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LITTLE FIRES
EVERYWHERE: ARE ELENA
AND MIA NARCISSISTIC
MOTHERS?

by

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Based on Celeste Ng's bestselling novel, *Little Fires Everywhere* is a riveting story of motherhood, class, and race. It's a story about the painful dance of mother-daughter relationships. It's a story of women longing to be mothers and longing to be themselves, unsure how to be both at the same time.

In the opening scene of Hulu's new miniseries, *Little Fires Everywhere*, Elena Richardson's 14-year-old daughter, Izzy, is nowhere to be found. Flames burst from every inch of the Richardsons' beautiful suburban home in Shaker Heights, Ohio.

A firefighter tells Elena and her husband, Bill: "They found little fires everywhere. The fire didn't just happen. It was set."

After we meet the Richardsons, the story returns to its beginning.

What led to this disaster? We meet Mia Warren and her daughter, Pearl, also age 14. An African-American itinerant artist, Mia is first spotted by Elena as she and Pearl sleep in their car upon their arrival in Shaker Heights. In short order, Mia and Pearl move into the rental property Elena owns, in part to assuage Elena's guilt for having called the police to report them as vagrants.

Izzy, Elena's daughter, passionately plays the violin and creates art in her room. Pearl, Mia's daughter longs for stability, creature comforts, and friends who don't change every year. Izzy craves understanding from Elena, who cannot tolerate her daughter's refusal to play by Elena's rules, such as wearing makeup and dresses. Pearl increasingly demands that Mia meet her needs, which do not include roaming from place to place each autumn.

Alternatively baffled and enraged by all the ways Izzy is unlike her, Elena pushes Izzy farther away and deeper into despair. Mia flip-flops between respecting Mia's wishes and yanking back on her word, pulled in by the web of secrets that shroud their life.

In addition, *Little Fires Everywhere* tells the powerful story of two other mothers, Bebe and Linda, whose crossed paths fuel the rage that eventually explodes between Elena and Mia. As a specialist in narcissism and daughters of narcissistic mothers, I was mesmerized by the book and miniseries (which has not yet aired all the episodes).

I wonder:

- Do either Elena or Mia display characteristics of narcissism? If so, in what way?
- How are those characteristics effecting Izzy and Pearl?
- How much are Elena and Mia's actions shaped by the restrictions of gender, race, and class instead of narcissism?
- What does it mean to be a "good mother?"
- Can you be a good mother if you are not at least reasonably self-aware?
- How does a mother connect with her daughter and let her go, allow her to become her own person?
- If you're the daughter of a narcissistic mother, what do you think? What is your reaction to Elena and Mia?

I'd love to hear your thoughts.

If you would like more information or to seek help, contact Dr. Stephanie Kriesberg at www.drstephaniekriesberg.com or email her at drsk@drstephaniekriesberg.com. Follow her on Twitter at [@drskriesberg](https://twitter.com/drskriesberg).