

Books

WHY I LOVE THE BABY-SITTERS CLUB

BY KRISTEN MASCIA

We borrowed them from the school library, stowed the chewed-up copies in our knapsacks, then waited impatiently for the bell to ring so we could immerse ourselves in their world. Before Katniss and Hermione there were Kristy, Claudia, Mary Anne and Stacey, the founding members of the Baby-Sitters Club—for us fourth-to-sixth-grade Millennial dweebs, the original book-series heroines. We aspired to be just like them: tough Kristy, hip Claudia, sweet Mary Anne, gorgeous Stacey. Would-be mini-moguls, we posted our own babysitting fliers, but our copycat club, comprised of highly decorated members of my Girl Scout troop, never took off. Of course, Ann M. Martin's explosively popular Scholastic series did, spawning 250 titles, a TV series, a movie and now a 21st-century reboot: On Dec. 1 Scholastic will release e-book versions of the first 20 titles, with a Facebook app too. Will girls still be inspired by Kristy and the gang? I think so. Martin's message—that you can build something cool with your pals—is timeless. Meanwhile, I know where I hope to be Christmas morning. Attached to my Kindle, awash in nostalgia—embracing my inner tween babysitter.

As the series goes digital, its old-world emphasis on friendship, pluck and enterprise still resonates



Twenty titles from the bestselling series, which launched in 1986, will be released in e-book form starting Dec. 1.

GREAT READS BEFORE THEY WERE MOVIES...



ANNA KARENINA: THE SCREENPLAY
by Tom Stoppard
Tolstoy's classic distilled into 199 pages suitable for filming. "All happy families are alike..." didn't make the cut!



THE SILVER LININGS PLAYBOOK
by Matthew Quick
Bradley Cooper and Jennifer Lawrence's quirky misfits make more sense here than on the screen.



LIFE OF PI
by Yann Martel
The Canadian author's novel about a zoo-keeper's son trapped on a lifeboat with a Bengal tiger won the '02 Man Booker Prize.

Books

Oddly Normal

by John Schwartz | ★★★★★

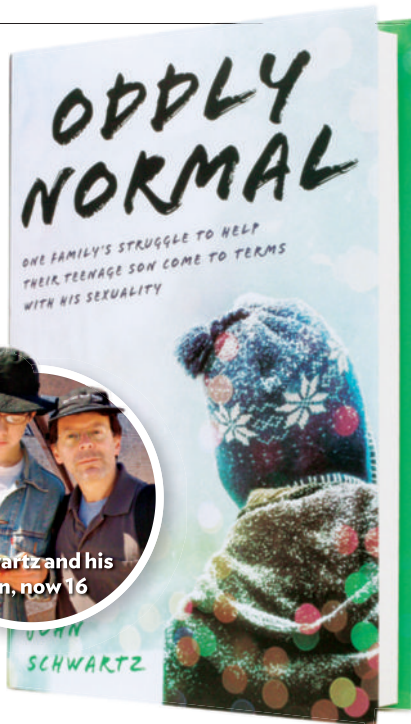
REVIEWED BY HELEN ROGAN

MEMOIR

After Joseph Schwartz attempted suicide at age 13, his journalist father decided to write this memoir about Joseph's troubles as a gay teen. The goal: to encourage other parents whose kids feel hopelessly different. Interweaving his family's story with reporting, Schwartz affectingly demonstrates that desperate children can be helped. It really *can* get better—as it did for Joseph when he found a support system, hit high school and dyed his hair a triumphant purple.



Schwartz and his son, now 16

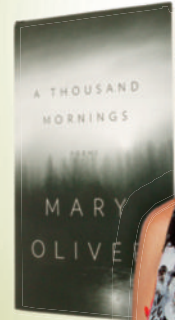


WHAT I'M READING SANDRA LEE

A THOUSAND MORNINGS

by Mary Oliver

"As I read her poems, I'm reminded that solace for hard times can be found in the leaves, in a smile from a stranger, by extending one's hand to help someone in need."



CATCHING UP WITH ...

DOLLY PARTON

WHAT INSPIRED YOUR NEW INSPIRATIONAL BOOK *DREAM MORE*? I expanded on the dreamin' and the carin' [from a commencement speech she gave in 2009] and turned it into a cute little book. It's not going to change the world, but it might change someone's day.



MOST IMPORTANT LESSON?

Just to be kind and open and learn things from the people you admire. Basic truths.

WHOM DO YOU ADMIRE?

I'm impressed by anyone who seems to know who they are. I like the way that little Taylor Swift, for instance, has conducted herself.

YOU'VE BEEN MARRIED FOR 46 YEARS—NOW THAT'S ADMIRABLE.

I allow Carl his space, and we get along really good. I don't think it was meant for me to have kids. We have nieces and nephews.

YOU'VE BEEN VOCAL ABOUT PLASTIC SURGERY. ANY REGRETS?

If you spend your life on television and in pictures, why not? I'm 67. I just regret that I can't get to the hospital quick enough to get some more! —KEVIN O'DONNELL



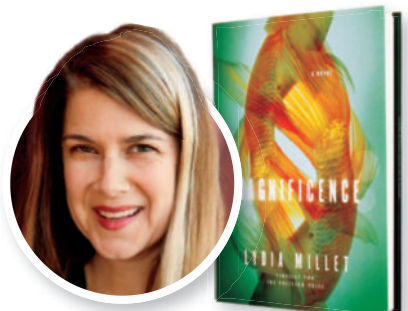
The Queen of Country

Magnificence

by Lydia Millet | ★★★★★

NOVEL

In the final book of a trilogy that began with her 2008 novel *How the Dead Dream*, Pulitzer Prize finalist Millet reintroduces Susan Lindley, a self-absorbed woman who compulsively cheats on her husband, then loses him in a grisly murder. Besieged by guilt, she floats numbly from room to room in her new home—a taxidermy-filled mansion willed to her by a long-forgotten, now-dead uncle. Susan's solipsism limits our ability to root for her. Still, Millet's lovely prose alone makes this worth a read. —K.M.



COMMENTS? WRITE TO KIM HUBBARD: bookseditor@peoplemag.com