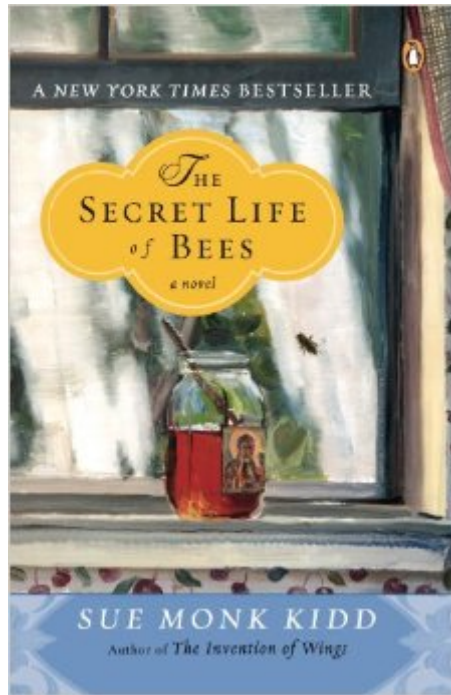


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# The Secret Life Of Bees



## Synopsis

The multimillion-copy “bestselling first novel by the author of *The Invention of Wings*, coming from Viking in January 2014 *The Secret Life of Bees* was a *New York Times* bestseller for more than two and a half years, a *Good Morning America* “Read This” Book Club pick and was made into an award-winning film starring Dakota Fanning, Queen Latifah, Jennifer Hudson, and Alicia Keys. A coming of age tale set in South Carolina in 1964, *The Secret Life of Bees* will appeal to fans of Kathryn Stockett’s *The Help* and Beth Hoffman’s *Saving CeeCee Honeycutt*, and 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 town’s most vicious racists, Lily decides they should both escape to Tiburon, South Carolina—a town that holds the secret to her mother’s past. There they are taken in by an eccentric trio of black beekeeping sisters who introduce Lily to a mesmerizing world of bees, honey, and the Black Madonna who presides over their household. This is a remarkable story about divine female power and the transforming power of love—a story that women will continue to share and pass on to their daughters for years to come.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars — See all reviews (3,009 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,506 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #11 in Books > Literature & Fiction > African American > Historical #12 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Women’s Fiction > Sisters #100 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Coming of Age

## Customer Reviews

*The Secret Life of Bees* is an enduring story set on a southern bee farm. The characters will enlighten and warm your heart. *The Secret Life of Bees* is similar to many southern stories; however, the bee lore that Kidd interjects throughout makes the book unique and interesting. *The Secret Life of Bees* is a heartwarming, feel good read. There are universal lessons about family and

self throughout. The main character, Lily Owens is fleeing an abusive father and an all-consuming truth surrounding her mother's death. *The Secret Life of Bees* is set in the 1960's when racial tensions and violence were at an all time high. Lily and her caretaker Rosaleen, leave town after a violent encounter with racists while Rosaleen was attempting to exercise some of her newly granted freedoms. Since the death of her mother, Lily has a few precious clues as to her last days. The clues lead Lily and Rosaleen to Tiburon, South Carolina where they meet the 'calendar sisters', May, June, and August Boatwright. The Boatwright sisters operate a successful Bee farm. Lily and Rosaleen are welcomed to the farm with open arms. Through her work on the farm, Lily is able to examine her past and begin to trust as she finds love again. *The Secret Life of Bees* is the story of mothers. The reader will travel with Lily as she experiences each of the four remarkable women ~ Rosaleen, May, June, and August. Each of these women is a teacher and guide to Lily. It is through her experiences that she is able to discern that a mother is more than just a biological bond. A great debut for Sue Monk Kidd. I cannot help thinking that I would have loved to learn more about Boatwright sisters...maybe there is room for another story!

I gave this book to my 15 year old daughter to read and she came back after finishing it exclaiming, " All those mothers!" Motherhood and its powerful influence (both good and bad) on each of us is a central theme to the story and the quest for all that a mother implies (safety, acceptance, unconditional love) draws the reader immediately to Lily Owen, the 14 year old narrator. I thought this book had beautiful imagery, a nice balance of goodness overcoming loss, and most of all conceded to the power of redemption. Sue Monk Kidd did a wonderful job weaving the racial tensions of the 1960's into the voice of the main character and bringing us, the reader, along for the ride as the young girl discovers what it feels like to be discriminated against herself, the dangers of racial inequality, and the basic human elements that bind us to each other despite color or class. This story is about a journey of growth and addresses that fundamental need in each of us to find answers to the questions of who we are. I have found, months later, that *The Secret Life of Bees* is still with me and I recommend it over and over again.

"The queen, for her part, is the unifying force of the community; if she is removed from the hive, the workers very quickly sense her absence. After a few hours, or even less, they show unmistakable signs of queenlessness." *The Secret Life of Bees* is a wonderful story that brings hope and strength to those that are in the midst of a journey through life. The author, Sue Monk Kidd, does an excellent job of drawing the reader into the story. By the end of the novel, the reader has developed

a relationship with the main character, Lily Owens, and leaves you wondering what else lies ahead in Lily's life. The story begins during the summer of 1964 in South Carolina. We are immediately drawn into Lily's struggle with a vague memory of the death of her mother. Her mother was shot and killed in a freak accident when she was only four years old. Throughout Lily's journey we discover more and more about her mother and her death. Lily's journey begins when she goes into town with her African American housekeeper, Rosaleen. The Civil Rights Act has just been passed and Rosaleen is going into town to register to vote. On their way into town Rosaleen gets into a fight with three of the most racist men in town and ends up getting both Lily and herself thrown in jail. Lily's abusive father, T. Ray, bails her out but on their way back they get into an argument about Lily's mother. "Not funny?" he yelled. "Not funny? Why, it's the funniest goddamn thing I ever heard: you think your mother is your guardian angel." He laughed again. "The woman could have cared less about you." This was absolutely devastating for Lily to hear. She knew she could not stay with T. Ray and live with his physical and emotional abuse. She also knew she needed to find the truth about what happened to her mother. She decides to break Rosaleen out of jail and travel to Tiburon, South Carolina. It is here where she meets the calendar sisters, May, June and August. While living with them Lily becomes engulfed in a completely different lifestyle from which she came from. She becomes an incredible beekeeper and develops strong relationships with the sisters. Throughout her stay with the sisters she begins to learn more about the truth of her mother's life and the mystery of her death. Kidd does a remarkable job of drawing parallels between the life of bees and the life that Lily is leading. Each chapter begins with a quote about bees that directly relates to what happens to Lily in that chapter. The struggle that Lily went through when her mother was killed is like the struggle a hive goes through when they lose their queen. "A queenless colony is a pitiful and melancholy community; there may be a mournful wail or lament from within. Without intervention, the colony will die. But introduce a new queen and the most extravagant change takes place." While there is no real replacement for a lost love one, Lily finds an almost motherly comfort within the calendar sisters. Their relationships grow stronger until Lily begins to feel as if she is a member of the family. "It was how Sugar-Girl said what she did, like I was truly one of them. [ ] They didn't even think of me being different." As Lily begins to gain the trust of the sisters she tells them the entire story about her mother, and her leaving T. Ray, and discovers more about her mother than she could have ever imagined.

If you liked Kaye Gibbon's "Ellen Foster" then Lily Owens will capture your heart. When her father, T. Ray, punished her by making her kneel on grits, I immediately knew that she was a survivor and he was a coward. May, June, and August Boatwright, the beekeeping sisters, and their Black Madonna honey were exquisite. May's tortured soul taught me about empathy gone awry. Sue Monk Kidd's strong southern storytelling skills are reminiscent of Reynolds Price and Harper Lee. In this her first novel, the writing isn't perfect but it tugged at my heart the way Barbara Kingsolver's "Pigs in Heaven" did. The characters, the time period and the small town setting made it similar to "To Kill a Mockingbird." This novel should be read by parents and teens together. I hope Kidd plans a sequel. I care so much about the characters that I yearn to know about their future lives.

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