

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Ann Napolitano's novel, [Hello Beautiful](#), was published by Dial Press in March 2023 and was an instant New York Times bestseller and the [100th Oprah Book Club pick](#). The novel will be published by Viking Penguin in the United Kingdom in July 2023, and currently has twenty-eight international publishers.



[Dear Edward](#) was published by Dial Press in January 2020 and was an instant New York Times bestseller, a [Read with Jenna selection](#), and was released on February 3rd as an [Apple TV+ series starring Connie Britton](#). The novel currently has twenty-seven international publishers. It was named one of the best books of 2020 by The Washington Post, The Boston Globe, Real Simple, Fast Company, Women's World, Parade, LibraryReads and Amazon.

Napolitano is also the author of the novels [A Good Hard Look](#) and [Within Arm's Reach](#). She was the Associate Editor of [One Story](#) literary magazine from 2014-2020. She received an MFA from New York University; she has taught fiction writing for Brooklyn

College's MFA program, New York University's School of Continuing and Professional Studies and for Gotham Writers' Workshop. In November 2019, Ann was long-listed for the Simpson/Joyce Carol Oates Literary Prize.

*A Good Hard Look* was published in the United States by Penguin Press. The novel appeared on the Southern Independent bestseller list, on one of NPR's Best of 2011 lists, and was also an Indie Next Pick and an Okra Pick.

Her first novel, *Within Arm's Reach*, was published in the United States by Crown Publishing, in the United Kingdom by Time Warner Books/Virago, in Spain by Ediciones Salamandra, and in Germany by Verlagsgruppe Droemer Weltbild. The novel was adapted and staged as a [theatrical production](#) in New York City in 2014.

Ann lives in Brooklyn with her husband and two children.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. Who is your favorite character in this book? Who did you most identify with, and why?
2. Discuss the rift that occurs between William, Julia and Sylvie, and the choices each character makes to contribute to that rift. If you were involved in a similar situation, what might you have done?
3. How did the ending make you feel? What do you think might happen for William and Alice next?
4. Ann Napolitano has said that HELLO BEAUTIFUL is an homage to Louisa May Alcott's LITTLE WOMEN. Have you read LITTLE WOMEN --- and, if so, what traces of Alcott's classic novel of sisterhood do you see in Napolitano's?
5. HELLO BEAUTIFUL is initially narrated from three perspectives: William's, Julia's and Sylvie's. Why do you think the author chose these particular characters to tell the story? Whose voice did you enjoy or relate to the most? How did you feel when Alice's voice entered the story?
6. Discuss how mental health plays a role in the story of HELLO BEAUTIFUL. Did William's depressive experience feel "real" to you, for example? What about his parents'?
7. Sylvie imagined her life to be full of "third doors," or unexpected ways of living that allow her to choose her own path. What third doors can you see in your own life? Have you ever wanted to make an unexpected decision? What did you choose?
8. Charlie described his daughter Julia as his "rocket" --- an ambitious, independent woman who follows her own dreams. What about his other daughters: Do you think they fit that description as well, and how? What about Rose? You may take this opportunity to talk about the mother-daughter relationships in the novel as well.
9. HELLO BEAUTIFUL highlighted a series of romantic partnerships: Charlie and Rose's, Julia and William's, Sylvie and William's, Emeline and Josie's. Which relationship do you think was the ideal in terms of love and connection, and why? Which were the most challenging?
10. In addition to romantic relationships, HELLO BEAUTIFUL featured different types of nuclear families: William's; the Padavanos; Julia and Alice's; and the "super-duplex" where Cecelia, Izzy, Emeline and Josie live together. Talk about what family looks like in the pages of this novel. Which family appeals to you most?

Readinggroupguides.com.

## BOOK REVIEWS

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### Booklist

William had a solitary upbringing tinged with grief, so it was something of a relief to marry into Julia's large, boisterous Italian family. Her parents and three sisters were nearly always there for her, physically and emotionally. Julia and her sisters could communicate opinions with a single glance; they were each others' first phone calls in times of

triumph or tragedy, and they all seemed to know one another better than they knew themselves. William tried to fit in quickly and absorb the Padavano family shorthand. When a depressive spell sours William and Julia's marriage, he decides that a solitary life may be the only way to keep the people he loves from harm. But when the cloud lifts, William is surprised to find the one Padavano who's still by his side, unable to let go of the strongest connection she's ever felt. Napolitano's (Dear Edward, 2020) sweeping, Chicago-set family saga echoes Cristina Alger's *The Darlings*, Jonathan Tropper's *This is Where I Leave You*, and Adam Langer's *Crossing California*. With the vibrant and close-knit Pilson neighborhood playing a supporting role, Napolitano's latest novel investigates the deep, maddeningly frustrating, and ever-present love of family, whether tied by genetics or by choice.

### Publisher's Weekly

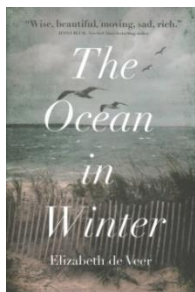
Napolitano (*Dear Edward*) explores the meaning of love and family with this striking story of four Chicago sisters and the young man who enters their lives. William Waters, a basketball player from outside Boston, enrolls at Northwestern in 1978 on an athletic scholarship. After he starts dating fellow student Julia Padavano, he's embraced by Julia's three younger sisters--Sylvie, a romantic searching for a great love affair; Cecelia, an aspiring artist; and Cecelia's earnest and quiet twin, Emeline--and is delighted to find a loving and loud family so different from his own, his parents having grown taciturn after his older sister's death years before. William and Julia marry, while the unmarried Cecelia gets pregnant at 17, Sylvie presses on with a job at a library, and Emeline works at a daycare where she fosters a crush on a coworker. After one character attempts suicide, the bonds of the expanding family are tested, and the Padavano women reexamine the limits of how much they're willing to sacrifice. The author breathes great life into her characters, and brings insight into their quiet moments as they gradually come into their own. This will move readers. Agent: Julie Barer, Book Group. (Mar.)

### Library Journal

Napolitano's (*Dear Edward*) fourth novel is a gorgeous exploration of love and loyalty centering on four sisters in a tight-knit Chicago family and the young man who inadvertently wreaks havoc when he enters their lives. Although they have very different personalities, the Padavano sisters have always been extremely close, best friends as well as siblings. When William Waters meets and starts dating Julia, he falls in love with the Padavano clan as much as with the ambitious, somewhat uncompromising oldest sister. When their marriage falls apart, Julia feels betrayed that the sisters keep William in their lives. The family fractures for years until a health crisis brings them back together, at least temporarily. Maura Tierney expertly narrates this elegantly written but fast-paced domestic drama, flawlessly voicing each character and beautifully conveying tenderness, regret, hurt, and yearning as they try to redefine their places in their shattered family and the wider world. Tierney deftly manages the dual timelines and perspective shifts, building suspense. VERDICT Napolitano's sophisticated but bighearted story about family and friendship, radiantly performed by Tierney, could be one of the year's best audiobooks.--Beth Farrell

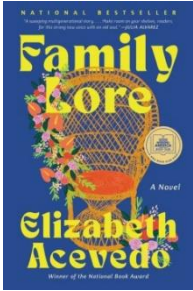
## SOLITO READALIKES - FOOTNOTES

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### ***The Ocean in Winter* by Elizabeth de Veer**

The lives of the three Emery sisters Alex, Colleen, and Riley were changed forever when Alex, eleven at the time, found their mother drowned in the bathtub of their home. When it becomes clear Riley is suffering from depression and might be a risk to herself, the sisters must sort through the past to help Riley.



### ***Family Lore* by Elizabeth Acevedo**

Flor has a gift: she can predict, to the day, when someone will die. So when she decides she wants a living wake—a party to bring her family and community together to celebrate the long life she’s led—her sisters are surprised. Has Flor foreseen her own death, or someone else’s? Does she have other motives? She refuses to tell her sisters, Matilde, Pastora, and Camila. But Flor isn’t the only person with secrets: her sisters are hiding things, too. And the next generation, cousins Ona and Yadi, face tumult of their own.



### ***Ask Again, Yes* by Mary Beth Keane**

You could call Peter Stanhope naive. Or you could call him optimistic. After all, as he tries to escape his traumatic childhood punctuated by his mom’s mental illness and a violent incident during his teenage years, he reasons that his family’s history might not matter in the long run. But of course, it does. The long shadow cast by his loneliness, the struggle to put a name to his mother’s suffering—these exact a toll not just on Peter but on his close childhood friend and neighbor, Kate. As their love blossoms, the couple realizes that a parent’s imprint might be more lasting than either could ever have imagined.