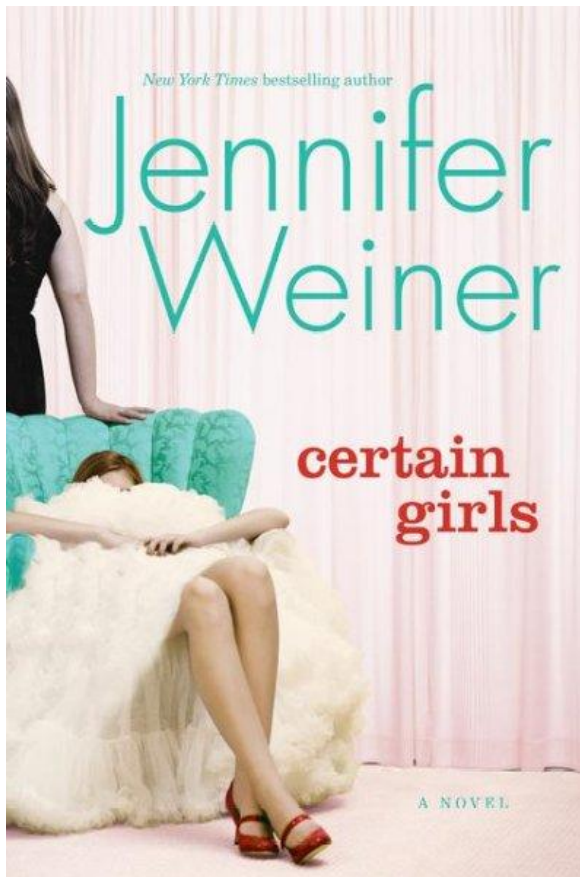


About the book...



Readers fell in love with Cannie Shapiro, the smart, sharp-tongued, bighearted heroine of *Good in Bed* who found her happy ending after her mother came out of the closet, her father fell out of her life, and her ex-boyfriend started chronicling their ex-sex life in the pages of a national magazine. Now Cannie's back. She's happily married to the tall, charming diet doctor Peter Krushevansky and has settled into a life that she finds wonderfully predictable. As preparations for daughter Joy's bat mitzvah begin, everything seems right in Cannie's world. Then Joy discovers the novel Cannie wrote years before and suddenly finds herself faced with what she thinks is the truth about her own conception -- the story her mother hid from her all her life. When Peter surprises his wife by saying he wants to have a baby, the family is forced to reconsider its history, its future, and what it means to be truly happy. Radiantly funny and disarmingly tender, with Weiner's whip-smart dialogue and sharp observations of modern life, *Certain Girls* is an unforgettable story about love, loss, and the enduring bonds of family.

About the author...



Jennifer Weiner is the author of five novels: *Good in Bed*, *In Her Shoes*, which was made into a major motion picture, *Little Earthquakes*, *Goodnight Nobody*, and *Certain Girls*, as well as the short story collection, *The Guy Not Taken*. A graduate of Princeton University, she lives in Philadelphia with her family. Visit her website at www.jenniferweiner.com.

Reviews

Publishers Weekly

Following the story collection *The Guy Not Taken*, Weiner turns in a hilarious sequel to her 2001 bestselling first novel, *Good in Bed*, revisiting the memorable and feisty Candace "Cannie" Shapiro. Flashing forward 13 years, the novel follows Cannie as she navigates the adolescent rebellion of her about-to-be bat mitzvah daughter, Joy, and juggles her writing career; her relationship with her physician husband, Peter Krushelevansky; her ongoing weight struggles; and the occasional impasse with Joy's biological father, Bruce Guberman. Joy, whose premature birth resulted in her wearing hearing aids, has her own amusing take on her mother's overinvolvement in her life as the novel, with some contrivance, alternates perspectives. As her bat mitzvah approaches, Joy tries to make contact with her long absent maternal grandfather and seeks more time with Bruce. In addition, unbeknownst to Joy, Peter has expressed a desire to have a baby with Cannie, which means looking for a surrogate mother. Throughout, Weiner offers her signature snappy observations: ("good looks function as a get-out-of-everything-free card") and spot-on insights into

human nature, with a few twists thrown in for good measure. She expends some energy getting readers up to speed on Good, but readers already involved with *Cannie* will enjoy this, despite Joy's equally strong voice.

Library Journal

Clear your calendar and prepare to read: *Cannie Shapiro* (of *Good in Bed*) is back! *Cannie*, now 42, has been married to her "Doctor Peter" for more than ten years, and "baby" Joy is turning 13. In alternating chapters covering roughly a year, *Cannie* and Joy share the emotion-packed experiences of parenting and being a teen. (At some point, Weiner may have planned this as *The Bat Mitzvah Diaries*.) Added complications are Peter's desire for a baby via surrogate and Joy's classmates' discovery of the sexy novel *Cannie* published a decade ago, *Big Girls Don't Cry* (i.e., *Good in Bed*). Joy vacillates between loving and hating her mother and her complex family structure, while *Cannie* struggles to let her baby grow up; readers will laugh and cry for them both. Returning in this sequel, among others, is *Cannie*'s best friend, Sam, still looking for the perfect mate (i.e., an unmarried Jewish male under 60). With six best sellers in seven years, Weiner is a talented writer who consistently delivers the goods. (Note: F-k is sprinkled judiciously throughout.) An essential read for fans and an essential buy for public libraries.

Discussion questions...

1. In the opening of the novel, Cannie thankfully observes how her daughter, Joy, is so different from herself. Joy, Cannie thinks, will have a better adolescence than her mother did. And yet it is their differences that cause such conflict and grief in the Krushelevansky household. In what ways are Cannie and Joy different? In what ways are they similar? How much of these differences are specific to Cannie and Joy and how much are common to all mother-daughter pairs?
2. Cannie loves her daughter so deeply and so enjoys being a mother that it is somewhat surprising to see how negatively she reacts to Peter's request that they have a child together. Why do you think she reacts this way?
3. On page 68, Joy seems enraged by Cannie's repetition of a familiar story about Joy's childhood. But Cannie can't figure out what has upset her daughter so. Identify moments in the novel where Joy is upset with something Cannie says or does, and Cannie doesn't understand why. Do you think Joy is being unfair, or is it Cannie who is overreacting?
4. Cannie tries to steer Joy away from the fashion magazines her aunt Elle devours because she thinks they're a "bad influence." What does Joy think? Do you

agree or disagree with Cannie, and why? How does the novel provide evidence to support one opinion over the other?

5. Joy is constantly smoothing her hair over her ears to hide her hearing aids, or taking them out altogether. What is she really trying to cover up? Is she ultimately successful? Why or why not?

6. The author uses both Cannie's and Joy's point of view in order to emphasize the disconnect between the worlds of adult women and teenage girls. How else does this generation gap manifest in the novel? Is it really just that Cannie is "clueless"? Are Shari and Elle really that dissimilar from Amber and her friends? What does this novel say about growing up and about the different "types" of women in the world?

7. Cannie struggles with two absent fathers -- her own, with whom she hasn't had a real relationship in decades, and her ex-boyfriend Bruce, who not only abandons her when he discovers that she is pregnant, but who isn't always the most attentive or responsible parent now that he's back in Joy's life. And then there's Peter, who isn't anyone's biological father but plays a father's role nonetheless. Compare and contrast Bruce Guberman, Lawrence Shapiro, and Peter Krushelevansky and their relationships to their families.

8. Describe how various children in this novel view their parents -- particularly their mothers. How do you feel

about these characters? Do you find the perspective of the children very different from that of the adults? Do you sympathize more with one "side" or another? Why or why not?

9. Joy notes on page 196 that her father's new wife, Emily, is so tiny and timid that Joy can't imagine her doing anything mean to anyone. But appearances often belie the truth. How do the appearances of the characters in this novel contradict who they are or what they are going through? Cite specific examples.

10. Even though Cannie would be fine with Joy going to her cousin Tyler's bar mitzvah, Joy decides to attend on the sly. What does Joy hope will happen at the party? What does she learn about herself and about her family?

11. Why do you think Cannie struggles so with the idea of surrogacy? What issues is she struggling with? How do you feel about the idea of pregnancy as a business arrangement -- or "babysitting," as some of the surrogates claim? Do you think Cannie is right that these women are asking for too little for what they are giving up? Why or why not?

12. On page 236, the author relays two news stories. One is about a sorority that dumps twenty-three girls from its roster, all of whom were either overweight, unattractive, or minorities. The other is about a 325-pound girl who commits suicide after being teased by

classmates about her weight; the girl's mother is subsequently charged with neglect. What statement do you think the author is making about America's obsession with weight? Do you think these two news stories speak to the same issue, or is there a difference between them? Explain your opinion.

13. As Joy and her classmates approach their bar and bat mitzvah dates, they struggle to shed their childhood and be perceived as adults by greater society, especially their peers and families. Identify the various elements of so-called adulthood that these children try on. What is it that finally shows Joy what it means to be a grown-up?

Teen Readers Guide

1. In the opening of the novel, Cannie thankfully observes how her daughter, Joy, is so different from herself. In what ways are Cannie and Joy different? In what ways are they similar? How much of these differences are specific to Cannie and Joy and how much are common to all mother/daughter pairs?

2. Jennifer Weiner has received praise for bringing her characters to life so convincingly. Do you find Joy believable as a typical teenage girl? What about the other teens in this book?

3. On page 68, Joy is furious with her mother for telling a familiar story about Joy's childhood. But Cannie can't figure out why her daughter is so upset. Identify moments in the novel where Joy is upset with something Cannie says or does, and Cannie doesn't understand why. Do you think Joy is being unfair, or is it Cannie who needs to snap out of it?

4. One of the things Cannie loves best about writing the Lyla Dare series is that she does it anonymously. This seems similar to the way many teens today use a screen name for chatting, MySpace, and other Internet activities. Why do you think using a pseudonym is so attractive to some people?

5. Joy is beautiful, but sees herself as flawed because of her hearing disability. Do you think a girl can be both beautiful and flawed? What does Cannie think about the fashion magazines that Elle gives to Joy? What does Joy think? Who do you most agree with, and why?

6. The author uses both Cannie's and Joy's point of view in order to emphasize the "generation gap" between the worlds of adult women and teenage girls. Is Cannie really just clueless? Are Shari and Elle really so dissimilar from Amber and her friends? What does this novel say about growing up and about the different "types" of girls and women in the world?

7. Describe how various teens in this novel view their parents -- particularly their mothers. How do you feel

about these characters? Do you find the perspective of the teens very different from that of the adults? Do you sympathize more with one "side" or another? Why or why not?

8. Joy notes on page 196 that her father's new wife, Emily, is so tiny and timid that Joy can't imagine her doing anything mean to anyone. But appearances are often deceiving. How do the appearances of the characters in this novel contradict who they are or what they are going through? Give specific examples.

9. Joy is constantly smoothing her hair over her ears to hide her hearing aids, or taking them out all together. What is she really trying to cover up? Is she ultimately successful? Why or why not?

10. Even though Cannie would be fine with Joy going to her cousin Tyler's bar mitzvah, Joy decides to attend on the sly. What does Joy hope will happen at the party? What does she learn about herself and about her family?

11. These days, it is more and more common to see remarried parents, stepsiblings, adoptions, etc. Do you think the definition of what makes a family "normal" has changed? Do you think the modern expressions of "family" makes relationships more or less complicated between adults and children?

12. As Joy and her classmates approach their bar/bat mitzvah dates, they struggle to shed their childhood

and be perceived as adults by greater society, especially their peers and families. Identify the various elements of so-called adulthood that these teens try on. What is it that, finally, shows Joy what it means to be a grown-up?

Read-alikes

Long Time No See by Susan Isaacs (2001)

The Orange Blossom Special by Betsy Carter (2005)

Belong to Me by Marisa de Los Santos (2008)

Thank you for All Things by Sandra Kring (2008)