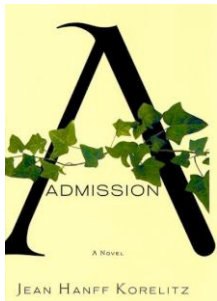


# literary **mama**

reading for the maternally inclined

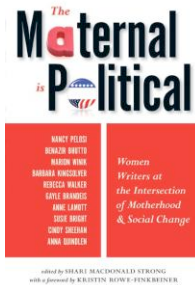
This month, Literary Mamas are reading about academic life. This fascinating collection of titles will take you from preschool to graduate school. Take your pick!



[Irena Smith](#), Columns Department Editorial Assistant, writes, "I just finished and immediately restarted, because it was that good, Jean Hanff Korelitz's [Admission](#), which chronicles a year in the life, both personal and professional, of Portia Nathan, a Princeton University admission officer. The title is evocative; admission, as another character reminds Portia, is as much about what you let in as what you leave out. And while Portia is scarily good at her job -- which involves making laser-thin distinctions between thousands of qualified and over-qualified applicants and separating the merely outstanding from the exceptionally outstanding -- she leaves out quite a bit, including a long-buried secret from her own undergraduate days, an unsatisfying living arrangement with a fussy member of the Princeton faculty, and her own mixed feelings about her job. The novel is by turns sardonic and heartfelt, but always -- like Portia herself -- whip-smart, and, aside from a well-told, engaging story, offers a fascinating behind-the-scenes peek at the workings of an admissions office of a top-ranked university."

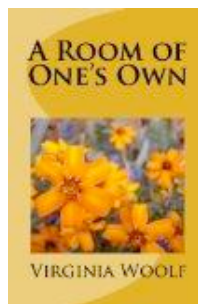
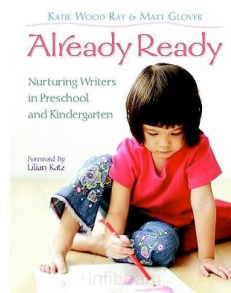
[C. Delia Scarpitti](#), Columns Department Co-Editor, shares, "The book that immediately comes to mind regarding the academic/education theme is May Sarton's classic novel, [The Small Room](#) (1976). In this novel, Sarton poses questions of ethics, special treatment, and the role of "the personal" with teacher-student interactions. *The Small Room* focuses on Lucy Winter, a new teacher for a prestigious women's college, who discovers inappropriate conduct by one of the community's celebrated genius students, Jane Seaman. What initially seems a clear case of pursuing college procedure for violating rules is confounded when Lucy becomes personally swayed by the emotional explanation behind the gifted, but troubled, student's act of plagiarism. With Sarton's typical tenderness and sensitivity, the writing in this novel makes it one worth reading and re-reading over the years to delve into the exploration of women, teaching and philosophy."





Cassie Premo Steele, [Columnist](#), recommends [The Maternal Is Political](#). "I have taught courses in motherhood at the undergrad and graduate levels many times, but just recently I began reading *The Maternal Is Political*, edited by Literary Mama's own Shari MacDonald Strong, and it's fabulous. Informed by feminist and political theory but accessible to the general reader. I will definitely include this book the next time I teach a course on motherhood!"

Columnist [Heather Cori](#) recommends [Already Ready: Nurturing Writers in Preschool and Kindergarten](#), by Katie Wood Ray and Matt Glover. "I love books that celebrate what writers can do and this book in particular proves that 3, 4 and 5 year-olds do indeed write! The authors begin by making the case for having children create "picture books" (small stacks of paper stapled together) instead of single page writing. The multiple pages encourage the creation of stories with more than one event. The book contains samples from young writers who combine pictures with some text and writers who begin to experiment and play with book text. *Already Ready* helps grown-ups make better sense of kid writing. I felt excited and inspired each time I opened this book. Check it out!"



[Caroline Grant](#), Editor-in-Chief and [Columnist](#) writes, "Virginia Woolf's essay [A Room of One's Own](#) is duly remembered for its title line, of course, its stipulation that a woman needs an income and a room of her own in order to write fiction, and I'm sure many of our readers long for even one of those things, let alone both. But I always think about how the piece was delivered first as a university lecture, and that Woolf sets her argument in a university that didn't accept women. Women aren't denied access to educational opportunities in the same way anymore, but pursuing an education or a career in education is still more difficult for women, especially mothers, than it should be. I think *A Room of One's Own* is still as strong and relevant as the day Virginia Woolf wrote it."