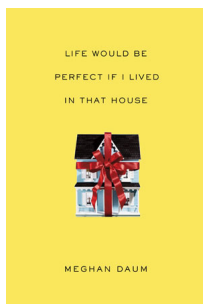


Essential Reading: Women's Memoir

This month Literary Mamas share their favorite women's memoirs. Take your pick!



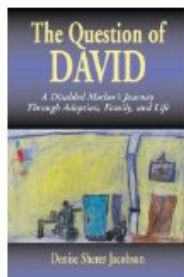
Irena Smith, Columns Department Editorial Assistant, writes, "Meghan Daum's original and immediately engaging [Life Would Be Perfect If I Lived in That House](#) charts a life spent playing house. Meghan, who grows up obsessed with Little House on the Prairie (going so far as almost buying her own not-so-little house right off the interstate in Nebraska), follows her mother to open houses as a child and, as an adult, moves into a dizzying succession of rentals and sublets -- each with the power, or so she imagines, to change her life and reflect back a better, more sophisticated self. Finally, in her mid-30s, she settles down in a quaint bungalow in Los Angeles -- right as the housing market begins to give way. Daum writes with irresistible dry wit and a gimlet eye for the telling, and sometimes quirky detail, and her tales of childhood homes, nightmare close quarters in Manhattan, spacious rentals in Nebraska, and a house in LA she loved far more passionately than her boyfriend at the time are by turns hilarious and poignant. The book jacket promises that it's a great read for anyone who has never outgrown playing house (true), but it is also a deeply personal meditation on how one woman's living quarters have shaped her -- and about the mark she has left on the places she's lived."

Columnist [Heather Cori](#) shares, "Four years and 1,000 discarded pages past her deadline, Mary Karr brings us her third memoir, [Lit](#). I loved her previous life confessionals, [Liar's Club](#) and [Cherry](#) and think they set a high standard for memoir. While I was anxiously waiting for *Lit* to arrive, I considered the title. Lit means to be drunk or drugged; lit means to have light within; lit also is short for literature. A perfect title. As the back reads, '*Lit* is about getting drunk and getting sober; becoming a mother by letting go of a mother; learning to write by learning to live.' The heaviness of the topic is balanced by her I-can't-believe-she-said that humor. I read this book slowly even though it was compelling; I wanted to make it last as long as possible."



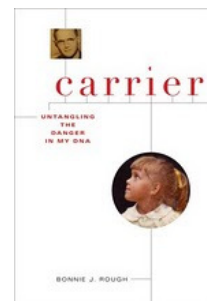
literary **mama**

reading for the maternally inclined



Suzanne Kamata, Fiction Co- Editor, says, "In [The Question of David](#), Denise Sherer Jacobson writes about becoming the mother via adoption of a baby boy who might have cerebral palsy. She struggles to maintain the balance between her writing, wifehood, and motherhood, kvetches about her mother-in-law, and worries about finding good household help - pretty routine stuff, until you consider that both Jacobson and her husband also have cerebral palsy and use wheelchairs to get around the house -- and the world. Jacobson's story is frank, humorous, and sometimes horrifying, but ultimately triumphant. Although this book is now out of print, it should be considered a classic."

Caroline Grant, Editor-in-Chief and [Columnist](#) writes, "My favorite recent memoir is Bonnie Rough's [Carrier: Untangling the Danger in My DNA](#). It's an extraordinary book, so beautifully written. Rough learns that she is a carrier for HED, a non-fatal but difficult genetic disorder that her grandfather suffered from and her brother also has. As she tells her story of trying to decide whether to have children, whether to undergo prenatal genetic testing, whether to carry a child with HED to term, she also tells her mother's and her grandfather's stories, in alternating 1st-person narratives. The memoir is a gorgeous love story, and also reads like a medical thriller -- I was staying up late and rising early to read it."



Kristina Riggle, Fiction Co-Editor, shares, "I adored Julie Klam's [Please Excuse My Daughter](#), which is funny and poignant without ever crossing over into sappy territory. Klam writes of how her dotting, loving mother inadvertently sent young Julie into the world utterly unable to manage in situations where a note from home can't get her out of trouble. Yet this is not a shrill, whiny, 'Look what my parents did to me' kind of story. It's full of heart and affection, and she's honest about her own foibles and without ever losing her charm or sense of humor. Her misadventures in crafting an adult self in New York City are funny, emotional and real. I'm looking forward to her new book,

[You Had Me At Woof: How Dogs Taught Me the Secrets of Happiness.](#)"

