

Senior Summer Reading Assignment--2009
The Secret Life of Bees by Sue Monk Kidd

You need to read this assignment *before* you read the novel—it requires you to gather evidence throughout your reading.

Choose **one** of the three reviews as a focus for your reading. As you read, collect evidence (quotes or paraphrases) with page numbers that will be sufficient to write a two-page essay. Your essay should have a clear, well-constructed thesis and documented support that addresses the topics of the review. The essay will be collected the first week of school and is worth 25 points.

A. *“A moving first novel...Lily is an authentic and winning character and her story is compellingly told. The bees presage her journey toward self-acceptance, faith and freedom that is at the heart of this novel.”*

--USA Today

Assignment—Option 1: As you read, collect evidence that traces Lily’s growth in self-acceptance, faith and freedom. Look beyond the obvious—even without reading the novel one can probably assume that Lily learns to accept herself, learns to have more faith in herself or in God, and gains more freedom. However, the *mature* reader knows that Lily’s growth in each of these areas is a result of the different issues or conflicts she faces in the story.

- What things, besides growing up, does Lily learn to accept?
- In who and what does Lily learn to have faith?
- What freedom(s) does Lily gain?

Assignment—Option 2: Same as above, but relate Lily’s growth in self-acceptance, faith, and freedom to the activity of the bees described at the beginning of each chapter.

B. *“This is the story of a young girl’s journey toward healing, and of the intrinsic sacredness of living in the world. Simply wonderful.”*

--Anne Rivers Siddons

Assignment: As you read, collect evidence about the painful experiences in Lily’s childhood and the people in her life who help her heal from these wounds. Do some research on the term “sacred.” How can everyday people, places, things—*everyday living*, be “sacred”? In your documented essay, explain how is Lily’s common, everyday life is sacred. How is this sacredness connected with Lily’s healing?

C. *“The chapters...dance on the edges of ‘Magical Realism,’ that blend of the fabulous and the ordinary that can invest a tale with a sense of wonderment, as is the case here.”*

--Richmond Times Dispatch

Assignment: Look up the literary genre “magical realism” and note its characteristics. As you read, collect evidence of the elements of magical realism that are used throughout the story. In your documented essay, explain how these elements are used to enhance Monk-Kidd’s messages about life. The term “magical” suggests elements of unreality. Why might a strong, religious, Christian writer include elements of magical realism in her writing? Do you think our lives today have magical elements that we don’t recognize, accept, or understand?