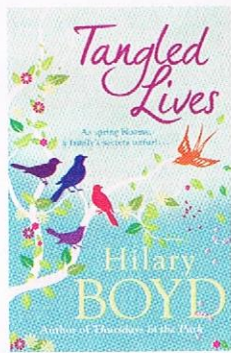


# BOOKS



Great reads make ideal presents for all the family: choose from the best of 2012

Reviews JACKIE WILKIN



**Book club choice**  
**Tangled Lives**  
by Hilary Boyd  
Quercus 2012  
Sixties teenager Annie Delaney becomes pregnant after a one-night stand. Scared, uncertain, and under pressure from

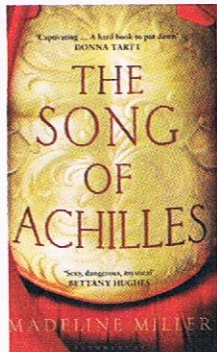
her cool and status-obsessed mother, she agrees to give her baby away. Thirty five years later, when Tom, now re-named Daniel Gray, gets in touch with her, Annie is thrown into confusion. It is baby Tom she longs for, but how will she react to this stranger?

After the first meeting Annie's doubts disappear, but the effect on her family is much less straightforward and throws her into a turmoil of doubt and guilt.

This is a book which gets to the heart of what it means to be a mother as Annie tries to balance everyone's expectations and confront the unresolved needs of her own childhood. Great discussion guaranteed.

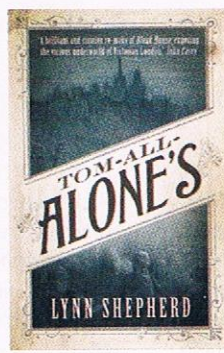
**For romantics**  
**The Song of Achilles**

by Madeline Miller  
Bloomsbury 2012  
The winner of this year's Orange Prize for Fiction turns the grandeur of the *Iliad* into a love story which probably belongs on



the Young Adult Romance shelf. But there are also pleasures to be had for grown-ups: the choice of Patroclus, Achilles' lover, as narrator; a real feel for the atmosphere, customs and landscape of the ancient world; the skill of a true story-teller which keeps you turning the pages far too late into the night.

But if you want wine instead of water, stick to Mary Renault; her fine historical realisations of the ancient world, especially *The King Must Die* (Arrow Books), remain the benchmark. And if it has to be the *Iliad*, Rosemary Sutcliff's *Black Ships Before Troy* (Frances Lincoln Children's Books) will absorb any reader from six to 60.



**Mystery choice**  
**Tom-All-Alone's**  
by Lynn Shepherd  
Constable and Robinson 2012  
When Tulkington, the lawyer-villain of *Bleak House* and keeper of secrets to the aristocracy, invites Victorian private eye

Charles Maddox to investigate a spate of anonymous letters, Maddox is led step-by-step into a horrifying world of abuse, madness, dark secrets and Ripper-type serial killings.

This superb modern detective story is located somewhere in the hinterland of Dickens's *Bleak House* and Wilkie Collins's *A Woman in White*. It is a worthy follow-up to Lynn Shepherd's first novel, *Murder at Mansfield Park*.



**Countryside choice**  
**Clarissa's England**  
by Clarissa Dickson  
Wright Hodder and Stoughton 2012

Our favourite eccentric goes in search of the infinite variety of the English counties. Naturally, there's

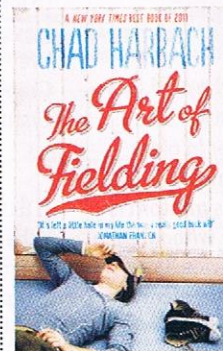
a lot about food, but there's also quirky history, aristocratic name-dropping and delicious pops at urban trendies.



**For her**  
**She's Leaving Home**  
by Joan Bakewell  
Virago 2012  
Writer, journalist and campaigner Bakewell - now Dame Joan - precisely recaptures the feel of growing up in the Sixties, the

decade which changed everything.

Martha flees her frustrated mum and protective father and runs away to groovy Liverpool. This is not a top-notch novel, but baby boomers will thoroughly enjoy the nostalgia.

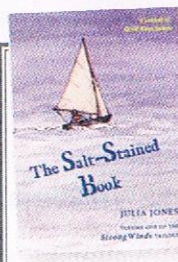


**For him**  
**The Art of Fielding**  
by Chad Harbach  
Fourth Estate 2012

Henry Skrimshander achieves near perfection as a baseball shortstop with a throw so straight 'you could dry laundry on it'. Taken from his

lowly background by charismatic university baseball team captain Schwarz, scouts are soon queuing up to sign him, but a freak accident introduces fear into what had been, until now, pure instinct. He falters and fails.

A great coming-of-age story, rich in the things that really matter to men - leadership, bonding and confidence.



## Christmas stocking fillers for all ages

If you've got kids or grandkids who are crazy about sailing, **Julia Jones's *Strong Winds trilogy*** (Golden Duck 2011-12) is the present

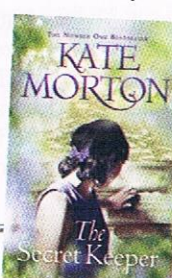
for them. (Though make sure you buy them Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons* first!)

It's got far too much plot, but Chinese gangs, toxic welfare officers, lady pirates (with hooks) and wicked policeman make

a great mix. Bookshops Ahoy!

### Can't stand the suspense?

Then Kate Morton's new novel ***The Secret Keeper*** (Macmillan 2012) isn't



for you. But fans of Morton will revel in the Australian maestro's latest literary offering. See the next edition of *WI Life* for a full review.