

## **Wishing: Diaries of a Teen Pregnancy**

Kim McLeod

Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing, 2007

**Reviewed by Nancy Bird LaChance and Sarah LaChance Adams**

*Wishing: Diaries of a Teen Pregnancy* by Kim McLeod is a book of diary entries written over a period of twenty-eight months. Near the end of the book, readers are spirited forward eight months into the next year, which includes twelve entries over five months, followed by an epilogue of sorts. McLeod's pregnancy begins halfway through the book, quite late in a work about expecting a baby. Further, the author does not explain how birth control—she obtains birth control pills at great effort—fails her. Regrettably, the narrative unfolds in bits and pieces, with unwelcome gaps.

Most unsettling is McLeod's transformation from a loving, caring teen mom of deep religious faith into every parent's nightmare. The entries shift abruptly from "She was very quiet in church today she [sic] has been since we first brought her. Praise the Lord for all the beauty of Lana. Love Lana's Mommy" to "I have fallen back into partying. I drank beer and smoked too much, I can hardly remember. I know I had sex with someone, but I don't really know them." What follows are eight pages that describe a wild roller-coaster ride of four months, ending with McLeod "staying at a friend's house near the mall. They have a cot in the basement I can use.... They let Mack stay over a few times. He's been coming into my bed. I wasn't able to say no." As readers, we found ourselves identifying more with McLeod's frustrated parents than with McLeod herself.

The book is marked by poor grammar, misspellings, slang, and profanity. Scrupulous editing would have ensured the book's accessibility to all readers, including students, tweens, teens, and their parents. Readers are left *wishing* for interpretive depth, struggling to find meaning in the mangled pieces of this painful puzzle.

## **Whatever Floats Your Boat: Perspectives on Motherhood**

Maryanne Pope and Shannon Lyons

Calgary, Alberta: Pink Gazelle Productions

**Reviewed by Gisela Norat**

Sudden widowhood at age 32 leaves Maryanne Pope without her soul mate and husband. At 36, she decides to tackle the nagging "little inner voice"

urging her to hurry up and have children. Not prepared to become a single mother, but also afraid to “miss the boat,” Pope literally embarks with eleven women friends on a weekend-long houseboat expedition on a lake in British Columbia. Their mission is to talk candidly about motherhood in the hope that the conversation will help Pope sort out her feelings. Not surprisingly, the participants in this documentary film respond with heartfelt joy and deep pain to the subject of motherhood.

Although ethnically and racially homogeneous, the group represents a myriad of life situations. On the trip there are women with and without children—either by choice or circumstance—including single, widowed, and divorced mothers parenting alone, married women with traditional families, and remarried women with biological and adopted children. The group discussions are engaging and show how women connect with the subject of motherhood. This all-female gathering in a support group, cushioned by the relative safety of friendship, demonstrates how empowering and nurturing a community of women can be—and frankly, to judge by the activities on board and off the boat, much more fun, economical, and expedient than professional therapy. Ultimately, the issue of how self-esteem and personal fulfillment is connected to bearing or not bearing a child can only be resolved individually. What is shared, however, is the experience of societal pressure that mandates women for biological reproduction.

Despite the inevitable tears shed on tape, the documentary is uplifting and inspirational. It confirms the need for connection, especially when women face life-transforming issues, such as whether or not to become a mother. The documentary would serve well in women’s studies courses, women’s public health programs, women’s discussion groups, and parent planning groups. It is not suitable for church-affiliated groups, given its treatment of married women choosing not to bear children, women choosing divorce, or, in one case, abortion.

The DVD includes a facilitated discussion session, titled “Perspectives on Motherhood,” which presents the voices of Asian, Black, Latino, and Caucasian women of different ages, walks of life, and experiences with motherhood. This session builds on the group’s common viewing of *Whatever Floats Your Boat* and gives the diverse group of women an opportunity to react to the documentary and share their views on its treatment of motherhood. The video package also includes a supplementary resource kit, with a synopsis and rationale for the documentary, a variety of interviews conducted by Pope that capture other women’s stories of motherhood, the transcription of a group discussion of six women’s reactions to the documentary, lesson and assignment ideas, pre- and post-viewing questions for discussion, and an annotated resource list. *Whatever Floats Your Boat: Perspectives on Motherhood* is sure to get women talking.