



## Annie John: A Novel

By Jamaica Kincaid

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*Annie John* is a haunting and provocative story of a young girl growing up on the island of Antigua. A classic coming-of-age story in the tradition of *The Catcher in the Rye* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Kincaid's novel focuses on a universal, tragic, and often comic theme: the loss of childhood. Annie's voice?urgent, demanding to be heard?is one that will not soon be forgotten by readers.

An adored only child, Annie has until recently lived an idyllic life. She is inseparable from her beautiful mother, a powerful presence, who is the very center of the little girl's existence. Loved and cherished, Annie grows and thrives within her mother's benign shadow. Looking back on her childhood, she reflects, "It was in such a paradise that I lived." When she turns twelve, however, Annie's life changes, in ways that are often mysterious to her. She begins to question the cultural assumptions of her island world; at school she instinctively rebels against authority; and most frighteningly, her mother, seeing Annie as a "young lady," ceases to be the source of unconditional adoration and takes on the new and unfamiliar guise of adversary. At the end of her school years, Annie decides to leave Antigua and her family, but not without a measure of sorrow, especially for the mother she once knew and never ceases to mourn. "For I could not be sure," she reflects, "whether for the rest of my life I would be able to tell when it was really my mother and when it was really her shadow standing between me and the rest of the world."

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## Annie John: A Novel By Jamaica Kincaid Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

### Amazon.com Review

Jamaica Kincaid beautifully delineates hatred and fear, because she knows they are often a step away from love and obsession. At the start of *Annie John*, her 10-year-old heroine is engulfed in family happiness and safety. Though Annie loves her father, she is all eyes for her mother. When she is almost 12, however, the idyll ends and she falls into deep disfavor. This inexplicable loss mars both lives, as each grows adept at public falsity and silent betrayal. The pattern is set, and extended: "And now I started a new series of betrayals of people and things I would have sworn only minutes before to die for." In front of Annie's father and the world, "We were politeness and kindness and love and laughter." Alone they are linked in loathing. Annie tries to imagine herself as someone in a book--an orphan or a girl with a wicked stepmother. The trouble is, she finds, those characters' lives always end happily. Luckily for us, though not perhaps for her alter ego, Kincaid is too truthful a writer to provide such a finale.

### Review

"So touching and familiar it could be happening to any of us . . . and that's exactly the book's strength, its wisdom, its truth." ?*The New York Times Book Review*

"So neon-bright that the traditional story of a young girl's passage into adolescence takes on a shimmering strangeness." ?*Elaine Kendall, The Los Angeles Times*

### About the Author

**Jamaica Kincaid's** books include *At the Bottom of the River*, *Annie John*, *A Small Place*, *Lucy*, *The Autobiography of My Mother*, *My Brother*, and, most recently, *Mr. Potter*. She lives in Vermont.

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