



The Secret Life of Bees

By Sue Monk Kidd

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The multi-million bestselling novel about a young girl's journey towards healing and the transforming power of love, from the award-winning author of *The Invention of Wings*

Set in South Carolina in 1964, *The Secret Life of Bees* tells the story of Lily Owens, whose life has been shaped around the blurred memory of the afternoon her mother was killed. When Lily's fierce-hearted black "stand-in mother," Rosaleen, insults three of the deepest racists in town, Lily decides to spring them both free. They escape to Tiburon, South Carolina--a town that holds the secret to her mother's past. Taken in by an eccentric trio of black beekeeping sister, Lily is introduced to their mesmerizing world of bees and honey, and the Black Madonna. This is a remarkable novel about divine female power, a story that women will share and pass on to their daughters for years to come.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

In Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees*, 14-year-old Lily Owen, neglected by her father and isolated on their South Carolina peach farm, spends hours imagining a blissful infancy when she was loved and nurtured by her mother, Deborah, whom she barely remembers. These consoling fantasies are her heart's answer to the family story that as a child, in unclear circumstances, Lily accidentally shot and killed her mother. All Lily has left of Deborah is a strange image of a Black Madonna, with the words "Tiburon, South Carolina" scrawled on the back. The search for a mother, and the need to mother oneself, are crucial elements in this well-written coming-of-age story set in the early 1960s against a background of racial violence and unrest. When Lily's beloved nanny, Rosaleen, manages to insult a group of angry white men on her way to register to vote and has to skip town, Lily takes the opportunity to go with her, fleeing to the only place she can think of--Tiburon, South Carolina--determined to find out more about her dead mother. Although the plot threads are too neatly trimmed, *The Secret Life of Bees* is a carefully crafted novel with an inspired depiction of character. The legend of the Black Madonna and the brave, kind, peculiar women who perpetuate Lily's story dominate the second half of the book, placing Kidd's debut novel squarely in the honored tradition of the Southern Gothic. --Regina Marler

From Publishers Weekly

Honey-sweet but never cloying, this debut by nonfiction author Kidd (*The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*) features a hive's worth of appealing female characters, an offbeat plot and a lovely style. It's 1964, the year of the Civil Rights Act, in Sylvan, S.C. Fourteen-year-old Lily is on the lam with motherly servant Rosaleen, fleeing both Lily's abusive father T. Ray and the police who battered Rosaleen for defending her new right to vote. Lily is also fleeing memories, particularly her jumbled recollection of how, as a frightened four-year-old, she accidentally shot and killed her mother during a fight with T. Ray. Among her mother's possessions, Lily finds a picture of a black Virgin Mary with "Tiburon, S.C." on the back so, blindly, she and Rosaleen head there. It turns out that the town is headquarters of Black Madonna Honey, produced by three middle-aged black sisters, August, June and May Boatwright. The "Calendar sisters" take in the fugitives, putting Lily to work in the honey house, where for the first time in years she's happy. But August, clearly the queen bee of the Boatwrights, keeps asking Lily searching questions. Faced with so ideally maternal a figure as August, most girls would babble uncontrollably. But Lily is a budding writer, desperate to connect yet fiercely protective of her secret interior life. Kidd's success at capturing the moody adolescent girl's voice makes her ambivalence comprehensible and charming. And it's deeply satisfying when August teaches Lily to "find the mother in (herself)" a soothing lesson that should charm female readers of all ages. (Jan. 28) Forecast: Blubs from an impressive lineup of women writers Anita Shreve, Susan Isaacs, Ursula Hegi pitch this book straight at its intended readership. It's hard to say whether confusion with the similarly titled *Bee Season* will hurt or help sales, but a 10-city author tour should help distinguish Kidd. Film rights have been optioned and foreign rights sold in England and France.

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From School Library Journal

Adult/High School-Lily Owens, 14, is an emotionally abused white girl living with her cold, uncaring father on a peach farm in rural South Carolina. The memory of her mother, who was accidentally killed in Lily's presence when she was four, haunts her constantly. She has one of her mother's few possessions, a picture of a black Madonna with the words, Tiburon, South Carolina, written on the back. Lily's companion during her

sad childhood has been Rosaleen, the black woman hired to care for her. Rosaleen, in a euphoric mood after the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, goes to town to register to vote and insults one of the town's most racist residents. After she is beaten up and hospitalized, Lily decides to rescue her and they go to Tiburon to search for memories of her mother. There they are taken in by three black sisters who are beekeepers producing a line of honey with the Black Madonna label. While racial tensions simmer around them, the women help Lily accept her loss and learn the power of forgiveness. There is a wonderful sense of the strength of female friendship and love throughout the story.

Penny Stevens, Andover College, Portland, ME

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Louis Jackson:

What do you ponder on book? It is just for students since they are still students or the idea for all people in the world, the actual best subject for that? Just you can be answered for that issue above. Every person has several personality and hobby for each other. Don't to be forced someone or something that they don't wish do that. You must know how great and also important the book The Secret Life of Bees. All type of book could you see on many methods. You can look for the internet options or other social media.

Nadine Taylor:

Nowadays reading books be a little more than want or need but also turn into a life style. This reading routine give you lot of advantages. The huge benefits you got of course the knowledge the particular information inside the book this improve your knowledge and information. The knowledge you get based on what kind of reserve you read, if you want drive more knowledge just go with education books but if you want sense happy read one together with theme for entertaining for example comic or novel. The actual The Secret Life of Bees is kind of reserve which is giving the reader capricious experience.

Albert Matthews:

People live in this new day of lifestyle always make an effort to and must have the extra time or they will get lots of stress from both day to day life and work. So , once we ask do people have free time, we will say absolutely of course. People is human not a robot. Then we inquire again, what kind of activity have you got when the spare time coming to an individual of course your answer will unlimited right. Then ever try this one, reading ebooks. It can be your alternative throughout spending your spare time, the actual book you have read is definitely The Secret Life of Bees.

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