

The Best Books to Give this Mother's Day

Mar 3, 2021 | Fiction | 0 comments



Mother's Day is almost here – and what better way to celebrate your mum, or mother figure, by gifting a wonderful book. But what to choose? Well, that's where we step in...

And if you're looking to give something more this mother's day, why not consider one of our subscription packages. Perfect for booklovers, our range of magazine and gift subscriptions on offer are designed to match all reading tastes.

For mums who love memorable and engaging literary fiction:

***Offshore* by Penelope Fitzgerald (1979; most recent reprint Fourth Estate, 2013), chosen by Kate Hopkins**

Offshore has a lot to recommend it, including evocative descriptions of Sixties London and a cast of loveably eccentric characters. But perhaps its most moving aspect is the relationship between 12-year-old Martha, her six-year-old sister Tilda and their mother Nenna. Nenna's life is in a mess. Her husband has left her, she can't get a job, and the only home she can afford for herself and her daughters is a damp,

cramped houseboat on Battersea Reach. And yet her girls never complain. They feel no bitterness when their mother doesn't give them pocket money, and find ingenious ways to acquire it themselves. Tilda relishes the adventure of living on the river and befriends a local marine artist. Martha, 'conscious of the responsibilities of protecting her mother and sister', cares for Tilda devotedly and helps Nenna with the cooking and cleaning. Both girls are keen to make their mother happy. When they earn an unexpectedly large sum of money from the sale of two antique tiles found on the river bank, Martha tells Tilda at once that 'we ought to get a present for Ma... You know Daddy always used to forget to give her anything'.

The sisters' love for each other is as strong as their feelings for their mother. They genuinely enjoy spending time together – despite their six-year age gap – and Martha's temporary infatuation with a glamorous Austrian visitor doesn't weaken their mutual affection ('between the sisters there was love of a singularly pure kind, proof against many trials'). In contrast to the familial strife depicted in so many novels, *Offshore* offers reassurance that mothers and children can remain close even in difficult situations – and that children can be supportive of their parents, as well as the other way round.



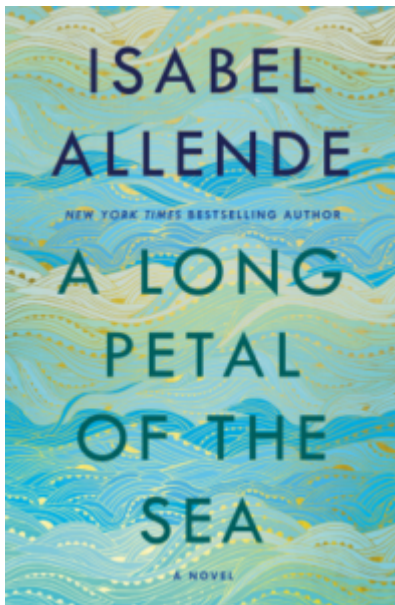
[Click here to buy a copy from Bookshop.org](#), supporting independent bookstores nationwide.

For mums who love epic, historical fiction:

***A Long Petal of the Sea* by Isabel Allende, chosen by Alice B**

This is an epic novel, spanning across decades and continents to explore a little-known (at least, I perceive to be little known in the UK) piece of history; that is, Pablo Neruda's involvement in transporting Spanish refugees to Chile during the civil war.

Allende's memorable novel begins in Spain in the late 1930s. General Franco has overthrown the government and hundreds of thousands are forced to flee Barcelona and head on a treacherous journey through the Pyrenees to reach the French border. Roser, a pregnant widow is one of those refugees. Her life becomes entwined with the brother of her late husband, Victor Dalmau. The pair are forced to marry in order to survive, and board the SS Winnipeg (a ship chartered by the poet Pablo Neruda, to transport the refugees from Southern France all the way to Chile).



We follow Roser and Victor through periods of trial and joy – running up until Chile in 1994 – in an epic family saga (which I think would make a fantastic series, by the way)! Her characters are engaging and believable, especially the strong-willed Roser. Allende’s pragmatic, optimistic and joyful approach to life is so clear in her writing, and something we could all do with at the moment.

A Long Petal of the Sea, is a refreshing and captivating love letter to Chile. It is also the perfect novel to give to Mums who enjoy epic family sagas and historical fiction.

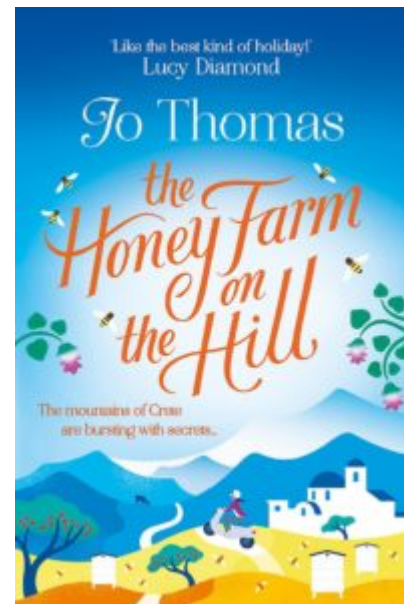
Don’t miss Sheila Grant’s glowing review of this epic novel, which will be published tomorrow.

Click here to buy a copy from Bookshop.org, supporting independent bookstores nationwide.

For mums who love escapist, romantic fiction:

***The Honey Farm on the Hill* by Jo Thomas, chosen by Nicola Smith**

Real-life travel may be out of the question at the moment, but armchair travel is not and what better way to discover the mountains of Crete than by reading *The Honey Farm on the Hill* by the queen of travel fiction, Jo Thomas. Treat your mum to an evocative trip with main character, Nell, as she leaves behind her job in a Christmas decoration factory and her plodding relationship with Mike, and decides to spend a couple of months as a WOOFer (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) helping to re-establish a honey farm and returning to the place where she lost her heart when she was 18. The characters in this book are wonderful, down to earth people and the community in Crete is welcoming and homely. Steeped in atmosphere, it’s easy to imagine the delicious food, the wild herbs, the sun beating down, and the beautiful surroundings as Nell settles into her new life and maybe finds a new love. Whilst it is a light read, it’s also a touching one which might just bring a tear to the eye. Anyone who loves a romance set in a beautiful location with a foodie theme will adore *The Honey Farm*



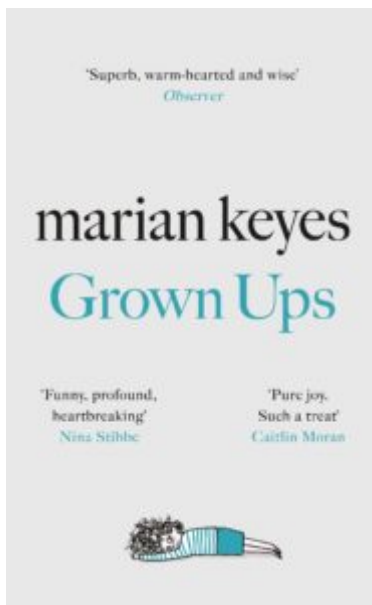
on the Hill. Jo Thomas is a purveyor of dreams and mums everywhere will be sure to love their armchair ride into the world that she creates.

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For mums who love funny, warm and entertaining fiction:

***Grown Ups* by Marianne Keys, chosen by Alice B**

I discovered Marianne Keys just before lockdown last April, and have listened to 90% of her books on Audible since then. I've also watched her recent writing-tips series on Youtube, which is both entertaining and packed full of great advice for budding writers.



Keys' down-to-earth, laugh-out-loud, heart-warming and intelligent writing is truly brilliant. Having read almost all of her work, I can say that one of her more recent publications, *Grown Ups*, is the best of the (brilliant) bunch.

In *Grown Ups*, we follow the lives of the Casey brothers (Johnny, Ed and Liam) and their fantastic wives and children. We follow the family through holidays, anniversaries and birthday parties... On the surface of things, all appears to be well. Then, at Johnny's birthday party, a mildly concussed Cara (Ed's wife) spills a secret and the full extent of the Casey

family's dysfunctionality is exposed.

This novel has so many strengths, perhaps the greatest of which Keys ability to explore dark and often tragic themes in a sharp, honest and somehow optimistic way. Eating disorders, financial troubles, infidelity, grief, jealousy... you name it, it's in *Grown Ups*. The combination of big, difficult themes with humour characterises Keys' entertaining novel, and makes her writing feel so authentic. In an age where everyone presents their life as perfect on social media, it is enlightening to read a book which exposes all the contradictions and mess behind the facades of seemingly perfect 'grown ups'.

The Casey family is a lovable mess, full of an eclectic range of deeply flawed characters, and by the end of this rather long (656 page) book, I felt like I knew them! I loved Cara and Nell the most.

This is a brilliant book to give to Mum's who enjoy 'women's fiction' (I use this term reluctantly, because I'm not sure I understand exactly what it means), Uplift, and

family sagas in general. It would appeal to those who enjoy reading Cecilia Ahern, to those who love Jane Austen! I can't recommend *Grown Ups* highly enough.

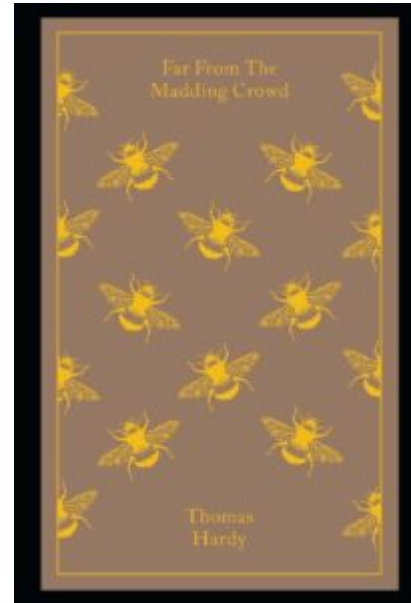
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For mums who love Classic fiction:

***Far from the Madding Crowd* by Thomas Hardy, chosen by Alice B**

I first read this wonderful book over Christmas 2020. I'd seen the film before – the 2015 version, starring Carey Mulligan – but so long ago that (if I am completely honest) I'd largely forgotten the plot, so the book felt fresh.

Far from the Madding Crowd is a perfect book to read in strange and unsettling times; escaping to Hardy's Wessex with a cast of endearing, funny and sometimes annoying characters was an absolute pleasure. Bathsheba Everdene is a strong-willed, engaging and generally brilliant female protagonist, who has been described as 'literatures forgotten feminist hero'. In many ways, this is a coming-of-age story. I adored Hardy's feminist observations, particularly, 'It is difficult for a woman to define her feelings in language which is chiefly made by men to express theirs'. He was a man before his time!



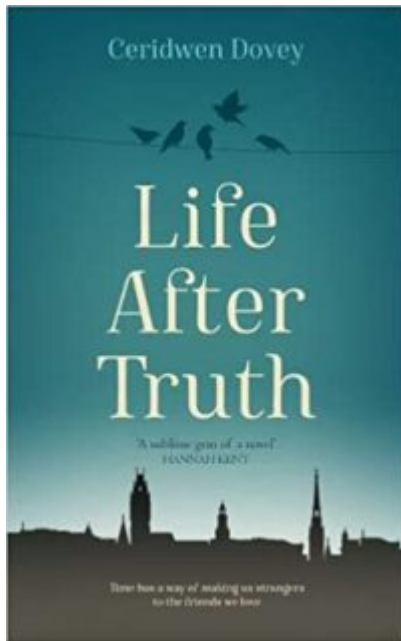
The central love story with Gabriel is frustrating and captivating and brilliant. The dialogue is peppered with witticisms – too many to include! Overall, this is a fantastically entertaining book, which, despite its age (it was first published in 1874) feels remarkably fresh. The perfect Mother's Day gift!

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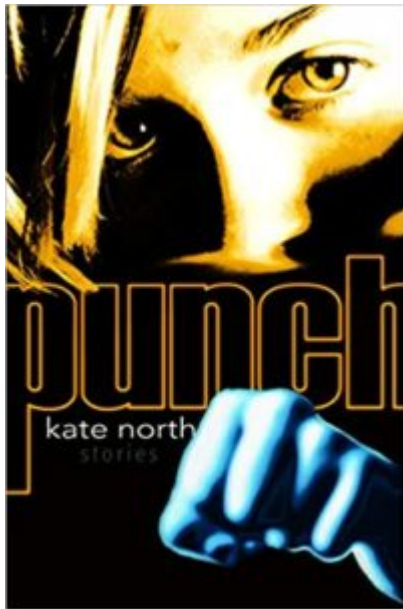
NB Recommends: Exciting Times by Naoise Dolan



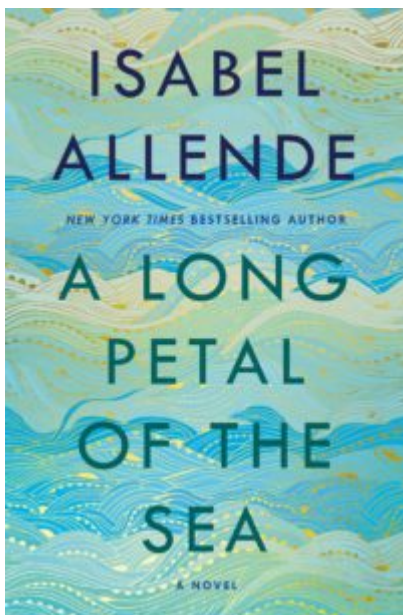
Life After Truth by Ceridwen Dovey



Saving Missy by Beth Morrey



Punch – Stories by Kate North



A Long Petal of the Sea by Isabelle Allende



The Best Books to Give this Mother's Day

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