



The Best Mums in Literature!

Feb 24, 2021 | Fiction | 0 comments



Mother's Day is just around the corner – some of our NB Community have written about their favourite literary mothers in celebration of strong and supportive mums everywhere! Who's your favourite?

Don't forget, if you are looking for some Mother's Day gift inspiration, why not consider gifting an NB subscription? Find the perfect package for your book-loving mum, or mother figure right here.

Kate Hopkin's Favourite Literary Mum:

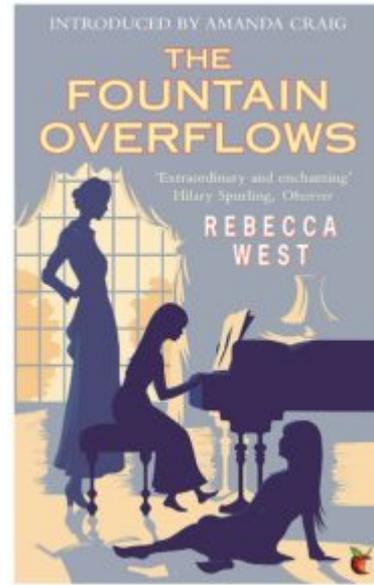
Clare Aubrey in Rebecca West's *The Fountain Overflows* (1957; most recent reprint Virago, 2011) – chosen by Kate Hopkins

Rebecca West created Clare Aubrey partly as a tribute to her own mother. Clare is a former concert pianist, married to the brilliant but unstable journalist Piers Aubrey. Her life in a suburb of Edwardian London is not easy: Piers is a depressive, and a compulsive quarreler and gambler. And yet Clare never complains, and somehow, on a very tight budget, creates a lovely home for her four children. However bad the family finances are, she always gives them a splendid Christmas, with wonderful fancy-dress costumes and toys made by her and Piers. She makes sure they have



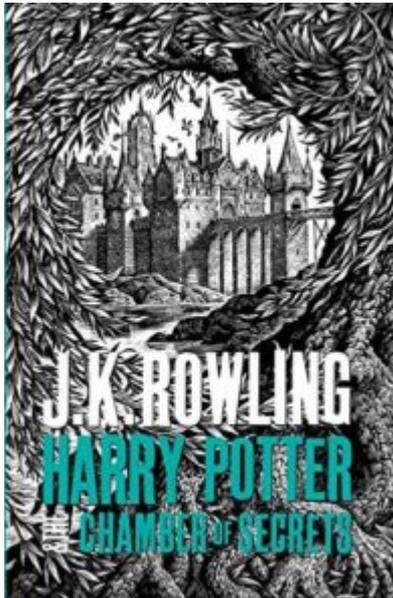
access to good books and music, tells them magical stories and takes them on exciting excursions to beauty spots such as Kew Gardens. Her offspring thrive as a result, and – the moralistic eldest daughter Cordelia excepted – feel they have ‘enjoyed every moment’ of their childhood.

Throughout the novel, Clare is consistently kind: to her own family, to her unstable cousin’s wife and daughter, to an eccentric local music teacher and to a neighbour whose sister is arrested for murder. But she is never sentimental. She secures her children’s financial future by concealing from her feckless gambling husband the fact she owns two valuable paintings. (Their sale proves invaluable when Piers abandons the family.) She brings her offspring up to work hard and avoid self-pity (‘there is a great deal in life which is not affected by what happens to you’). And she submits her daughters Mary and Rose to such a rigorous musical education that both in due course achieve their childhood dream of becoming concert pianists. Clare not only gives her children a very happy upbringing but also ensures that they have rewarding adult lives. No mother could do more.



Nicola Smith’s Favourite Mums in Literature:

Molly Weasley in the Harry Potter series



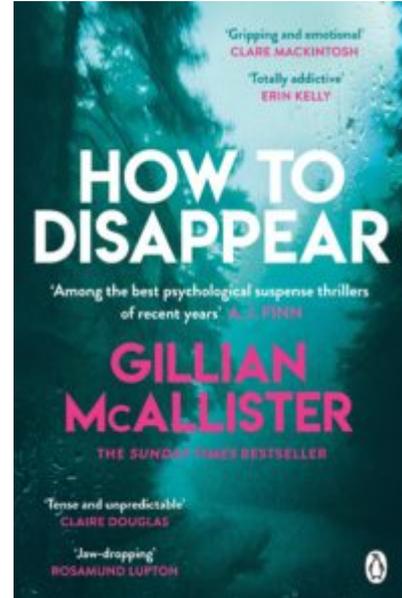
When talking about iconic mothers in literature one in particular springs to mind – Molly Weasley, mother of the chaotic but loved Weasley clan in the Harry Potter series. From the first book to the last she is a standout character for the reader and for the leading characters, particularly Harry for whom she became a kind of replacement for the mother he never knew. She is the beating heart of her family, worrying endlessly about her offspring from the kitchen of The Burrow, her rather jumbled home, and yet, despite the fact that she is the homely sort, she’s more than capable of holding her own in any Wizarding War and woe betide you if you dare to insult or threaten her beloved family or friends. Who wouldn’t want to receive a hand-knitted monogrammed jumper from her at Christmas, or perhaps a box of her home-made fudge? although maybe not a howler when you’d misbehaved! No matter how sharp her tongue at times, you can rest assured that Molly Weasley only ever wanted the best for those she cared about most and a warm



hug from her would make everything feel right, if only for that moment. And don't forget, whether by skill, magic, or a mixture of both, she could conjure up food to die for. A mouth-watering treacle pudding, anyone? As mothers go, Mrs Weasley is certainly a whomping Whiz-bang of a role-model.

Lauren in *How to Disappear* by Gillian McAllister

What would a mother do to protect her child? The answer is probably 'anything'. This is the question that faces Lauren in Gillian McAllister's *How to Disappear*. Lauren and Aidan are a really happy couple. Lauren's daughter, Zara, lives with them. Aidan's daughter, Poppy, lives with her mother. This is a blended family that works. They have a great life, a good home, a gorgeous dog. Everything is perfect until Zara witnesses a terrible crime and being an honest person who believes in doing the right thing, she comes forward and reports what she saw. This is the beginning of a nightmare for the family as Lauren and Zara must give up the lives they know and love, and disappear for their own safety. Lauren finds herself suddenly solely responsible for Zara's protection when they are thrust into dangerous situations, but like any mother would she steps up and does an amazing job at protecting her daughter. Right from the beginning the reader is put firmly in the shoes of the main characters and in particular a mother must find themselves pondering what they would do in Lauren's situation. Every mother may be an icon in their child's eyes, but the sacrifices Lauren makes for Zara definitely give her iconic status. Their story is one that the reader will not forget.



Alice's Favourite Literary Mum:

Jessica Andrews, *Saltwater*

"It begins with our bodies. Skin on skin. My body burst from yours. Safe together in the violet dark and yet already there are spaces beginning to open between us."

This gem of a book is an outstanding debut from Sunderland born Jessica Andrews (definitely one to watch).

The coming-of-age novel follows Lucy, a young woman who moves from Sunderland, to London and then to her late grandfather's cottage in Ireland. This is a book about struggling to fit in, it is about being a working-class woman

Andrews really delves into the strong and complex bond between the protagonist, Lucy, and her single mother, through reflecting on memories throughout her life and the moments which came to define her. We explore Lucy's observations of her mother growing up, of the way she acts, of the way she dresses, and of the way other people – mainly men – react to her. Though at some points uncomfortable, it was refreshing to read a novel which explored and reflected upon the nuances of a mother-daughter relationship in a raw, honest, and authentic way, particularly the awkward phases of adolescence, and early twenties:



“I avoid people. Itchy at mealtimes. Sup coffee slowly. Guzzle white wine. Watch strangers. Get nervous. There are so many things I do not know the names of. There is pho and plantain and falafel and tagine and food is luxuriant in this place. Meals trickle richly into afternoons like incomprehensible poetry and my tongue is too thick to comprehend the taste. I am not delicate enough to understand nuance. The potato smiley faces of my childhood are beige mush now. Dairy causes acne and gluten is the devil. Tapioca and soy milk and Maldon sea salt. Almonds are unethical and cheap beer causes migraines. If our bodies are defined by the things we put into them, then I am too afraid to put anything into mine. I am cheap things, sad things, small and unrefined”.

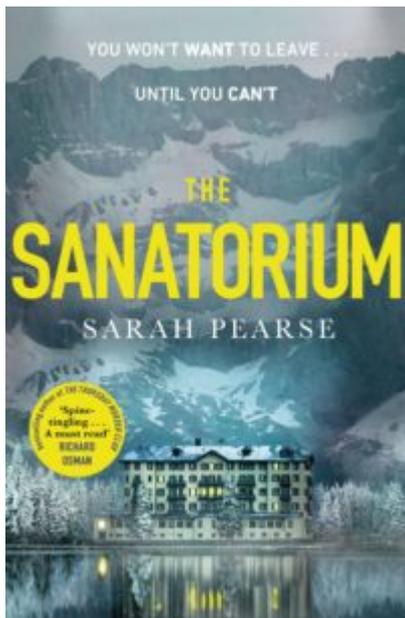
The narrative is told in short, disorientating fragments which flit between childhood and womanhood and everything in between. Often, Saltwater feels more like poetry than prose, because of its unusual structure and the fact that the prose is so hauntingly beautiful. I kept underlining passage and after passage, and folding over the corner of page after page; and that's a sure sign of a good book!

I will be reading whatever Andrews publishes next.

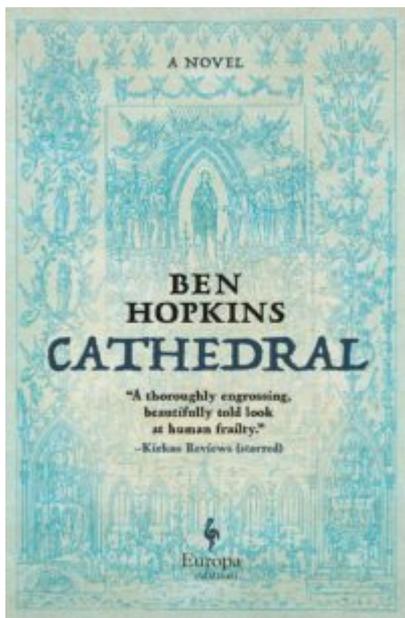
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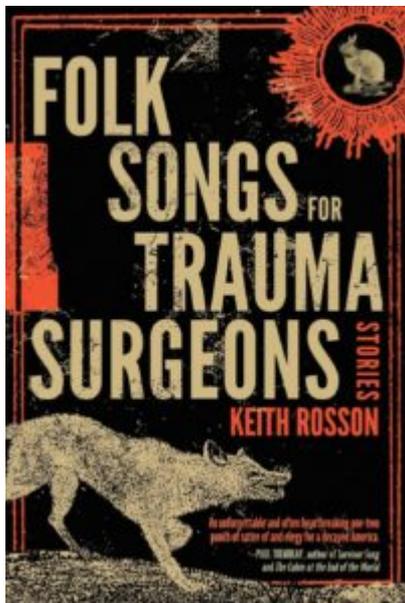


The Sanatorium by Sarah Pearse

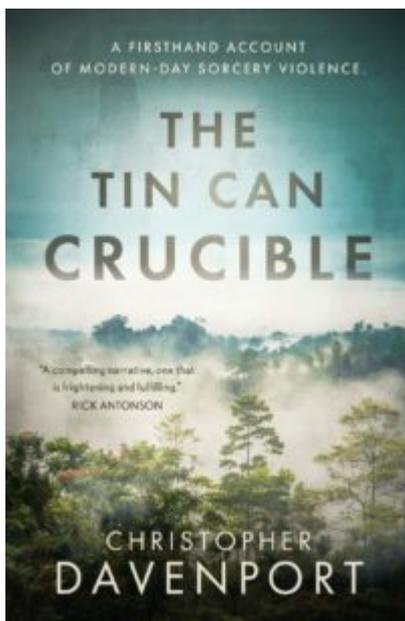


Cathedral by Ben Hopkins



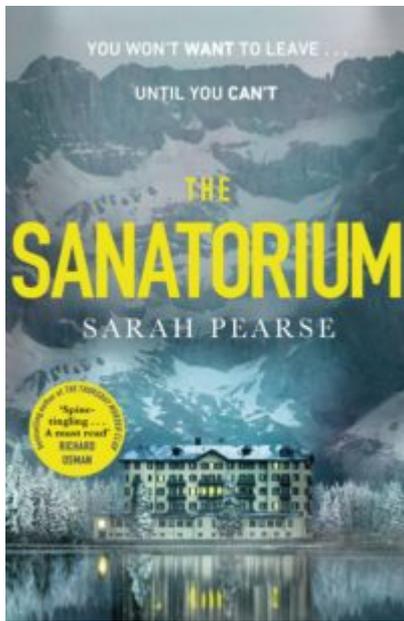


Folk Songs for Trauma Surgeons by Keith Rosson



The Tin Can Crucible by Christopher Davenport





NB Recommends: The Sanatorium by Sarah Pearse – Words from the Editor

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Who is your favourite literary mum? ❤️❤️

At NB, we've had a glance at who we think some of the "Best Mums in Literature" are but we'd love to know your thoughts! 🌻 nbmagazine.co.uk/the-best-mums-...

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