

# Introduction to the *Secret Life of Bees*

Sue Monk Kidd

# Skills Practiced

- Use of period after abbreviation of title
- Elimination of comma in compound predicate
- Correct plural of compound word

# Practice Sentences

- Mrs Kidd wrote mostly fiction, and later wrote her first successful novel.
- She understood the life of a Southerner, which was scattered with handful of incidents of racism.

# Answers

- Mrs. Kidd wrote mostly fiction and later wrote her first successful novel.
- She understood the life of a Southerner, which was scattered with handfuls of incidents of racism.

# Stuff you should know:

- What influenced the author
- What works she is best known for writing
- What to expect from this novel
- Awards and acclaim for the work
- Any relevancy today

# Sue Monk Kidd

writer

novelist

memoirist



# Memoirist

- 1. An account of the personal experiences of an author.
- 2. An autobiography. Often used in the plural.
- 3. A biography or biographical sketch.

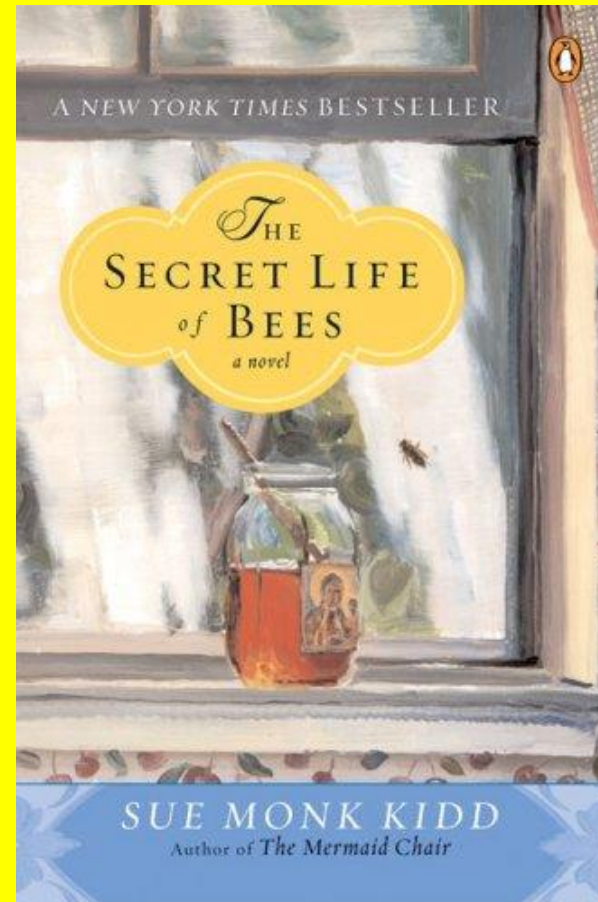
tuesdays with  
**Morrie**

an old man, a young man,  
and life's greatest lesson

Mitch Albom

# First Novel but not first work written

- Sue Monk Kidd is best known for her first novel, [\*The Secret Life of Bees\*](#) (2002), in which she tells the coming-of-age story set in 1964 of a fourteen year old girl and her black housekeeper.





# Sue Monk Kidd

- She was born in Albany, Georgia and raised in the tiny town of Sylvester, Georgia, a place that deeply influenced the writing of her first novel *The Secret Life of Bees*.

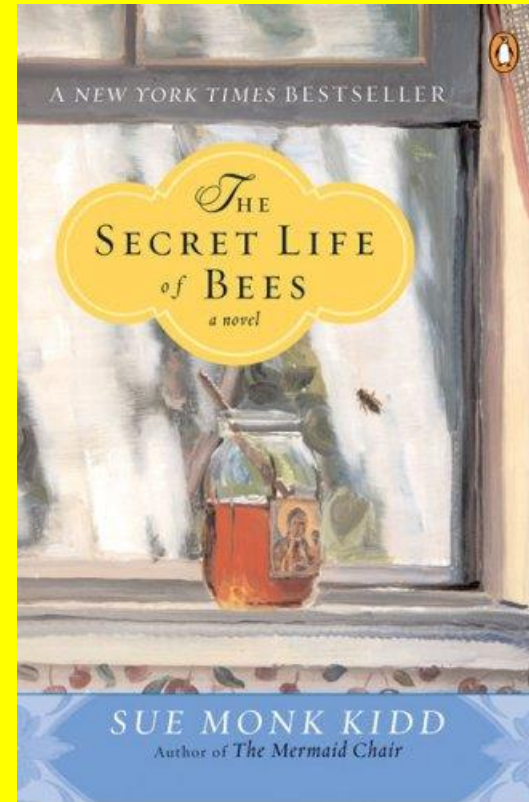


# Her works were nonfiction

- Sue's first book, *God's Joyful Surprise* (Harper San Francisco, 1988), describes the **beginnings of her spiritual search.**
- Her second book, *When the Heart Waits*, (Harper San Francisco, 1990) reveals a deepening of Sue's voice and **recounts her vivid spiritual transformation at mid life.**
- Turning her explorations to feminist theology, she published *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, (Harper San Francisco, 1996), a **memoir that had a groundbreaking effect within religious circles.**

# The Secret Life of Bees

- Her first novel, *The Secret Life of Bees* was published by Viking in 2002.
- Quickly became a literary phenomenon.



# Awards and Acclaim

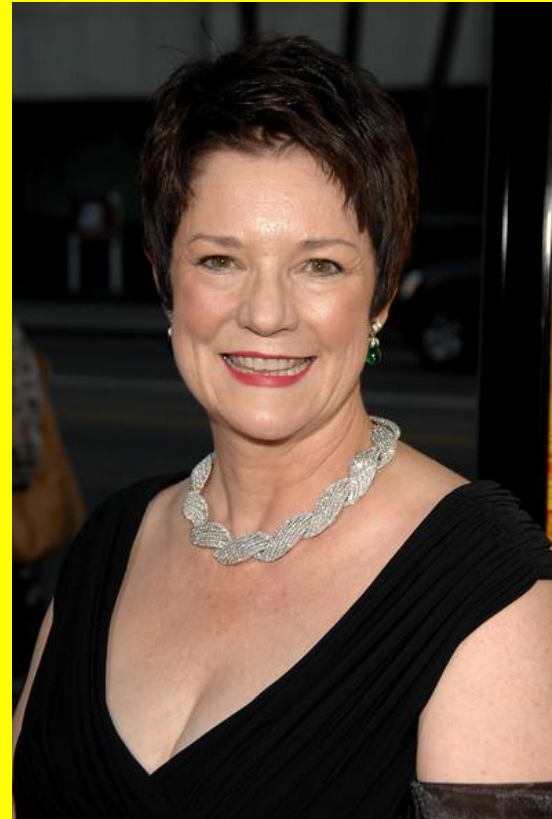
- The novel tells the story of fourteen year old Lily, who runs away with her black housekeeper in 1964 in South Carolina, and of the sanctuary they find in the home of three beekeeping sisters.
- *The Secret Life of Bees* has sold more than 6 million copies, spent over 2 ½ years on the New York Times bestseller list and been published in 35 countries.
- It was awarded the 2004 Book Sense Paperback book of the Year, nominated for the Orange Prize in England, and chosen as Good Morning America's Read This! Book Club pick.

# Today

- Taught widely now in high school and college classrooms, *The Secret Life of Bees* is fast becoming a modern classic.
- It was produced on stage in New York by The American Place Theater and adapted into a movie by Fox Searchlight in 2008, which won the People's Choice and the NAACP Image awards for Best Picture.

# Kidd's influences

- Kidd cites Thoreau's *Walden* and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* as early influences that would eventually lead to a writing career rooted in spirituality.



# Her life before Bees

- Kidd majored in nursing at Texas Christian University and graduated in 1970 with a B.S. degree.



# Kidd



- During her twenties she worked as a registered nurse and as a nursing instructor.
- She married her husband, Sandy Kidd, with whom she had two children.
- Kidd is pictured here with her daughter.



# Kidd's life

- Kidd and her family were living in South Carolina where her husband taught at a small liberal arts college when she decided to enroll in writing classes.
- Her goal was to write fiction, but she began her career writing nonfiction inspirational pieces.



# Good, Bad, and Ugly

## Pros

- *The Secret Life of Bees* has loveable, well written characters.
- A sweet, Southern voice
- Compelling story full of mystery, longing and love
- Easy to read--not too long

## Cons

- Not entirely realistic (which isn't necessarily a con for everyone)

# Description



- A motherless child searching for the truth about her mother and herself
- A black woman and white girl united in the South in the 1960s
- Black Madonna Honey - the women who make it, the bees that produce it, and the spiritual figure

# Overview

- *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd is the story of Lily, a teenager on a peach farm in South Carolina whose mother died when she was young and whose father is abusive.
- In practice, Lily is raised by the black housekeeper, Rosaleen.
- When Rosaleen gets in a fight with some white men while she is going into town to register to vote, Lily and Rosaleen decide to take off together.
- They end up in a unique community that is the perfect place for Lily to look for her mother and learn to love herself.





# Quick Quiz

- Use a half sheet of paper and answer the following questions.
- Number 1-10 and write short answers to each question.
- You may use your notes if you wish.

# Do you know this stuff?

- 1. Sue Monk Kidd got her first degree in what field?
- 2. Sue Monk Kidd lived in what state?

# More stuff you should know

- 3. Sue Monk Kidd is a memoirist. Define that term in your own words.
- 4. What other author have we read this term who is also a memoirist?



# Other stuff you should know

- 5. Name one American writer that Kidd says influenced her writing (spelling not an issue).
- 6. Kidd's husband was teaching at a small liberal arts college in what state – that same state is included in *The Secret Life of Bees*.

# More stuff

- 7. What is at least one award or prize that the author has won for *The Secret Life of Bees*?
- 8. What is one pro or positive thing that can be said about *The Secret Life of Bees*?

# Last questions

- 9. Who is the main character and narrator of *The Secret Life of Bees*?
- 10. In what year (you can name the decade for credit) does the novel take place?