

# literary **mama**

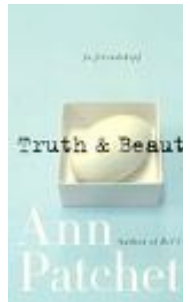
reading for the maternally inclined

## Essential Reading: Friendship

January 2010

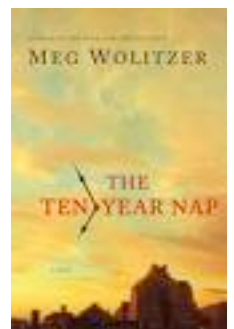
"A friend is one to whom one may pour out all the contents of one's heart, chaff and grain together, knowing that the gentlest of hands will take and sift it, keep what is worth keeping and with a breath of kindness blow the rest away." -- Arabian Proverb

Columnist and Creative Nonfiction Editor, Susan Ito, shares "**Truth and Beauty** by Ann Patchett is one of the most beautiful, painful and intense stories of friendship I've ever read. Two women, two writers, a tragic and beautiful friendship."



Caroline Grant, Editor-in-Chief and Columnist, writes, "A book in heavy rotation with my young sons is Russell and Lillian Hoban's lovely **Best Friends for Frances**. We delight in Frances' little songs, envy the fabulous picnic ("Four or five sandwiches and some apples and bananas and two packages of cupcakes and a quart of chocolate milk" -- just for one!), but love it most of all because it shows how boys and girls can be friends, and also that siblings can be friends-- maybe even best friends-- "for frogs and ball and tea parties and dolls."

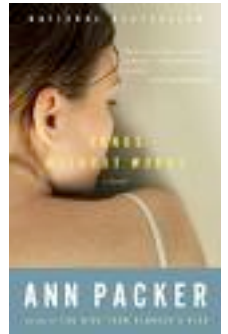
Cassie Premo Steele, Columnist, shares, "A few months ago I read **The Ten Year Nap** by Meg Wolitzer and it was riveting. It follows a group of womanfriends in New York City whose children are around ten years old -- that time in a woman's life when, if she has been 'staying at home,' she starts to consider 'going back to work.' There are lots of nonfiction books about this topic, but to have a realistic, funny, insightful novel was refreshing. I liked it so much that when I finished reading it, I drove it straight to my friend's house -- she is at that crossroads in her own life. Funny ending: when I rang her



# literary **mama**

reading for the maternally inclined

Alissa McElreath, Columns Co-Editor, says, "A few weeks ago I picked up Ann Packer's book **Songs Without Words** at a thrift store, and started reading it, as usual, on the drive home (at red lights, of course!). Packer's book is a coming of age book in many ways, but a coming of age novel deeply rooted in the story of a friendship between two women, Liz and Sarabeth. This friendship started during girlhood, and endured through the ups and downs of life: the suicide of Sarabeth's mother, marriage, childbirth, and work. Yet when Liz's own adolescent daughter attempts suicide, the friendship is thrown by one seemingly simple action on Sarabeth's part -- her neglect to phone Liz immediately upon hearing of her daughter's hospitalization. This one incident sends their friendship into a downward spiral, as Liz finds herself pulling away and toward her family and her daughter in a protective embrace, and Sarabeth finds herself alone, floundering, confronted with her own choices in her life. This is a beautifully written book -- a book about the strengths in friendship, but the weaknesses, too; a book about the tenuous ties that bind us together."



Ezine co-editor, Jessica DeVoe Riley, says, "I have a slightly different recommendation for the list: wartime books. The camaraderie that forms among fellow soldiers fascinates me because no matter how different the people may be, they find common ground in their fears, their courage, and their struggle to return to 'normal' life once they have left the battlefield. While a number of wartime books touch on this theme, the two that always come to mind are **All Quiet on the Western Front** by Erich Maria Remarque, a novel that follows German soldiers in World War I, and **The Things They Carried** by Tim O'Brien, a collection of short stories about American soldiers in Vietnam."

