

# literary **mama**

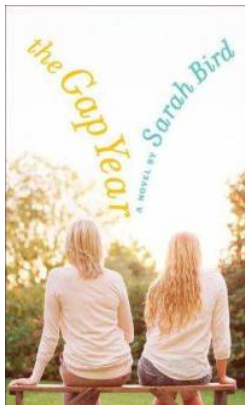
reading for the maternally inclined

Essential Reading: Desiring Motherhood

By [LM Rhena Tantisunthorn](#)

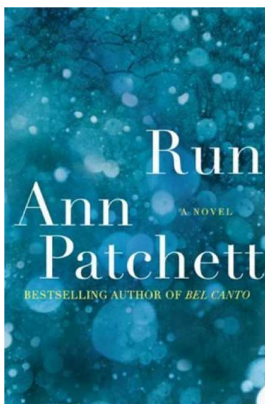
October 2011

In honor of Literary Mama's October theme, we asked our editors and columnists to share books about "Desiring Motherhood."



Caroline M. Grant, Editor-in-Chief, writes, "Cam Lightsey is the mother of an 18 year-old daughter, so she doesn't fit our typical profile of a woman desiring motherhood. But Cam is full of regrets about her daughter Aubrey's childhood: she wasn't able to breastfeed; she was a single mom (her husband abandoned the family for a cult); she left the vibrant city for a safer suburb; and now, as Aubrey is supposed to be leaving for college, the two are barely speaking. Narrated in alternating chapters by Cam and Aubrey, *The Gap Year* explores how this fissure has risen between the pair. Despite the potentially melancholy material, the novel is often incredibly funny, thanks to Sarah Bird's sharp, smart writing, and her honest, unsentimental look at mothering and being mothered."

Fiction Co-Editor, Kristina Riggle, shares, "In *The Wednesday Sisters* by Meg Waite Clayton, five friends meet in a park and, over the years as they watch the children play, become friends and also writers. As the novel tells the story of five interwoven lives, the story touches on many aspects of the experience of being a woman in the late 1960s and early 70s: career, ambition, what it means to be a good wife, and to what lengths a woman should go to become a mother in the first place. In the context of the novel, the Sexual Revolution hasn't hit this pocket of California, and to be a good wife and mother is still the ideal role. What does that mean for a woman's identity when she can't conceive? And how far would she go? I found this plot thread both familiar and strikingly different from our contemporary experience with infertility."



Katherine J Barrett, Reviews and Profiles Co-Editor, recommends Ann Patchett's novel, *Run*. "Doyle and Bernadette had one son, Sullivan, and Bernadette wanted more children but was unable to conceive. 'She prayed for her pregnancy to hold to term and then she prayed for another chance at pregnancy.' When Sullivan is 12 years old, Doyle and Bernadette adopt two biological, black, baby brothers, Tip and Teddy, and Doyle thinks, 'Now Bernadette can be happy.' Four years later, however, Bernadette dies of cancer and Doyle is left to raise his sons. The main story takes place when Tip and Teddy are in university and an unknown black woman saves Tip from a road accident. In that way, the Doyles meet Tennessee and her daughter, Kenya. 'Don't you ever wonder about your mother?' Kenya asks Tip. From there, a complex and beautiful story of politics, race, parenting and motherhood evolves."