

The background features a network diagram with white circular nodes connected by thin purple lines. The nodes are scattered across the frame, with some forming larger, more complex clusters. The background color transitions from a deep purple at the top to a bright pink at the bottom. There are also several small, faint white dots scattered throughout the background.

# Little Fires Everywhere

Written by Celeste Ng

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Published by griefconvention

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# Little Fires Everywhere

By Celeste Ng

## Little Fires Everywhere Hulu

Everyone in Shaker Heights was talking about it that summer: how Isabelle, the last of the Richardson children, had finally gone around the bend and burned the house down. In Shaker Heights, a placid, progressive suburb of Cleveland, everything is meticulously planned — from the layout of the winding roads, to the colours of the houses, to the successful lives its residents will go on to lead. And no one embodies this spirit more than Elena Richardson, whose guiding principle is playing by the rules. Enter Mia Warren — an enigmatic artist and single mother — who arrives in this idyllic bubble with her teenage daughter Pearl, and rents a house from the Richardsons. Soon Mia and Pearl become more than just tenants: all four Richardson children are drawn to the alluring mother-daughter pair. But Mia carries with her a mysterious past, and a disregard for the rules that threatens to upend this carefully ordered community. When the Richardsons' friends attempt to adopt a Chinese-American baby, a custody battle erupts that dramatically divides the town and puts Mia and Mrs. Richardson on opposing sides. Suspicious of Mia and her motives, Mrs. Richardson becomes determined to uncover the secrets in Mia's past. But her obsession will come at unexpected and devastating costs to her own family — and Mia's. Little Fires Everywhere explores the weight of long-held secrets and the ferocious pull of motherhood — and the danger of believing that planning and following the rules can avert disaster, or heartbreak.

The order of the small town on the riverbank  
Forever at war with the order of the dark and starlit soul

—Adrienne Rich, 1968—

The nonconformist has always been at war with the suburbs — Adrienne Rich was writing about it 50 years ago, and she surely was not the first. I can understand this dichotomy; I myself have certainly experienced suburbs where a high level of conformity seemed to be expected, resulting in a weird high-school atmosphere among grown adults. Still, you really don't have to dig — The order of the small town on the riverbank  
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## Little Fires Everywhere

everywhere, with varying degrees of happiness and fulfillment. All of which is to say, if you're going to write on this theme now, you should probably have something new to add to the conversation, or at least a unique way of expressing it.

Little Fires Everywhere takes place in the planned community of Shaker Heights, where an artist named Mia and her teenage daughter Pearl move into a rental home after having lived a peripatetic existence since Pearl's birth. The battle lines are immediately drawn: the nonconformist, creative Mia versus the staid middle-aged matrons of Shaker Heights. Mind you, these battle lines aren't initially drawn by the characters, but by the author, who makes it clear that Mia is the moral center of the book. Characters who like Mia are the good characters; characters who don't like Mia are the bad characters; and characters who are suspicious of Mia at first and then come around to liking her have experienced a redemptive arc. This would be less problematic if Mia hadn't (view spoiler)[agreed to be a surrogate mother while in college, run off while still pregnant, forced her daughter to live a nomadic life in order not to blow her cover, and lied to her daughter the entire time, as well as keeping her from her grandparents and her biological father (hide spoiler)]. I was honestly horrified by Mia's actions and I wasn't brought around by the fact that she was an artist, or by the fact that she was allegedly the best mother since the Virgin Mary or whatever. But as far as this book is concerned, Mia is the real deal, an infinitely better person than all those Shaker Heights parents, who, let's face it, are all kind of repressed. Being repressed is the real sin of suburbanites, you see. Nothing could possibly be worse, I guess. Oh, there's also a subplot regarding a custody battle between a set of adoptive white Shaker Heights parents and the baby's biological mother, a young Chinese immigrant, which could have been really interesting, but it's given short shrift and is clearly meant only to underscore how amazing Mia is and how horrible the Shaker Heights mothers are in comparison.

Now look, I don't expect any character to be perfect, and I did not expect that from the character of Mia. Obviously, someone in the novel needed to do something scandalous, or you'd have no book at all. What I don't like is being told who to root for. I don't like it when authors stack the deck. Just present every character in the fullness of their humanity and let me decide who I'm rooting for. If you've done your job properly, I'll root for who you want me to root for anyway. But if you idealize one extremely flawed character at the expense of everyone else, you're going to lose me. You're going to make me side with a bunch of repressed Shaker Heights matrons I have nothing in common with, because those poor matrons never even had a chance at the end of your pen.

Okay, so the nonconformist versus the suburbs theme wasn't handled in a particularly original or illuminating way here. It's possible the book could have been redeemed by good writing, except Little Fires Everywhere doesn't really have that either. The constantly shifting viewpoints didn't work for me at all—and when I say constantly shifting, I don't mean chapter by chapter. I mean paragraph by paragraph, and sometimes sentence by sentence. This results in some extreme awkwardness, as when every sentence in a paragraph is from the point of view of the character of Izzy, except for one sentence in the middle that relays a piece of information that Izzy doesn't know. I guess an omniscient narrator is responsible for that particular sentence? In a few instances the omniscient narrator is even more obtrusive, reminding us who does and doesn't know certain things

## Little Fires Everywhere

that have just occurred from one character's viewpoint. But beyond the awkwardness, so many characters are given a moment in the spotlight that I never really felt like I got to know most of them, and what we do know is revealed mainly through soliloquies and flashbacks, some of which are so long and involved that they derail the main story and quash any possible shot at narrative momentum. And let's not forget the eye-rollingly dramatic and implausible plot twists that make it seem as if the author has watched too much Grey's Anatomy. There's the college student who can't afford the year's tuition, and because she's (view spoiler)[too proud to accept a generous loan from her trusted mentor, and for some reason doesn't want to seek federal loans, she decides to become a surrogate mother instead. Makes sense! (hide spoiler)]. There's the character who is suspected of (view spoiler)[getting pregnant and then having an abortion, because she seemed to have gained weight, then vomited conspicuously, then by the next month had lost the weight. It turns out she had been stress-eating junk food (hence the weight gain), then got food poisoning (hence the vomiting), and then stopped eating due to stress (hence the weight loss). What a calamity of errors, am I right? (hide spoiler)] And then there's the beloved mentor who is of course (view spoiler)[diagnosed with a brain tumor and given weeks to live at precisely the time she's most needed. I guess at least it's good that she doesn't die in a car accident on an icy road—but that's only because another character does fall victim to that cliché a few months later. (hide spoiler)] There's just so much crammed into this book, but it all adds up to so little.

This is all very awkward, because a representative of the publisher offered me this ARC a few weeks ago and I enthusiastically accepted. I hadn't read Celeste Ng's previous novel, but I was under the impression that she was a good writer and I thought I would really enjoy this one. But I didn't, and I have to be honest about it, because if I'm not honest about the books I dislike, I can't expect anyone to trust my word on any book I review. Little Fires Everywhere seemed endless, it was pedestrian and tedious, and it just regurgitated stereotypes about the suburbs we've all heard countless times before. I initially thought I would give it 2 stars because, even though I didn't like it, it seemed to me that the author had done what she'd set out to do, and I wanted to acknowledge that. But by the time I reached the end of the book, I'd changed my mind. It now seems to me that the author truly believes she's written something deeply meaningful, and I know this sounds harsh, but I don't agree. I learned nothing from this book and I didn't enjoy the experience. There's just no other way to say it. ...more

## Little Fires Everywhere Movie

All her life, she had learned that passion, like fire, was a dangerous thing. It so easily went out of control.

4 1/2 stars. You should go into this book expecting what it is: a slow-moving character portrait filled with complex family dynamics and small-town politics. If you know what this is, like with Ng's *Everything I Never Told You*, and don't go into it expecting fast-pacing and high-octane drama, you will probably find this quiet read to be extremely engrossing and emotional.

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I have to be in the mood for this kind of read, but when I am, it packs a powerful punch. These characters are so vivid, so real, so caught up in the little fires of everyday life in Shaker Heights. There's several stories going on in here, but the book begins with literal fires lighting up the Richardson household and the knowledge that the youngest daughter, Izzy, the wild card, has disappeared. Presumably because she is guilty of the arson.

Then we move back from there. We start to get a portrait of the events leading up to this dramatic fire. We see the poor artist, Mia, and her daughter, Pearl, move into town and the effect they have on all members of the Richardson family. Further back, we get the past stories of almost every character who comes into this book. It is such a rich work in which the personal stories and experiences of secondary characters play a huge part in influencing how events unfold.

And, behind it all, is a court case that will affect all the characters lives. A custody battle over a Chinese baby who could be given every toy, every desire, every opportunity by her rich and white adoptive parents - but is that all? Is that enough when her poor birth mother is ready and willing to care for her? Things become very tense. The town becomes divided. And I felt an emotional wreck by the end of it, too.

Mrs. Richardson, however, could not let Izzy be, and the feeling coalesced in all of them: Izzy pushing, her mother restraining, and after a time no one could remember how the dynamic had started, only that it had existed always.

The Richardson family, along with Mia and Pearl, Bebe, and the McCulloughs, all pulled me into their lives. I despised a character at one point, only to find pity for them a couple of chapters later. The relationship between Izzy and her mother was a real point of interest for me. How Mrs. Richardson's fears about Izzy affected her behaviour toward her, which in turn affected how Izzy behaved. All leading to the ultimate question: was Izzy always what Mrs. Richardson feared she was? Or did Mrs. Richardson

Little Fires Everywhere

create what she most feared through her treatment of Izzy?

Little Fires Everywhere is a great example of how small character dynamics can create a powerful and fascinating story. I love the empathy the author shows for all the people in this book - even the manipulative, morally corrupt and undeserving. No one is merely good or bad. And that is what makes the book so effective. Whose side am I on? I'll let you know if I ever figure it out.

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\*4.25 stars\*

Little Fires Everywhere is such an apt title for a novel that delves into the intricacies and angst that undoubtedly burns through some relationships—maybe none more so than mother and daughter. At its core, this story explores the notion that being a mother doesn't mean being perfect; it comes down to love, sacrifice and sheer will. Through her cast of captivating characters, Celeste Ng confronts the reality that haunts us all—each and every one of us is rife with cracks and flaws, \*4.25 stars\*

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It's akin to pure magic when you pick up a book from an author you haven't read before—I know, what's wrong with me? How did I miss Everything I Never Told You?—and find yourself caught up in what can only be described as book nirvana. I had heard Celeste Ng's writing style was incredible, but I took that with a grain of salt—merely an attempt on my part to avoid disappointment. What I didn't anticipate was this level of character development. This level of intricate detail and the multifaceted beings I wanted nothing more than to surround myself with.

I have to admit, it was Mia that started out as my least favorite of the bunch. Her artsy-fartsy, gypsy-ways came off as incredibly selfish. A mother sacrificing any sense of stability for her daughter, in an attempt to chase her next inspiration, rubbed me the wrong way. How could she not stay in one place and let her incredibly smart daughter thrive?

Then we meet Mrs. Richardson who's been hell-bent on living the life she laid out so perfectly in her mind. From most angles she has it all—steady career, lovely home, successful husband, wealth and four children. A conundrum of sorts, she's tenacious, but still somehow oblivious. Initially, I wasn't really sure what to make of her or her motives—was I reading more into things than I should?

Little Fires Everywhere

What binds these two very different women together is their teenage children who have their own fires burning between them and a custody battle that rocks their small town. The women end up on opposing sides of the equation, only working to further highlight their differences. The author juxtaposes these two women in many aspectsâ€”but not overtly soâ€”and by the end, I was stunned.

What struck me the most about this journey was the authorâ€™s ability to change my entire perspectiveâ€”meaning, my thoughts and feelings in the beginning of the story were vastly different by the time I turned that final page. Some aspects ended on a sad note, but overall it was still a satisfying ending to what I can only describe as a fully immersive novel.

I had the pleasure of reading this with the Traveling Sisters group; what a fun experience it turned out to be. Celeste Ng gave us plenty to discuss. Looking forward to the next read sisters. â™¥

\*Thank you to Penguin Press and Edelweiss for a copy in exchange for an honest review. ...more



## Little Fires Everywhere Book

My reviews can also be seen at: <https://deesradreadsandreviews.wordpress.com/>

“Little Fires Everywhere” is my first read by Celeste Ng, but I’m pretty sure that it won’t be my last. I could easily have read this book in just one or two sittings but life got in the way (in this case life being a glass of 7up, a knee jerk and “Nooo! Save the books!”). But once the book was dry, I picked it up again and didn’t stop until I finished the last page.

Everything in Shaker Heights is planned and there are rules that residents must follow. Houses can only be painted certain colors (to ensure aesthetic harmony), garbage is never put out in front of the house, lawns must always be cut promptly, etc.

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The city motto says it all:

“Most communities just happen; the best are planned.”

When Mia Warren and her fifteen year old daughter, Pearl rent a home from the Richardsons, a prominent Shaker Heights family “their lives will become intertwined in ways they never could have imagined.

Mrs. Richardson liked to rent to people she felt were deserving of her help, people who may have had some tough turns in life. She felt it was her way of giving back. When she first meets Mia Warren and her daughter she thinks they are the perfect tenants.

One of the Richardson boys, Moody is curious about the new tenants and heads over to the rental property. Moody and Pearl hit it off immediately. Moody who has never wanted for anything, is surprised at how this mother and daughter make their way. Mia can stretch a dollar (and leftover food) farther than anyone he’s ever seen. It’s not long before Moody brings Pearl home to meet everyone. Soon Pearl is spending much of her time at the Richardson home. At first, everything is fantastic. Mrs. Richardson even hires Mia to do some housekeeping and cooking at the Richardson

Little Fires Everywhere

home. But it won't be long before the many differences between Mia and Mrs. Richardson cause a divide that will affect the two families in unimaginable ways.

In some ways, I felt bad for Pearl as the nomadic life that her mother had them living would be hard on anyone, especially a teenage girl. However, Pearl also seemed to benefit from the way they lived. At first, Mia came across as incredibly selfish but it wasn't long before I loved her. Her caring ways were evident and how she responded to the different crises that came up endeared her to me. I may not have agreed with all of her choices but I could certainly see how she would have made them.

Right off the bat I was irked by Mrs. Richardson (the fact that she was rarely referred to by her first name was fitting). Mrs. Richardson was the type who wanted to be seen as someone who cared and helped others. However, you could tell right away that she kept track of all the good things she had done. And you never knew when Mrs. Richardson would want a repayment of her "kindness". When she offers to buy one of Mia's photographs and Mia doesn't fall at her feet with gratitude...

"That's very generous of you." Mia's eyes slid toward the window briefly and Mrs. Richardson felt a twinge of irritation at this lukewarm response to her philanthropy.

Izzy was a firecracker and I adored her impulsiveness and strong feelings about right and wrong. Even at ten years old, setting shelter cats free "They're like prisoners on death row", her refusal to conform was thrilling. Mrs. Pissers and the toothpick incident had me giggling. And I hurried to Google to search "This Be The Verse" by Philip Larkin.

There was a lot going on in "Little Fires Everywhere" but I found it easy to keep up. I will say that it had a bit of a slow start but I feel the author was just setting the stage for all that was to come. And once I hit the halfway mark, I was so completely invested into all of their lives and HAD to know what was going to happen next.

The additional story-line of little Mirabelle McCullough/May Ling Chow's adoption was incredibly thought provoking and had me asking myself some hard questions. I honestly didn't know which side I was on half the time. My head was spinning.

"What made someone a mother? Was it biology alone, or was it love?"

I thought that the development of the characters was fantastic. With so many characters and only so many pages, it takes skill to bring them all to life. And in my opinion; Celeste Ng did a phenomenal job. And with the many 90's references such as Sir-Mix-a-lot, Smashing Pumpkins, Jerry Springer, and Monica Lewinsky - I was taken back to my own adolescence.

This was an intriguing and compelling domestic drama. A story about motherhood, adolescence, race, rules, right and wrong, and so much more. Great characters and an interesting plot made "Little Fires Everywhere" a fast and fantastic read.

Little Fires Everywhere

Many thanks go to Penguin Press for providing a copy of this book for me to read in exchange for my honest review. ...more

Dang!

If this book does not get your brain churning, well, then you did not read the same book I just did!

This book is filled with so many scenarios with so many questions and no perfect answers. Every situation is a little pile of kindling and any of the questionable solutions will only ignite the fire . . . soon you have a bunch of fires ready to burn everything to the ground. Man, that would be a great title for this book! Oh . . . wait . . .

It has been a long time since I remember reading a b Dang!

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It has been a long time since I remember reading a book where my mind and problem solving skills have been this challenged. Usually when you are reading you think, "well, the best route for them to follow is this" or "Geez, it's obvious that they should never have done that." In this book I just kept thinking, "I am glad I am not the one who has to make any of these decisions!"

Also, this book is full of so many misunderstandings. I get frustrated when someone is falsely accused or the wrong conclusion is assumed. Every 15 minutes I found myself yelling at this book!

"IT WASN'T HER!"

"NO, THAT'S NOT WHAT HAPPENED! SOMEONE SPEAK UP!"

"OH, THIS ISN'T GOING TO END WELL!"

I believe I have said it before, but any time a book has you engaged so much you yell at it, want to pull the characters out of the pages and shake them, and/or need a stiff drink to calm your nerves at the end of each chapter, you are reading a pretty darn good book.

Give your analytical side a gift and read this book - it would be a great one for a book club. I imagine it would certainly lead to some lively discussion! ...more

## Little Fires Everywhere Review

“Most of the time, everyone deserves more than one chance. We all do things we regret now and then. You just have to carry them with you.”

Never in my life have I read any book, any narrative, that cared as deeply for all of its characters as this one did. *Little Fires Everywhere* lives in the grey area, leaving it impossible not to be invested, impossible not to love every character and cry for every character and root for every character, despite all their flaws.

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I really struggle to characterize this book; it’s sort of a combination between a mystery and literary fiction, and will probably work best for you if you’re a fan of both? *Little Fires Everywhere* is a very slow-burn story about a small town thrown into disarray by a court dispute. When an Asian baby given up by her mother is adopted by a white family, it causes a spiral of events that lead to a scene of a house on fire and a family driven away.

I think I’ve already expressed this, but this book is.... a masterpiece. It’s one of those books that I finished and then was just on my bed tearing up because it’s so well-crafted. The reason this book is so fantastic is primarily structural; we see the end, and then we go back and see the beginning.

But anyway, the reason this book works so well is the characterization. There is so much to appreciate here. I like that Moody is sort of written as the stereotypical jilted nice guy, and then we see more nuance to that characterization. I loved the complexity of the dynamic between poor characters and rich characters; I loved how no character is black and white, but they have definition nonetheless.

Of the approximately-eleven-person main cast, Izzy is my absolute favorite. Izzy is a ridiculously relatable character for me personally mainly through her relationship with her mom. There’s a line somewhere where Izzy says she thinks her mother sees her as such a demon that all her actions are framed in that light - that was me. And that is still me in my relationship with one of my parents. The degree to which the narrative of this book validates her trauma and her feelings is incredible.

And on another very personal note, Mia’s kind of reminds me of my other parent. So some of you who follow me on this platform might now that my mom and I are really, really close, and I grew up with her as my main support system. And I think her relationship with Izzy just felt so personal to me for that reason.

So maybe this was too personal a read for me, but I'm going to be honest: it's my belief that reading is something that is meant to be personal. And maybe the degree to which this personally affected me is the most important part of all.

There's a scene within this book that has stuck with me since the beginning, in which the adoptive mother of the baby is asked how she plans to incorporate Chinese culture into the life of the baby, and she brings up "oriental rugs" and how she gives the baby rice. And it's this awful moment, because we know she loves that baby. We do. But in that moment she becomes the persecutor of her own child. She does not understand, and so she perpetrates a culture that has been trying to swallow up her child. I think that's what this book is about, in the end; the degrees to which we can hurt people without ever attempting to, the way we can ruin lives through looking for our own happiness.

This book was masterful. And I hope you all read it.

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I pre-ordered this book months ago. It arrived at 12:01am today. I've been reading non-stop.... a one-sitting read with a few necessity breaks.

Here's is my problem....

I feel as if I've read this story before. I was only mildly interested in many scenes.

There were parts I found trite and parts I found semi boring.

Personally - I found the characters to be very one dimensional.

Here's another problem I have:

Yesterday I finished reading "In The Fall They Come Back", by Robert Bausch. I saw a I pre-ordered this book months ago. It arrived at 12:01am today. I've been reading non-stop.... a one-sitting read with a few necessity breaks.

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Here's another problem I have:

Yesterday I finished reading "In The Fall They Come Back", by Robert Bausch. I saw a lot of similarities in these two books, but this novel didn't 'wow' me nearly as much.

This story 'seemed' like it had all the elements I usually love .....

The wealthy and thrifty battle it out...plus moral issues to think about ...but my heart wasn't always in it.

Not sure why. It could be me.

Little Fires Everywhere

For one thing..... I spent summers in Shaker Heights .... I felt this book could have been written anywhere. Plus.... I'm not sure I appreciated some of the stereotyping of this community.

BUT ....here's a small flavor of the characters you'll spend time with:

'The Richardson's family':

Bill is an attorney and drives a BMW Sedan

Elena is a wife & mom..... works for the local newspaper: 'Sun Press'. She drives a Lexus

THE FOUR SIBLINGS:

Lexie -senior drives an explorer- has the lead in her School play. Seems fruity & shallow at times - but is an excellent student

Trip - a junior - drives a jeep - loves sports - handsome -fit --and charming

Moody - sophomore- rides a bike ( bless him) - most compassionate- very bright -introspective

Izzy - Freshman- considered black sheep of the bunch - feels different than others in her family.

'The Warren's: They recently moved into a rental ( a duplex) that the Richardsons own.

Mia- 36 years old, single mom, artist. Mia drives a VW Rabbit. She would rather mop floors any day- quietly alone- than have to wait on customers.

Pearl -15 years old - Mia's daughter - shy - honors student -

Paul, my husband, is rushing me - he says RETIRE.... lol.....

So.....I LIKED IT.....but..... after several great books I've recently read, I can't say I'm 'wild' about it. It was ok!!! - alright - better than OK!

Worth reading! Others may love it!

3.6 stars ...more

## Little Fires Everywhere Summary

I'd rate this 3.5 stars. (I know, it's killing me, too.)

Sometimes one of my greatest frustrations with books I read is that it is difficult for me to believe that a character would do something egregious as a knee-jerk reaction to something they don't agree with. I know, I'm reading fiction, which isn't always directly based on real life, but sometimes a character's actions are so ridiculous and ring so false that they really change my feelings about a book.

Other times a character is so unlikable I'd rate this 3.5 stars. (I know, it's killing me, too.)

Sometimes one of my greatest frustrations with books I read is that it is difficult for me to believe that a character would do something egregious as a knee-jerk reaction to something they don't agree with. I know, I'm reading fiction, which isn't always directly based on real life, but sometimes a character's actions are so ridiculous and ring so false that they really change my feelings about a book.

Other times a character is so unlikable (although you may discover it's all an act) that they're just so off-putting, and they detract from the book's appeal.

Both things happened for me while reading Celeste Ng's new book, *Little Fires Everywhere*, and I'm so disappointed, because I wanted to love it. While I found much of the book simply beautiful, the plot—and one character—travel down a path that I found a little too far-fetched and irritating that it spoiled how I felt.

To someone on the outside looking in, the Richardson family seems like the quintessential Shaker Heights, Ohio family—two successful and driven parents, four good-looking children, sure to follow in their parents' footsteps. The perception isn't all false—Elena Richardson, who returned to her hometown after college to raise a family, is a reporter for the local paper; her husband is a successful attorney. Their children, each one year apart, are each popular and successful in their own way, except the youngest, Izzy, who has a knack for standing out, especially if it means pushing her mother's buttons.

When Mia Warren, an enigmatic, slightly bohemian artist, and her daughter Pearl arrive in Shaker Heights, and move into the Richardsons' rental apartment, the family quickly falls under their spell. Pearl, who has moved more times than she can count, always on her mother's whim, has finally extracted a promise from Mia that they will stay in Shaker Heights, and she is excited to finally be able to make friends and cement relationships instead of biding her time until she leaves town again.

Pearl and the Richardsons' younger son, Moody, become close friends, although quickly she becomes a part of the family. Mia, too, in addition to working on her art, begins working for the Richardsons, becoming an unexpected confidante for older daughter Lexie, and forging a relationship with Izzy that

Little Fires Everywhere

she can't have with her mother. But Mia is also wary of the Richardsons and doesn't quite trust that all is as perfect as it seems.

When a custody battle involving one of Elena's oldest friends becomes fodder for the media, everyone in town has an opinion. Elena discovers that she and Mia are on opposite sides of this fight, which causes Elena to view Mia with suspicion. Suddenly she feels the need to find more about this mysterious woman who holds her family in her thrall, and Elena doesn't realize—or care, really—about what damage the truth may cause, for everyone.

"All her life, she had learned that passion, like fire, was a dangerous thing. It so easily went out of control. It scaled walls and jumped over trenches. Sparks leapt like fleas and spread as rapidly; a breeze could carry embers for miles. Better to control that spark and pass it carefully from one generation to the next, like an Olympic torch. Or, perhaps, to tend it carefully like an eternal flame: a reminder of light and goodness that would never—could never—set anything ablaze. Carefully controlled. Domesticated. Happy in captivity. The key, she thought, was to avoid conflagration."

*Little Fires Everywhere* is a powerful meditation on motherhood and the sometimes-tenuous bond between mother and child. It's also a book about the destructive power of secrets, misunderstandings, and miscommunication, and how easily problems could be avoided if people would just say what they thought, or speak up rather than let a person roll over them. At its most poignant, this is a book about the damage that can be done by neglect or mistreatment, even when it's unintended, and how finding someone who seems to care about you can be a life-changing force.

Ng is a storyteller with such quiet power. As she did in her spectacular first novel, *Everything I Never Told You*, she captures the routine and dramatic moments in a family's life, uncovering just how much goes on underneath the silences. While I appreciate her fearlessness in creating unappealing characters, I really was unhappy with some of her choices, which I won't reveal for fear of spoiling the plot, but they just seemed so ludicrous (and in one case, just a wee bit convenient and predictable) that one character and her treatment of others became almost one-dimensional.

I've seen many glowingly positive reviews of this book, so I wouldn't let my criticisms dissuade you from reading it if it interests you. Ng is an immense talent, and I look forward to seeing what's next for her. If you do read this, I would love to talk to you after you're finished, to see what you thought about the things that frustrated me.

See all of my reviews at <http://itseithersadnessoreuphoria.blog...> ...more

So, self-identification determines if a book is YA? Based on more than 60% of the content, this is young adult material. It's good; parts are excellent, others not so much.

I liked Mia's backstory as she became an artist using experimental photography. I thought that the custody dispute concerning "Oriental Barbie" was worth at least a star or two.



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A lot of the characters are cliché. The at-home Mr. Richardson could be a cardboard cutout with excellent earning skills. He fares a lot better before the judge. The Richardson children fit into "The Breakfast Club" well. A jock, a popular girl, a smart kid and Izzy who may well be a transgendered Holden Caulfield (thank you to my GR friend, Bill Kupersmith), but I liked her a lot more than that wretched boy.

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So yeah, the Richardsons have a child for each grade in high-school. Mrs. Richardson produced four singletons in roughly as many years. While in other respects, she is a perfect match for her orderly and rule-bound community. The rapid-fire baby production seemed reckless and out of place. It is the only part of her character that jibbed with aggressively investigating her tenant and employee's past. Opening a "can of worms" and a house full of screaming babies being equally disordered and unpredictable.

I don't believe that she is meant to be likable. She approaches friendship with same calculation as Claire Underwood with a careful tally of every kindness. But, as she is central to the book, I wish she were plausible. Even if she were perfectly constructed, the story is still awfully scattered.

My son heard part of the book while we were driving over the holidays. When we stopped, he would say "So" and give a one-sentence summary of the upcoming section or chapter. I don't believe he has any preternatural gifts as plot savant. A lot of the story is pretty predictable.

I have a quibble about that car. Is that the same VW rabbit Mia's brother bought when they were teenagers? If so, how did she manage vehicle maintenance on minimum wage earnings supplemented by occasionally selling a piece of art? Twenty to thirty years of use is aging NASA spacecraft territory, but this car starts reliably, runs well over long distances, and doesn't need any repairs. It seems oddly out of place given the careful mathematics of Bebe's poverty.

P.S. I stand corrected my son says he is too a plot savant. ...more

## Little Fires Everywhere Characters

I think it's safe to say that I'll read everything Celeste Ng ever writes.

Just like in a mystery book, you have to work at getting to the root of her stories. She doesn't hand you the plot from the get-go, but instead offers you kernels of the story until everything comes together at the very end. Although this can lead to frustration or boredom, especially with the sometimes barebones plot, I loved it.

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I'm very much a character-focused reader, and this was very much a character-focused novel. There's not much action driving this book forward. It's slow paced, but this gives us the time to dive deeper into the nuances of the complicated situation these characters are placed into. By examining from all sides, we are shown how both humans and their choices are complicated.

If you like character studies, complex relationships, and a '90s suburban setting, please pick this up!

...more

When I read Celeste Ng's debut novel *Everything I Never Told You* in late 2014, I was smitten. Ng's writing was so beautiful, her characters so real, and the story so compelling. I instantly knew I would be reading whatever she put out next.

Three years later and I'm happy to say that Ng has returned with just as stunning of a novel as her debut. *Little Fires Everywhere* is hands down one of the best books I've read this year; and just like its predecessor will be rising to the top of my yearly f When I read Celeste Ng's debut novel *Everything I Never Told You* in late 2014, I was smitten. Ng's writing was so beautiful, her characters so real, and the story so compelling. I instantly knew I would be reading whatever she put out next.

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I don't want to say too much about this novel because with Ng's books, I've discovered, it's best to go in anticipating very little and being surprised along the way. Because she is very good at surprises—and not the kind of plot twists you'll read in a thriller or spy novel; the kind of surprises that sneak up on you in real life and seem to tear your world apart. Her novels are domestic, but they aren't quaint. They have a raw, emotional power to them that are especially drawn out by her incredibly crafted characters. The inner turmoil is just as important as the external conflict in her stories, and that makes for a compulsively readable, yet immensely relatable read. You can empathize with so many parties in her

stories, and this one is no exception.

To me, these characters jumped from the pages; they have the mannerism (she's so observant, akin to Adichie in that sense) and the motivations of people you know in your own life. Mrs. Richardson's ethics and worldview are as real and as contrary as Mia's artistic sentiments. And you can't help feeling for both of them at times. That's what makes this story so good—there is no black and white, despite the obviously drawn lines between the differing characters. Ng exists in the grey, and her mission, it seems to me, is to pull you in to the grey too and think about how murky and complicated and messy life is.

I'll stop gushing, but only as long as people go pick this up and read it (along with her first novel too)! Ng is surely one of my favorite living writers, and, again, I can't wait to see what she does next. ...more

## Little Fires Everywhere Show

5 Amazing Bright Shiny Stars! I would give it 100 if Goodreads would let me.

Little Fires Everywhere is a novel that far surpasses any other that I have ever read. I don't know how Celeste Ng did it. It is a brilliantly written novel with intricate, rich and wholly vivid characters whose lives are so fully intertwined you can't help but read on in bewildered awe of how Celeste Ng created these characters. My nerve endings were fully engaged on high alert from the first sentence.

Shaker Heights, 5 Amazing Bright Shiny Stars! I would give it 100 if Goodreads would let me.

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Shaker Heights, Ohio is an affluent town with rules and regulations like no other. Mrs. Richardson lives by them, having been raised by them and she has raised her four children (Lexie, Trip, Moody and Izzy) to abide by them as well. She rents a little apartment in Shaker Heights to Mia Warren and her daughter Pearl, who are less fortunate. Mia is a free spirited artist, who lives life to the fullest. These women have one thing in common and one thing only: they love their children immensely and they accept each other's as their own. Mia (or rather Ms. Ng) describes it beautifully:

"To a parent, your child wasn't just a person, your child was a place, a kind of Narnia, a vast eternal place where the present you were living and the past you remembered and the future you longed for all existed at once. You could see it every time you looked at her; layered in her face was the baby she'd been and the child she'd become and the adult she would grow up to be and you saw them all simultaneously, like a 3-D image. It made your head spin. It was like a place you could take refuge, if you knew how to get in. And each time you left it, each time your child passed out of your sight, you feared you might never be able to return to that place again."

Neither live perfect lives, sometimes in fact they make grave mistakes, yet their love for their children never falters.

These mothers relationships with each other, their family and everyone in town is threatened when a custody battle ensues between a friend of the Richardsons, Mrs. and Mr. McCullough, who are in the middle of adopting a Chinese American baby and a friend of Mia's, Bebe, who is the birth mother. This battle wrecks havoc on the town and causes incredible strife between the families.

This novel is captivating and crazy compelling. These characters burn an indelible image onto your soul. The character of Izzy, Mrs. Richardson's daughter had me from the beginning (kind of like Hannah from

Little Fires Everywhere

Ms. Ng's *Everything I Never Told You* - which I also loved). Izzy has a strength and overcame odds that most children in her position wouldn't. Her triumphs made my heart soar.

Somehow Ms. Ng made me change my mind about some of the characters throughout the course of this novel. In the beginning, I felt one way about two of the characters and then by the end, I did a complete switcheroo, and my feelings about them were FIERCE.

*Little Fires Everywhere* brought forth laughter and lots of tears. It is that kind of novel. I can't recommend it highly enough. It is captivating, compelling and full of heart and soul. Celeste Ng's ability to intertwine the characters and storylines was wondrous, brilliant and beautiful. I loved every second of this book. It has now topped my list as my FAVORITE BOOK of ALL TIME.

*Little Fires Everywhere* was a Traveling Sister Group Read and included Brenda, Norma, Jennifer, Holly, Melissa & Kendall. We all had a fabulous time reading this one together - the group discussions for this incredible read were amazing and I look forward to our next read together.

For the full Traveling Sisters Group Review, please see Norma and Brenda's Blog:  
<https://www.twogirlslostinacouleeread...>

Thank you to Edelweiss, Penguin Press and Celeste Ng for an ARC of this novel in exchange for an honest review.

Published on Goodreads, Edelweiss and Amazon on 9.17.17. ...more

The Richardson family lives a perfect life, planned to a T and that's what Elena Richardson, her husband and four children seem to have, at least to fifteen year old Pearl Warren. Pearl moves with her itinerant artist mother, Mia, into a rental house owned by the Richardsons in Shaker Heights and becomes infatuated with this family, their house, their life style so different from her own and is mostly infatuated with three of the teenage siblings. The reader though knows from the get go that the Richardson family lives a perfect life, planned to a T and that's what Elena Richardson, her husband and four children seem to have, at least to fifteen year old Pearl Warren. Pearl moves with her itinerant artist mother, Mia, into a rental house owned by the Richardsons in Shaker Heights and becomes infatuated with this family, their house, their life style so different from her own and is mostly infatuated with three of the teenage siblings. The reader though knows from the get go that there's no perfection here. An awful thing happens to this family and we know what it is from the first sentence but I won't give it away.

The Shaker Heights motto is: "Most communities just happen; the best are planned": the underlying philosophy being that everything could - and should- be planned out, and that by doing so you could avoid the unseemly, the unpleasant, and the disastrous." The truth is that life happens and no matter what - things cannot be avoided and what happens here defies this underlying philosophy.

## Little Fires Everywhere

But this is not the most awful thing that happens in this family. For me it was the dysfunctional relationship that Elena has with her youngest daughter Izzy . Izzy reminds me in some ways of Hannah in Ng's last book, *Everything I Never Told You*. Unlike Hannah, Izzy is not invisible not totally ignored, but she is picked on, made fun of and seems to always be the recipient of her mother's impatience with things that are not perfect. There is not the only mother-daughter relationship that Ng focuses on . There is Mia and Pearl, who move from place to place, with Pearl not knowing the reason why or who her father was. There is Bebe, Mia's coworker, and her newborn baby May-Ling that she abandons and then fights to get custody. Bebe's story at first seems secondary but it ends up being the impetus for Elena's almost obsessive search to find out Mia's past.

Ng delves deep into her characters and you feel you know them inside and out even though it takes until the end to fully understand Elena and Izzy. You may not like all of them but you will understand them . This I find to be Ng's strength as a writer- how she makes us know her characters. One of the most poignant scenes in the novel, is when the Richardsons find the photographs that Mia leaves for them. She came to know them too . Definitely recommended to those who were fans of *Everything I Never Told You*, and stories of families who are less than perfect, which I'm sure many of us can relate to.

I received an advanced copy of this book from Penguin Publishing Group through Edelweiss. The book links are not working for me now but I'll try again later to insert them. ...more

## Little Fires Everywhere Amazon

I wouldn't even know where to begin to try and review this one. Holy fuck.

Metaphorically speaking, everyone has 'little fires' in their lives - events that begin as a small spark, and have the ability to transform into a raging inferno, changing lives for ever.

Shaker Heights, Cleveland is an idyllic place to live, everything has been planned to create the perfect community, but it's residents are expected to live by its many rules and regulations.

The Richardson's are quintessentially the kind of family who the community of Shaker Heights was built for. Elena Richardso Metaphorically speaking, everyone has 'little fires' in their lives - events that begin as a small spark, and have the ability to transform into a raging inferno, changing lives for ever.

Shaker Heights, Cleveland is an idyllic place to live, everything has been planned to create the perfect community, but it's residents are expected to live by its many rules and regulations.

The Richardson's are quintessentially the kind of family who the community of Shaker Heights was built for. Elena Richardson was brought up with these rules, and she and her husband are determined that their four children, Lexie, Trip, Moody and Izzy will live by them too. Izzy isn't exactly a chip off the old block though, and will prove to be very disruptive.

The Richardson's rent out an apartment to people they feel need a helping hand, and their latest tenants are Mia and her daughter Pearl. Mia is a free spirit, an artist specialising in photography, and when Elena's troublesome daughter Izzy becomes close to Mia, Elena finds that she's jealous of the relationship, a relationship that doesn't exist between her and Izzy. Further to this, an adoption case in the community puts Elena and Mia on opposing sides, and Elena decides to do some digging on Mia's past, and uproots some secrets that will change everything.

Oh gosh, this book explores so many issues, but for me the one that stood out was motherhood, and in particular, the relationship between mothers and daughters, from baby's early days to teenage angst.

It was beautifully written, with characters so well developed I felt as if I knew them personally. I also liked the setting of Shaker Heights, a place so perfect and orderly, and yet, ultimately there is always someone who will rip up those precious rules and regulations and throw them in the garbage.

Celeste Ng writes with great insight and empathy, and leaves the reader with much to think about.

\*Thank you to Netgalley and Little, Brown Book Group for my ARC in exchange for an honest review\*  
...more

## Little Fires Everywhere Book Club Questions

My favorite part of this book was the part when I deposited my still-pristine hardcover copy, unblemished BOTM Club bookmark and all, into the Little Free Library down the street - knowing that although I did not much enjoy the book, I am one of approximately 998 readers in that regard, and therefore my little free deposit would hopefully confer lotta free joy on someone else.

I didn't hate this book at first; rather, the dislike gradually seeped up on me, like Little Gripes Everywhere! My admire My favorite part of this book was the part when I deposited my still-pristine hardcover copy, unblemished BOTM Club bookmark and all, into the Little Free Library down the street - knowing that although I did not much enjoy the book, I am one of approximately 998 readers in that regard, and therefore my little free deposit would hopefully confer lotta free joy on someone else.

I didn't hate this book at first; rather, the dislike gradually seeped up on me, like Little Gripes Everywhere! My admired GR friend Debbie uses the concept of a Complaint Board in her wonderful reviews, and I really had the Complaint Board experience with this one. It was as though I was standing in front of that bulletin board at the Whole Foods where people are all like, "NO COCONUT CHIA PODS PAST TWO WEEKS WTF!" Only for me it was more like, "THIS IS MASQUERADING AS A CHARACTER-DRIVEN NOVEL WHEN IT'S REALLY PLOT-DRIVEN AF WHAT THE HELL?"

So, initially I had decided to keep my negative Nellie thoughts to myself, but I'll share a couple...lest they become everything I never told you (lol lol!)

Gripe 1: What I said on the Complaint Board above: I think by literary fiction standards, this book was way too concerned with jerking the plot around in different directions and became clunky and mechanical in so doing. As other reviews have observed, this also often relies on the reader having to swallow repeated farfetched coincidences, which I will not enumerate to avoid spoilers, and also because they are annoying and absurd.

Gripe 2: Related: Now, I liked Everything I Never Told You (the first book I ever reviewed on Goodreads! And very positively!) and would definitely call that a character-driven novel, which by definition requires very well-developed characters. The reader needs a very clear understanding of not just the things a character is doing or has done, but more importantly, what the character is thinking and how they are thinking it - and as they alone are capable of thinking.

In my opinion, in contrast, LFE is only a character-driven novel if you accept as the definition of a character-driven novel "a novel with some characters in it, who do some stuff." I didn't find the voices - internal or external - differentiated at all. I feel like I could read aloud a quote or a thought from each character and it would be difficult to guess who it was. Everyone was super superficially portrayed: the four kids were a kind of Breakfast Club cast of characters without any of the John Hughes wit, etc.



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Gripe 3: Some other reviewers have already noted that they felt manipulated by the book, that it seemed clear that the author was yanking around the puppet strings in order to gesture toward whom the reader was supposed to like, dislike, and root for. I would have to agree with this; I felt that the author should have trusted us more instead of nudging us in different directions - for example, by phoning it in with the characterization of certain characters so that they have all the subtlety of Cruella de Ville. I was also really put off by the whole Manic Pixie Dream Artist Mom thing going on with Mia, whom, as many others have noted, seems to be set up as the hero of the book. And ugh, the ending, with the four envelopes - for me that was so saccharine that I seriously wanted to vomit.

In short - wow, I really liked this author's first book, and this one was so different and really suffered in comparison. It really felt like a sophomore slump to me, or an early draft. Her debut was pretty risky and daring, while this one sort of played it safe to the point of becoming formulaic. Reading this book often felt to me like trying to play dolls with a young child and having to just unquestioningly accept the illogical and despotic rules of their universe.

Side note: It didn't help that I read *The Leavers* recently - check that one out for a more complex and nuanced examination of issues around cross-cultural adoption. And for your more general making-peace-with mom issues (among many other things), *The Animators* is another suggestion I'd offer. A richer depiction of artists as well - some manic maybe, but manic pixie-free! ...more

4.5 It's my first novel by Celeste Ng and even though Literary Fiction/Contemporary isn't my genre, I really enjoyed this one. I now have to pick up "Everything I Never Told You" which has been on my shelves for way too long!

Would recommend if you're looking for a slow character driven book full of emotions!