

Sample Synopses – Michele Chynoweth

Fiction

The Help

By Kathryn Stockett

Three ordinary women are about to take one extraordinary step. Twenty-two-year-old Skeeter has just returned home after graduating from Ole Miss. She may have a degree, but it is 1962, Mississippi, and her mother will not be happy till Skeeter has a ring on her finger. Skeeter would normally find solace with her beloved maid Constantine, the woman who raised her, but Constantine has disappeared and no one will tell Skeeter where she has gone.

Aibileen is a black maid, a wise, regal woman raising her seventeenth white child. Something has shifted inside her after the loss of her own son, who died while his bosses looked the other way. She is devoted to the little girl she looks after, though she knows both their hearts may be broken.

Minnie, Aibileen's best friend, is short, fat, and perhaps the sassiest woman in Mississippi. She can cook like nobody's business, but she can't mind her tongue, so she's lost yet another job. Minny finally finds a position working for someone too new to town to know her reputation. But her new boss has secrets of her own.

Seemingly as different from one another as can be, these women will nonetheless come together for a clandestine project that will put them all at risk. And why? Because they are suffocating within the lines that define their town and their times. And sometimes lines are made to be crossed.

In pitch-perfect voices, Kathryn Stockett creates three extraordinary women whose determination to start a movement of their own forever changes a town, and the way women—mothers, daughters, caregivers, friends—view one another. A deeply moving novel filled with poignancy, humor, and hope, *The Help* is a timeless and universal story about the lines we abide by, and the ones we don't.

The Lord of the Flies

By William Golding

William Golding's classic tale about a group of English schoolboys who are plane-wrecked on a deserted island is just as chilling and relevant today as when it was first published in 1954. At first, the stranded boys cooperate, attempting to gather food, make shelters, and maintain signal fires. Overseeing their efforts are Ralph, "the boy with fair hair," and Piggy, Ralph's chubby, wisdom-dispensing sidekick whose thick spectacles come in handy for lighting fires. Although Ralph tries to impose order and delegate responsibility, there are many in their number who would rather swim, play, or hunt the island's wild pig population. Soon Ralph's rules are being ignored or challenged outright. His fiercest antagonist is Jack, the redheaded leader of the pig hunters, who manages to lure away many of the boys to join his band of

painted savages. The situation deteriorates as the trappings of civilization continue to fall away, until Ralph discovers that instead of being hunters, he and Piggy have become the hunted: "He forgot his words, his hunger and thirst, and became fear; hopeless fear on flying feet." Golding's gripping novel explores the boundary between human reason and animal instinct, all on the brutal playing field of adolescent competition.

The Kite Runner

By Khaled Hosseini

The unforgettable, heartbreaking story of the unlikely friendship between a wealthy boy and the son of his father's servant, *The Kite Runner* is a beautifully crafted novel set in a country that is in the process of being destroyed. It is about the power of reading, the price of betrayal, and the possibility of redemption; and an exploration of the power of fathers over sons—their love, their sacrifices, their lies.

A sweeping story of family, love, and friendship told against the devastating backdrop of the history of Afghanistan over the last thirty years, *The Kite Runner* is an unusual and powerful novel that has become a beloved, one-of-a-kind classic.

The Great Gatsby

By F. Scott Fitzgerald

The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald's third book, stands as the supreme achievement of his career. The story of the fabulously wealthy Jay Gatsby and his love for the beautiful Daisy Buchanan, of lavish parties on Long Island at a time when *The New York Times* noted "gin was the national drink and sex the national obsession," it is an exquisitely crafted tale of America in the 1920s. A portrait of the Jazz Age in all of its decadence and excess, *Gatsby* captured the spirit of the author's generation and earned itself a permanent place in American mythology. Self-made, self-invented millionaire Jay Gatsby embodies some of Fitzgerald's—and his country's—most abiding obsessions: money, ambition, greed, and the promise of new beginnings. "Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther.... And one fine morning—" Gatsby's rise to glory and eventual fall from grace becomes a kind of cautionary tale about the American Dream.

Oliver Twist

By Charles Dickens

Dickens pours his own youthful experience of Victorian London's unspeakable squalor into this realistic depiction of the link between destitution and crime. Oliver escapes his miserable servitude by running away to London, where he unwillingly but inevitably joins a scabrous gang of thieves. Masterminded by the loathsome Fagin, the underworld crew features some of Dickens' most memorable characters,

including the juvenile pickpocket known as the Artful Dodger, the vicious Bill Sikes, and gentle Nancy, an angel of self-sacrifice.

A profound social critic, Dickens introduced genteel readers to the problems of the poor in a way that had rarely been attempted before. This tale of the struggle between hope and cruelty continues to speak to modern audiences.

The Jealous Son **by Michele Chynoweth**

Banned from their home in the Navajo Nation as a result of their disobedience, Eliza and Alex Trellis build a new life for themselves and their two sons. Although life is a daily struggle, the boys grow up happy and healthy—until the oldest son Cameron starts to become envious of his younger brother and bandmate Austin, who gets everything he wants—fame, fortune and everything that goes with it. Jealous that his brother seems to unfairly gain the attention of their parents, the accolades of the world and the love of his girl, Cameron seeks to find justice and get rid of his brother once and for all.

A modern-day murder mystery based on the Bible story of Cain and Abel, *The Jealous Son* begs the questions of how a broken family can piece itself back together once tragedy strikes, how one can rise above grief and despair to find hope and forgiveness, and whether God is still in the midst despite it all.

Memoir

The Glass Castle **By Jeanette Walls**

The Glass Castle is a remarkable memoir of resilience and redemption, and a revelatory look into a family at once deeply dysfunctional and uniquely vibrant. When sober, Jeannette's brilliant and charismatic father captured his children's imagination, teaching them physics, geology, and how to embrace life fearlessly. But when he drank, he was dishonest and destructive. Her mother was a free spirit who abhorred the idea of domesticity and didn't want the responsibility of raising a family.

The Walls children learned to take care of themselves. They fed, clothed, and protected one another, and eventually found their way to New York. Their parents followed them, choosing to be homeless even as their children prospered.

The Glass Castle is truly astonishing—a memoir permeated by the intense love of a peculiar but loyal family.

Wild

By Cheryl Strayed

At twenty-two, Cheryl Strayed thought she had lost everything. In the wake of her mother's death, her family scattered and her own marriage was soon destroyed. Four years later, with nothing more to lose, she made the most impulsive decision of her life. With no experience or training, driven only by blind will, she would hike more than a thousand miles of the Pacific Crest Trail from the Mojave Desert through California and Oregon to Washington State—and she would do it alone. Told with suspense and style, sparkling with warmth and humor, *Wild* powerfully captures the terrors and pleasures of one young woman forging ahead against all odds on a journey that maddened, strengthened, and ultimately healed her.

True Story/Biography

Unbroken

Lauren Hillenbrand

In boyhood, Louis Zamperini was an incorrigible delinquent. As a teenager, he channeled his defiance into running, discovering a prodigious talent that carried him to the Berlin Olympics. Then with the start of World War II, the athlete became an airman. When his Army Air Forces bomber crashed into the Pacific Ocean, against all odds, Zamperini survived. Driven to the limits of endurance, Zamperini would answer desperation with ingenuity; suffering with hope, resolve, and humor; brutality with rebellion.

Yet Louie's willpower faced its ultimate test upon his heroic return home after the war when he grappled with PTSD, struggled to come to terms with the injustices done to him, and was set on the path of redemption by a momentous encounter with famed reverend Billy Graham. *Unbroken* is an unforgettable testament to the resilience of the human mind, body, and spirit, brought vividly to life by *Seabiscuit* author Laura Hillenbrand.

Non-Fiction

Rich Dad, Poor Dad

By Robert Kiyosaki

Rich Dad Poor Dad is Robert's story of growing up with two dads — his real father and the father of his best friend, his rich dad — and the ways in which both men shaped his thoughts about money and investing. The book explodes the myth that you need to earn a high income to be rich and explains the difference between working for money and having your money work for you.

Rich Dad Poor Dad...

- Explodes the myth that you need to earn a high income to become rich
- Challenges the belief that your house is an asset
- Shows parents why they can't rely on the school system to teach their kids about money
- Defines once and for all an asset and a liability
- Teaches you what to teach your kids about money for their future financial success

Codependent No More

By Melody Beattie

In a crisis, it's easy to revert to old patterns. Caring for your well-being during the coronavirus pandemic includes maintaining healthy boundaries and saying no to unhealthy relationships.

The healing touchstone of millions, this modern classic by one of America's best-loved and most inspirational authors holds the key to understanding codependency and to unlocking its stultifying hold on your life.

Is someone else's problem your problem? If, like so many others, you've lost sight of your own life in the drama of tending to someone else's, you may be codependent--and you may find yourself in this book--*Codependent No More*. The healing touchstone of millions, this modern classic by one of America's best-loved and most inspirational authors holds the key to understanding codependency and to unlocking its stultifying hold on your life.

With instructive life stories, personal reflections, exercises, and self-tests, *Codependent No*

More is a simple, straightforward, readable map of the perplexing world of codependency--charting the path to freedom and a lifetime of healing, hope, and happiness.

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