war raged across the galaxy. Billions had died, billions more were doomed. Moons, planets, the very stars themselves, faced destruction - cold-blooded, brutal, and worse, random. The Idirans fought for their Faith; the Culture for its moral right to exist. Principles were at stake. There could be no surrender. Within the cosmic conflict, an individual crusade. Deep within a fabled labyrinth on a barren world, a Planet of the Dead proscribed to mortals, lay a fugitive Mind. Both the Culture and the Idirans sought it. It was the fate of Horza, the Changer, and his motley crew of unpredictable mercenaries, human and machine, actually to find it, and with it their own destruction.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

\*\*\*Hmm, Aviger said. Without looking up, he asked, "What were they called?"  
"Hmm," Xoxarle rumbled. "Their name..."  
The Idiran pondered. "...I believe they were called the...the Fanch."  
"Never heard of them," Aviger said. "No, you wouldn't have," Xoxarle purred.  
"We annihilated them."\*\*\*  
My favourite of the Culture novels, Consider Phlebas is a standalone novel requiring nothing but an inquiring mind and a taste for the weird. A great war has erupted between two ideologically opposed civilizations - but our concern is with the mission of a shapeshifting humanoid and a fanatical soldier both attempting to acquire a stranded AI on an off-limits planet. What I enjoyed about Consider Phlebas was the interplay of opposing ideologies, the shifting scenes of conflict, the clever dialogue and plotting (from the opening rescue scene to the main characters' final confrontation) Don't miss the bittersweet melancholic epilogue!

After reading all the Culture novels, it's time to do a review on each one. This is book 1 of 10. Let's start with *The Culture: Extremely advanced utopian conglomeration of pan-humans, aliens, and machines enjoying all life has to offer facilitated by the most advanced AI's in the galaxy.* There's many goings-on. Consider *Phlebas* is the first of the Culture series, and I feel the most experimental. Banks shows us the peace-loving Culture at what they subsequently consider the worst part of their history, during a galactic war with aliens who are bent on domination. This book shows you the Culture through the eyes of an outsider, which is why this review is titled "An appetizer..." as the Culture is much broader than is stated in this novel. The main character has their own agenda and doesn't like the Culture very much. This causes some friction. This book is not the best one of the series in my opinion, however it gives you an introduction to the Culture and the events which shape discussion throughout the rest of the series. There's many interesting plot points and situations that the main character gets into, of different varieties. One feature I appreciated about this book, is how it takes place in the far future, however does not alienate the reader with unexplained strange terms or technologies. In addition, people still behave like people, have human thought-processes, and are relatable. This is not to say there isn't unique, interesting, and enjoyable strangeness. Some will tell you to skip this book, or start with another. I'd say read them in published order for an interesting experience. Before beginning this series, I had no idea what to expect, however the rave reviews from fellow Sci-Fi fans brought a copy to my door, and led to reading all 10 books in succession (or Excession??). Next up is the second book, "*The Player of Games*" which really starts getting into the Culture, its wonders, and a smaller than galactic-scale but still interestingly thorny issue.

I read this book and many other of Banks' books when they came out and decided to re-read this after 30 years and see if I liked it as much as when I was in my early 20s... I'll tell you that time did not do Banks and favors. I am going to go through and read more of the Culture series of books and see if they are as good as I remembered them, but I have to say *Consider Phlebas* was not one of my favorite books by him. I found that several side adventures seem to have no meaning on the main story line and it was like he had written of a series of short stories and tied them all together with a common theme that somehow doesn't really come together. What's up with *Fwi-Song*? That was just a wordy side show that contributed nothing to the story. In the end, I felt the book could've been cut in half and still would've been a gripping action sci-fi book.

Banks creates a universe that is beyond imagination- immense, complex and absorbing while on

the micro level his characters are rich and their stories xxxx. What I really liked is how sympathetic to each the author made me feel even though they were on opposite sides of a horrific war. I realized as I neared the end, I still was unable to pick a side to root for, a testament to the idea that the forces that lead to war cannot be simply broken down to right and wrong nor those on each side simply characterized as good or bad.

The only book I've ever read where I absolutely loved everything about it EXCEPT the main character. I loathed him. Even just a mediocre protagonist would have been enough to make this one of my favorite books. Instead, it was like a favorite meal cooked badly. I had to try to ignore him in order to enjoy everything else about the book. There was no valid reason for him to be stubbornly committed to the obviously idiotic position he took, other than to create additional conflict that wasn't even necessary.

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