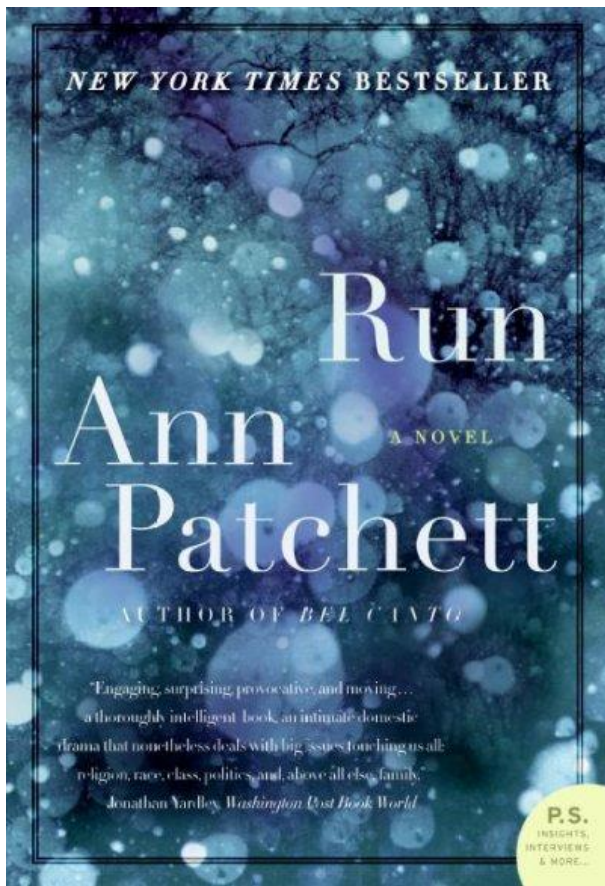


Ann Arbor District Library: Book Club to Go Discussion Guide

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1328242>

About the Book



Since their mother's death, Tip and Teddy Doyle have been raised by their loving, possessive, and ambitious father. As the former mayor of Boston, Bernard Doyle wants to see his sons in politics, a dream the boys have never shared. But when an argument in a blinding New England snowstorm inadvertently causes an accident that involves a stranger and her child, all Bernard Doyle cares about is his ability to keep his children—all his children—safe.

Set over a period of twenty-four hours, *Run* takes us from the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard to a home for retired Catholic priests in downtown Boston. It shows us how worlds of privilege and poverty can coexist only blocks apart from each other, and how family can include people you've never even met. Ann Patchett illustrates the humanity that connects disparate lives, weaving several stories into one surprising and endlessly moving narrative.

Suspenseful and stunningly executed, *Run* is ultimately a novel about secrets, duty, responsibility, and the lengths we will go to protect our children.

About the Author

Source: <http://www.annpatchett.com>



Ann Patchett was born in Los Angeles in 1963 and raised in Nashville. She attended Sarah Lawrence College and the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop. In 1990, she won a residential fellowship to the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Massachusetts, where she wrote her first novel, *The Patron Saint of Liars*. It was named a *New York Times* Notable Book for 1992.

For nine years, Patchett worked at *Seventeen* magazine. She mostly wrote non-fiction, and the magazine would publish only one of every five articles she wrote. She said that the magazine was cruel but eventually she stopped taking criticism personally. She ended her relationship with the magazine after getting into a fight with an editor and exclaiming "I'll never darken your door again!"

In 1993, she received a Bunting Fellowship from the Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute at Radcliffe College. Patchett's second novel, *Taft*, was awarded the Janet Heidinger Kafka Prize for the best work of fiction in 1994. Her third novel, *The Magician's Assistant*, was short-listed for England's Orange Prize and earned her a Guggenheim Fellowship. Her next novel, *Bel Canto*, won both the PEN/Faulkner Award and the Orange Prize in 2002, and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. It was named the Book Sense Book of the Year. It sold over a million copies in the United States and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award.

In 2004, Patchett published *Truth & Beauty*, a memoir of her friendship with the writer Lucy Grealy. It was named one of the Best Books of the Year by the *Chicago Tribune*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *Entertainment Weekly*. *Truth & Beauty* was also a finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize and won the Chicago Tribune's Heartland Prize, the Harold D. Vursell Memorial Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the Alex Award from the American Library Association. *What now?*, published in April, 2008, is an essay based on a commencement speech she delivered at her alma mater in 2006.

Patchett has written for numerous publications, including the *New York Times Magazine*, *Harper's Magazine*, *The Atlantic*, the *Washington Post*, *Gourmet*, and *Vogue*. She lives in Nashville, Tennessee with her husband, Karl VanDevender.

Reviews

Publishers Weekly

Novelists can no longer take it as an insult when people say their novels are like good television, because the finest American television is better written than most novels. Ann Patchett's new one has the texture, the pace and the fairy tale elegance of a half dozen novels she might have read and loved growing up, but the magic and the finesse of *Run* is really much closer to that of *Six Feet Under* or *ER* or *The Sopranos*, and that is good news for everybody, not least her readers. Bernadette and Bernard Doyle were a Boston couple who wanted to have a big lively family. They had one boy, Sullivan, and then adopted two black kids, Teddy and Tip. Mr. Doyle is a former mayor of Boston and he continues his interest in politics, hoping his boys will shape up one day for elected office, though none of them seems especially keen. Bernadette dies when the adopted kids are just four, and much of the book offers a placid requiem to her memory in particular and to the force of motherhood in lives generally. An old statue from Bernadette's side of the family seems to convey miracles, and there will be more than one before this gracious book is done. One night, during a heavy snowfall, Teddy and Tip accompany their father to a lecture given by Jessie Jackson at the Kennedy Centre. Tip is preoccupied with studying fish, so he feels more than a little coerced by his father. After the lecture they get into an argument and Tip walks backwards in the road. A car appears out of nowhere and so does a woman called Tennessee, who pushes Tip out of the car's path and is herself struck.

Thus, a woman is taken to hospital and her daughter, Kenya, is left in the company of the Doyles. Relationships begin both to emerge and unravel, disclosing secrets, hopes, fears. *Run* is a novel with timeless concerns at its heart—class and belonging, parenthood and love—and if it wears that heart on its sleeve, then it does so with confidence. And so it should: the book is lovely to read and is satisfyingly bold in its attempt to say something patient and true about family. Patchett knows how to wear big human concerns very lightly, and that is a continuing bonus for those who found a great deal to admire in her previous work, especially the ultra-lauded *Bel Canto*. Yet one should not mistake that lightness for anything cosmetic: *Run* is a book that sets out

inventively to contend with the temper of our times, and by the end we feel we really know the Doyle family in all its intensity and with all its surprises.

The Washington Post

This fifth novel by the author of the much-admired *Bel Canto* is engaging, surprising, provocative and moving. Its force is diminished somewhat by a couple of extended passages in which Ann Patchett resorts to conversation rather than action to fill in some of her plot's holes, but these are minor annoyances in what is otherwise a thoroughly intelligent book, an intimate domestic drama that nonetheless deals with big issues touching us all: religion, race, class, politics and, above all else, family.

[Bernard] Doyle is a believer in politics. He thinks that "it's something that a person has to do," and he would agree with another character who believes that "there were some people who had the ability to tell other people what was worth wanting, could tell them in a way that was so powerful that the people who heard them suddenly had their eyes opened to what had been withheld from them all along." He feels responsible for the difference between the lives of the people living in Cathedral and those living in more prosperous neighborhoods, though history makes plain that there's only so much that he -- or anyone else in public office -- can do about it.

In the end, though, more than anything else *Run* is about family, and the infinitely surprising ways in which families can intersect with each other. Patchett has populated the novel with an uncommonly interesting and attractive group of people: Doyle, at once sentimental and tough, generous and willful; Tip, purposeful and uncompromising; Teddy, warm-hearted and kind. I found myself especially drawn to Kenya, a preternaturally gifted runner blessed with "strength, grace, concentration," and to Sullivan, irreverent and idiosyncratic, the prodigal son who reappears unexpectedly and, despite his father's suspicions and doubts, provides his own kind of strength in a time of change and uncertainty.

To the novel's many strengths, one last must be noted. Endings in novels aren't easy and sometimes really don't matter, since in the reader's mind the characters keep right on living, but Patchett has given this one an ending that is just about perfect. Certainly it felt that way to me as I quite reluctantly reached the final page.

Booklist *Starred Review*

The question of what makes a family is central to this luminous novel, Patchett's first since her award-winning *Bel Canto* (2001)...The drama of a single day is given an unreal quality by the snow that curtails normal activity, as these vividly portrayed characters struggle with their circumstances: Sullivan, the prodigal whose mistake his father lied about; smart Tip; sweet Teddy; speedy runner Kenya; and her mother, Tennessee, whose dreamlike sequence in her hospital room reveals another twist in the family muddle. In extraordinarily fluid prose, Patchett unfolds this story to its epilogue-like final chapter as she illuminates issues of race, religion, duty, and desire.

Library Journal *Starred Review*

Two families come together in a traffic accident during a snowstorm. Nothing terribly unusual there, except that a woman has purposely thrown herself under a car to protect a stranger. It quickly becomes clear that the families—a poor, single black mother with her 11-year-old daughter and a white, Irish Catholic, former Boston mayor with a biological son and two adopted black college-aged sons whose much-loved wife died over 20 years ago—have a connection. The award-winning Patchett (*Bel Canto*) here presents an engrossing and enjoyable novel. While there are a few unexpected turns, the reader very quickly figures out where the plot is headed, but that does not detract from the pleasure of reading. The somewhat unusual premise is presented very matter-of-factly; this is not a story about race but about family and the depths of parents' love of their children, whether biological, adopted, given away, or otherwise acquired, and of each other.

Literary Criticism

Ann Patchett: The Novelist as Magician

Shopping for shoes one morning in Nashville, Ann Patchett is captivated by a pair of thigh-high, stiletto suede boots. "I sure would sell a lot of books if I wore these on the tour," she says. At the moment, she is the picture of Southern gentility in a tailored sundress, flat mules and muted lipstick. Still, she gives the impression she is not joking.

Her ability to straddle two worlds at once, to conjure another life and find the voice to describe it, is what has enthralled Patchett's readers since she burst onto the scene in 1985 at age 21 with her first short story in the *Paris Review*. Now, *The Magician's Assistant*--Patchett's third novel, just out from Harcourt Brace--is being touted by her publishers as the work that will transform her from

a critically acclaimed, midlist author into a popular success. In this novel (as in 1992's *The Patron Saint of Liars* and 1994's *Taft*, both published by Houghton Mifflin), lonely strangers construct a family out of the ruins of past love.

The Magician's Assistant is the story of Sabine, who marries Parsifal the Magician after being his assistant for 20 years. While Sabine knows that Parsifal is gay, it is not until his untimely death shortly after their marriage that she learns his real name was Guy Fetters and that he has a mother and two sisters alive and well in Alliance, Nebraska. When Sabine agrees to visit her newly discovered in-laws in the dead of a Midwestern winter, she begins a journey of redemption; in their shared love for Parsifal, each woman is finally able to understand the past--and to discover something of her own desires and potential.

"People tell me that *The Magician's Assistant* is my breakthrough book, that it is so much better than the others," Patchett says, sitting with *PW* in her modest, immaculate living room after a breakneck tour through town that bypassed all country music attractions in favor of a stop at the Loveless Diner and a visit to her mother's house, where her beloved terrier, Rose, was visiting. "But I refuse to be disloyal to the first and second books to sell the third."

It would be easy for Patchett to brag about her considerable achievements: the critical reception to her work has been exceptional. *The Patron Saint of Liars*, which won the 1989 James A. Michener/Copernicus Award for a book in progress, left Alice McDermott gushing in the *New York Times Book Review*: "Ann Patchett has written such a good first novel that among the many pleasures it offers is the anticipation of how wonderful her second, third and fourth will surely be." *Taft* won the Janet Heidinger Kafka Prize for the best work of fiction in 1994. On October 4, just three days after the official release of *The Magician's Assistant*, Patchett was awarded the Nashville Banner Tennessee Writers Award at the Southern Festival of Books.

How does a young writer handle such critical acclaim? In a conversation covering subjects as diverse as Patchett's relationship to her seven step-siblings, her stint in the Los Angeles Police Academy (researching a book she later abandoned) and her fascination with Nashville society, the author makes it clear that she simply doesn't think about it. "There is a small window of time, after the book is finished, when I care what people think," she declares. "Otherwise, I don't care about the reviews; maybe it's because I've never had any bad ones."

Curled up in her favorite armchair, Patchett laughs delightedly while discussing her work and communicates with her hands and eyes as much as her words. Tall and slim, with apple cheeks and radiant skin, it is easy to see why *Vogue* and *GQ* like to photograph her to illustrate the first-person, nonfiction articles she writes for them--describing her experiences at Nashville's Swan Ball, fly-fishing in Alaska and obsessing over her dog. During the interview, Patchett pauses thoughtfully after each question. "I am trying to give you an honest answer, rather than a part of my personal mythology," she explains.

If the mythology of a creative child succeeding beyond early expectations has clung to Patchett, it owes something to a peripatetic childhood that left her fascinated by characters in transition, and offbeat, surrogate families. When she was six, her parents divorced, and--"with nothing in her pocket"--her mother moved her two young daughters from Los Angeles, where they were born, to her native Nashville. Patchett "didn't go to school much after that." When she did attend her Catholic parochial school, she earned D's and F's and was kept in from recess every day for two years.

"We had peculiar circumstances," Patchett says of her divorced mother. "She was a very loving mother, but we were scrambling; we had bigger things going on in our lives than whether or not I could read."

Quickly, storytelling became Patchett's way of impressing her teachers. "And because of my slow childhood, and being yelled at by the nuns, nothing makes me happier than being told I'm smart," she says.

In high school, Patchett submitted poetry to the *New Yorker* and *Seventeen*. At 17, she entered Sarah Lawrence College "completely focused" on becoming a poet.

"I believe that my gift in this world is not that I'm smarter or more talented than anyone else: it's that I had a singular goal. I don't want other stuff: friends, kids, travel. What makes me happy is writing."

There was "much hand holding and chin tickling" by the writing staff at Sarah Lawrence, according to Patchett. Even so, the critic in her own head was brutal; to escape a poetry writer's block, Patchett took a fiction writing class with Alan Gurganus. "I just completely found myself," she says. "I took to fiction like a duck to water."

Patchett's course was set. After studying with "unbelievably generous, good teachers" like Russell Banks and Grace Paley, she sold her first story, "All Little Colored Children Should Learn to Play Harmonica" to the *Paris Review*, where it was published right before she graduated, on her 21st birthday. The next fall, she enrolled in the Iowa Writers' Workshop where, the M.F.A. she earned notwithstanding, she "didn't learn a damn thing."

Patchett describes "All Little Colored Children Should Learn to Play Harmonica"--about the Smileys, a black family raising eight children in the 1940s--as "the cash cow of my career, the little tale that could." The story has been anthologized many times as well as adapted into a play. "Because I was 19, I had the courage and the confidence to approach such subject matter with authority," Patchett said. "And I ended up resenting that story for a while--it was a long time before I wrote anything else that was good."

The next few years were difficult for Patchett. Although Random House expressed interest in a novel of interconnected short stories about the Smiley children, the resulting book "was not worth the sum of its parts," Patchett said, and she broke her contract with the publisher. That same year, her one-year-old marriage broke up. In the emotional aftermath, Patchett quit her job teaching at Pennsylvania's Allegheny College two days before the start of fall classes and moved home to Nashville to live with her mother. She was 25.

In Nashville, Patchett waitressed at T.G.I.Fridays for a year. "But all that time rolling silverware I was thinking about a novel." With her proposal, she was granted a residential fellowship at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Mass., which she began on October 1, 1990. By May 1, she had finished *The Patron Saint of Liars*. Also in Provincetown, Patchett met Elizabeth McCracken (*The Giant's House*) and the two began what she anticipates will be "a life-long tradition of editing each other's work."

The Patron Saint of Liars--about a home for unwed mothers run by nuns during the 1960s in an abandoned hotel in Habit, Kentucky--is presented as a fairy tale, devoid of politics or a real sense of time. Patchett admits that the lack of discussion about abortion or the changes in society or the Catholic church during the years in which the story is set was purely accidental. "These were simply things I didn't know how to do when I wrote my first book," she explains.

Patchett sent *The Patron Saint of Liars* off in "chunks" to her agent, Lisa Bankoff at ICM (Alan Gurganus, also a client of Bankoff, had introduced the two). By the

time Patchett drove from Provincetown to Nashville, Bankoff had several offers for the manuscript. Patchett accepted Houghton Mifflin's offer because she wanted to work with Richard Todd, "an old-fashioned, gentle, smart, kind man who is literature all the way."

Patchett stayed with Houghton Mifflin for her second book, *Taft*, the story of a middle-aged black bartender and ex-drummer in Memphis whose paternal and romantic impulses are awakened by a young white girl he hires in his bar.

The idea for the book arose one night when Patchett, flirting with a drummer in the Rum Boogie Cafe in Memphis, found herself wondering what it would be like to fall in love with a middle-aged black man in a modern Southern city. *The Magician's Assistant* had its genesis in a similar moment of fantasy. Several years ago, Patchett's father, a detective with the LAPD, took her to a dinner show at L.A.'s Magic Castle. That evening, Patchett was picked from the audience to assist the magician with his act; the event prompted her to write a short story, "The Magician's Assistant's Dream," which appeared in *Columbia: A Magazine of Poetry and Prose*. A book proposal based on the story won her a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1994.

Patchett left Houghton Mifflin with *The Magician's Assistant* because Todd had recently departed to become a freelance editor at Random House. At first, Patchett considered following him but worried that, without an in-house editor, she "would fall through the cracks." In a fortuitous moment, the writer met Elizabeth Bogner, Harcourt Brace's former director of marketing, at a cocktail party. Bogner, who, as a bookseller at the recently defunct Books and Co. in Manhattan, had loved *The Patron Saint of Liars*, began a successful campaign complete with "little gifts" to lure Patchett to her house.

Patchett likes to think about a book for a year or more; when she starts the actual writing, she works quickly, locking herself in her home for eight hours a day, five days a week, and forbidding herself to read (she does not own a TV) until she has put in a full day. "My apartment gets very, very clean when I'm writing," she laughs.

In the end, it is not the writing but the touring--the lonely hotel rooms, the endless parade of strangers, the constant need to perform--that Patchett dreads. Still, she will tour behind *The Magician's Assistant* and will spend the fall semester performing on a different stage, as the Tennessee Williams Fellow in Creative Writing at the University of the South, in Sewanee, Tenn. "I put an

awful lot out in front of people when I tour or teach," she explains. "I become very funny and entertaining, something I am not normally. It takes a lot out of me."

Having issued that disclaimer, Patchett admits that the next article she will publish--in November's *GQ*--is, in fact, humorous: a first-person account of her experience wearing a "pregnancy suit," and working as a pregnant extra in the CBS TV movie made from *The Patron Saint of Liars*, tentatively set to air this spring. When asked whether it was difficult to relinquish control to the screenplay writer, Patchett is dismissive. "On the first day of shooting, I received a check for \$40,000. After that, I really don't give a damn what they do with the book."

The money, she explains, gives her the time to think about her next book: a novel based loosely on the recent hostage crisis in Lima, Peru, in which each character speaks a different language. "I'm very interested in the idea of foreignness, of people coming from different countries finding a way to communicate," she said.

Ultimately, Patchett's far-flung subjects arise from a single motivation: "That way no one ever thinks I am writing about myself. I never thought it was strange to pick these topics. I just really believe that using your imagination is the one time in life you can really go anywhere."

Source: Patchett, Ann, and Elizabeth Bernstein. "Ann Patchett: The Novelist as Magician." Publishers Weekly 244.42 (13 Oct. 1997): 52-53. Rpt. in Contemporary Literary Criticism. Vol. 244. Detroit: Gale, 2008. Literature Resource Center. <http://www.aadl.org/research/browse/books>

Discussion Questions Source:

<http://www.harpercollins.com/author/authorExtra.aspx?authorID=20650&isbn13=9780061340635&displayType=readingGuide>

1. How would you characterize Teddy and Tip's relationship as siblings? How does it compare to their relationship with their brother, Sullivan?
2. At the Jesse Jackson lecture, Doyle reviews the personalities of his three sons and thinks about which of them would be most able to lead. Which of the

boys do you think would make the best politician? Do you think Doyle's assessments of their characters are accurate or biased?

3. Discuss the concept of nature versus nurture. Do you think that Sullivan, Tip, and Teddy are who they are, or would they have turned out differently had Bernadette lived? How would those differences manifest themselves?

4. Discuss the different meanings of the title. How many different ways does the word Run work for you?

5. *Run* includes several incidences of doubling—two brothers who get adopted, two mothers who die, two men named Sullivan, two Tennessee Alice Mosers, two accidents involving hospital stays. What is the effect for you as a reader of seeing similar characters and events repeated over the course of the book? Can you think of any other examples of doubling in literature?

6. Why is Kenya the one subject that Sullivan and his father can agree on? How does her adoption into the family help Teddy and Tip understand Sullivan and what he went through growing up?

7. Towards the end of the story we see images of four mothers (including the Virgin Mary) on Kenya's dresser. What is the author saying about women and mothers to have them all there together?

8. Why does Kenya's mother conceal her true identity from her daughter? Do you think that she imagines the conversation in the hospital with Tennessee Alice Moser after surgery or do you think it really happened?

9. What does Father Sullivan's encounter with Tennessee in the hospital suggest about his ability to heal?

10. Doyle is very invested in politics on both local and national levels, but he falters at the idea of taking home a stray child. What does this book say to you about social responsibility?

11. Of the many characters in *Run*, which did you feel most connected to on an emotional level? How do you explain that connection?

12. How did you react to Bernard Doyle's decision to bestow the heirloom statue on Kenya, a daughter who has literally shared nothing with his former wife,

Bernadette? Do you think he made the same decision his wife would have made?

Multimedia

Author Ann Patchett Needs First Reader (Radio Broadcast)

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=14556358>

A discussion of the author and her work from NPR.

Further Reading

BirthMark: transracial adoption in contemporary America by Sandra Lee Patton

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1174547>

(Call number: 362.734 Pa)

Neither an argument for nor against the practice of transracial adoption, *BirthMarks* seeks to counter the dominant public view of this practice as a panacea to the so-called "epidemic" of illegitimacy and the misfortune of infertility among the middle class with a more nuanced view that gives voice to those directly involved, shedding light on the ways in which Black and multiracial adoptees articulate their own identity experiences.

Book Club To Go* *Bel Canto by Ann Patchett

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1175837>

(Call number: Fiction Patchett)

Somewhere in South America, at the home of the country's vice president, a lavish birthday party is being held in honor of the powerful businessman Mr. Hosokawa. It is a perfect evening-until a band of gun-wielding terrorists takes the entire party hostage. But what begins as a panicked, life-threatening scenario slowly evolves into something quite different, a moment of great beauty, as terrorists and hostages forge unexpected bonds, and people from different continents become compatriots.

State of Wonder by Ann Patchett

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1379123>

(Call number: Fiction Patchett)

A researcher at a pharmaceutical company, Marina Singh journeys into the heart of the Amazonian delta to check on a field team that has been silent for two years--a dangerous assignment that forces Marina to confront the ghosts of her past.

Read-Alikes

***Book Club To Go* *The secret life of bees* by Sue Monk Kidd**

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1186707>

(Call number: Fiction Kidd)

Sue Monk Kidd is an extraordinary storyteller. In "*The Secret Life of Bees*," she explores a young girl's search for the truth about her mother; her courage to tear down racial barriers; and her joy as she claims her place within a community of women. "Beautifully written."

***Perfect family* by Pam Lewis**

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1311414>

(Call number: Fiction Lewis)

A literary page-turner about a proper New England family and the dark secrets that undo them. Pony Carteret -- the lovely headstrong youngest member of the Carteret family -- has always been a strong swimmer. So when she is discovered drowned at the family's summer home on Lake Aral, Vermont, her red hair tangled in an anchor chain and her baby abandoned on shore, her family is stunned by disbelief. As the police conduct their investigation, Jasper Carteret, the patriarch, calls an urgent family meeting. Had any of her siblings known that Pony would be at the house that day? Was she having personal problems, was she depressed? Had she ever revealed the true identity of her baby's father?

***The color of water: a Black man's tribute to his white mother* by James McBride**

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1104663>

(Call number: 921 McBride)

Who is Ruth McBride Jordan? A self-declared "light-skinned" woman evasive about her ethnicity, yet steadfast in her love for her twelve black children. James McBride, journalist, musician and son, explores his mother's past, as well as his own upbringing and heritage, in a poignant and powerful debut, *The Color Of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother*. The son of a black minister and a woman who would not admit she was white, James McBride grew up in "orchestrated chaos" with his eleven siblings in the poor, all-black projects of Red Hook, Brooklyn. "Mommy," a fiercely protective woman with "dark eyes full of pep and fire," herded her brood to Manhattan's free cultural events, sent them off on buses to the best (and mainly Jewish) schools, demanded good grades

and commanded respect. As a young man, McBride saw his mother as a source of embarrassment, worry, and confusion-and reached thirty before he began to discover the truth about her early life and long-buried pain. *In The Color of Water*, McBride retraces his mother's footsteps and, through her searing and spirited voice, recreates her remarkable story.

A Mercy: a novel by Toni Morrison

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1314598>

(Call number: Fiction Morrison)

A powerful tragedy distilled into a jewel of a masterpiece by the Nobel Prize-winning author of *Beloved* and, almost like a prelude to that story, set two centuries earlier. In the 1680s the slave trade was still in its infancy. In the Americas, virulent religious and class divisions, prejudice and oppression were rife, providing the fertile soil in which slavery and race hatred were planted and took root. Jacob is an Anglo-Dutch trader and adventurer, with a small holding in the harsh north. Despite his distaste for dealing in "flesh," he takes a small slave girl in part payment for a bad debt from a plantation owner in Catholic Maryland. This is Florens, "with the hands of a slave and the feet of a Portuguese lady." Florens looks for love, first from Lina, an older servant woman at her new master's house, but later from a handsome blacksmith, an African, never enslaved.

Summaries from



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