

# literary **mama**

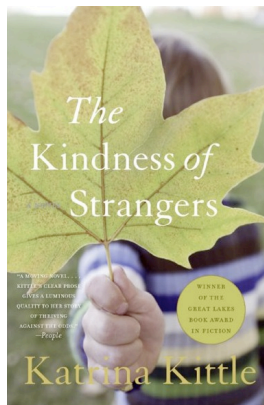
reading for the maternally inclined

Now Reading: October, 2011

By [Rhena Tantisunthorn](#)

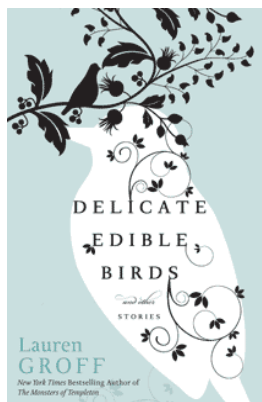
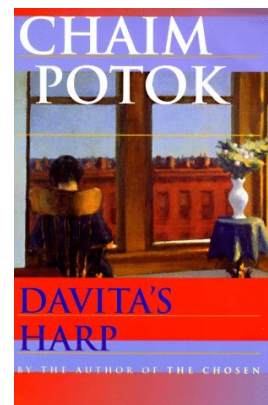
October 2011

This month, Literary Mama editors are reading about religion, the fall out from child abuse, a collection of short stories that one editor wishes were longer stories, and a mother-daughter travel memoir. Read on below!



[Kristina Riggle](#), Fiction Co-Editor, writes, "I just finished [The Kindness of Strangers](#) by Katrina Kittle, a beautiful, important book about child sexual abuse. Don't let the subject matter scare you; Kittle is never gratuitous or lurid in her handling of this subject, yet she is unflinching in her portrayal of its devastating affects. Sarah Laden, a young widow with two adolescent boys, is at Ground Zero when it's discovered the husband of her close friend, Courtney, has been running a child abuse ring right out of their home, featuring their own 10-year-old son, Jordan. How could Courtney not have known? As more chilling details emerge about the couple, and Courtney is jailed while her husband is on the run, Sarah takes in Jordan as a foster child. That's where the story gets its power; the circle of kind people around Jordan who rally to heal and protect him. But their task seems nearly impossible. How do you put back together a life that has been shattered at such a young age? And with Jordan's father on the loose and Courtney's culpability unclear, will they be able to protect him forever?"

[Karna Converse](#), Blog Co-Editor, shares, "I'm about 100 pages into [Davita's Harp](#) by Chaim Potok. This novel about a Jewish-American family is set in New York City in the 1930s and '40s and told from a young girl's (Davita) point of view. The book came highly recommended from a friend and all I can add is this statement from the About the Author page: 'With each of his novels, Chaim Potok has shown that he speaks to a vast audience not only about the Jewish religious experience, but about religious experience itself, about the profound--sometimes painful, sometimes joyful--effect religion can have on us. Now... he explores our experience of religion through the story of a young girl.' I plan to share Davita's Harp with my 14-year-old daughter when I'm done."



[Katherine J Barrett](#), Reviews and Profiles Co-Editor, adds, "I am reading Lauren Groff's collection of short stories, [Delicate Edible Birds](#). Groff is a fantastic story-teller, able to wrap an entire world into 25 pages. 'Majorette' begins with the 1950s marriage of a 16-year-old beauty queen and an already-alcoholic groom. Their first child, a girl, forms the center of the story and her life is tragic but for her facility with the baton which she discovers in high school: "'A natural,'" said the baton teacher, clasping her hands to the breast, rolling her eyes cloudward. A natural, smirked the boys on the football team as she marched at the head of the marching band in her knee-high boots, in her spangly

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little leotard, in her hat like an upended loaf of bread.' The following story, "Blythe," traces the relationship between two mothers, Harriet and Blythe, as they discover poetry, performance art, depression and friendship. '...I would see Blythe as she actually was, the lines on her thin skin, the lickings of her lips, the great broad bulk, the panic in the eyes whirling up as soon as she saw me, that need.' I didn't want this story to end, but felt relief for the characters when it did."

[Suzanne Kamata](#), Fiction Co-Editor, notes, "I just finished reading [Traveling with Pomegranates](#), a mother-daughter travel memoir by Sue Monk Kidd and Ann Kidd Taylor. Mother Sue, about to turn fifty, and daughter Ann, newly graduated from college and unsure of her future, contemplate the next stages of their lives and their evolving relationship with each other while visiting the sacred sites of Turkey, Greece, and France. In Greece, Sue, already a successful writer of inspirational nonfiction, summoned the courage to follow her dreams and try her hand at fiction. As a writer of fiction, I was fascinated by how she first imagined and developed the idea that became *The Secret Life of Bees*. Ann's story is also that of a budding writer. After she is rejected by her graduate school of choice, she gives up on being a professor of Greek history and realizes that what she really wants to do is write, like her mother - or maybe in spite of her mother. Filled with warmth and wisdom, this book celebrates the feminine spirit."

