

## **The Mother of All Baby Books: An All-Canadian Guide to Your Baby's First Year, 2nd ed.**

Ann Douglas.

Mississauga, Ontario: Wiley, 2013.

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA S. CHIN-NEWMAN

Ann Douglas's Canadian edition of *The Mother of All Baby Books* seeks to distinguish itself in a competitive market by appealing to Canadian consumers. The book cites interviews with Canadian parents, acknowledges the financial hardship associated with parental leave benefits (some families do not qualify for parental benefits and those who do receive only 55 percent of the parent's wages), and includes a table that lists required vaccinations and an appendix that lists Canadian website resources. The first edition, published in 2001, covered some planning-for-baby topics related to the end of pregnancy; this second edition begins with birth and covers the first 12 months of life. The first four chapters, which address newborn care and postpartum care of the mother's body, cover the period immediately after birth. The remaining six chapters are organized topically and address the emotional challenges of being a new parent, breastfeeding, practical aspects of baby care, medical care, eating and sleeping, and milestones of a baby's development.

Douglas understands that today's parents face a bewildering array of choices. Hence, she writes clearly, adopts a down-to-earth tone, and provides scientifically accurate information. Readers will be reassured to learn that many mothers do not feel immediate love for their babies, or that researchers report that the majority of new mothers dream of their babies being in danger. But Douglas does not radically challenge the genre of parenting books. To do so she might have risked writing from her personal perspective as a mother of four, giving advice that goes against the medical establishment, or educating her readers about finances (as does Armin Brott in his series of books for fathers). She does, however, privilege the voices of mothers by citing often from her interviews with Canadian parents, and it is noteworthy that she briefly addresses issues not typically included in parenting books, such as the existence of elimination communication (the method of reading baby's signals and not using diapers), or how an adoptive mother can breastfeed.

Notwithstanding her progressive approach, Douglas's book is aimed at heterosexual couples raising biological babies and does not address cultural variations in parenting practices. Moreover, some useful facts are missing from this updated edition. For example, there is but a passing reference to nursing pillows designed to assist breastfeeding mothers (a subject worthy of

development), and the newer options of compostable or flushable diapers are not described.

*The Mother of All Baby Books: An All-Canadian Guide to Your Baby's First Year* is an important addition to the bookshelf of parenting books that has grown exponentially since the 1946 publication of pediatrician Benjamin Spock's bestselling *Baby and Child Care*. It is refreshing to read a parenting book authored by a mother that includes mothers' voices, and readers will enjoy learning the results of recent research, such as the finding that new fathers' hormone levels change in the weeks immediately preceding and following the birth of a baby. Douglas's journalistic background shows in this engagingly written work, but the lack of illustrations makes it difficult to visualize advice on topics such as postpartum exercises and the proper latch for breastfeeding. In the end, readers may find this book contains valuable information to supplement their broader reading about the first year of a baby's life.

## **Mothers, Daughters and Untamed Dragons**

Aysan Sev'er.

Bradford, Ontario: Demeter Press, 2012.

REVIEWED BY NONIE HARRIS

"Turkish plays have a lot of deaths in them, especially deaths of women who sacrifice themselves for their country, or for their husbands or children. In Turkish plays, the drama imitates life."

*Mothers, Daughters and Untamed Dragons* begins with a death—the "un-eventful" death of Anna, the novel's narrator, who leads readers through her life as a child in post-World War II Turkey to new possibilities in Canada. Anna's is a tale of four generations and six women: of mother-daughter relationships that are fraught with deeply rooted tensions and men who either are "scared off" or doomed to early death. Through Anna's eyes, author Aysan Sev'er skillfully and meticulously unfurls the difficult terrain of mother-daughter relationships. Anna bears witness to human frailty, jealousy, generosity, and love, as well as the painful grief tied deeply to the loss of her own daughter.

On one level, the novel explores the lasting effects of war and brutality on one family: "war blunts morals, and turns them upside down." The consequent emotional damage threads its way through the four generations, always present but not necessarily articulated. On another level, the novel offers an