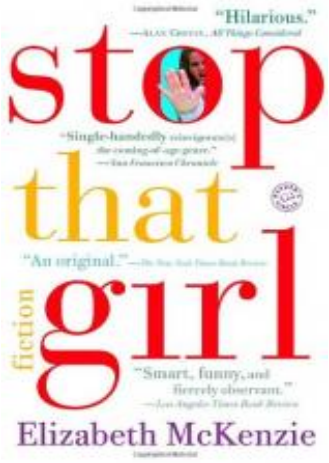
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Stop That Girl

by Elizabeth McKenzie



About the Book

From the start of Elizabeth McKenzie's beguiling fiction debut, we are drawn into the offbeat worldview of sharp-eyed, intrepid Ann Ransom. **Stop That Girl** chronicles Ann's colorful coming-of-age travails, from her childhood in a disjointed family through her tender adolescence and beyond. Along the way, she discovers the absurdities that lurk around every corner of a young woman's life, by way of oafish neighbors, overzealous boyfriends, prurient vegetable salesmen, sour landlords, and an iconoclast grandmother, known even to her family as Dr. Frost. Keenly funny and highly original, **Stop That Girl** is a brilliant examination of the exigencies of love and the fragile fabric of family, and heralds the emergence of a remarkable new voice in fiction.

Discussion Guide

1. How does the setting of California shape **Stop That Girl**? How might the novel be different if it were set in another region?

2. Discuss the social backdrop to these stories. How does the culture of the sixties and seventies help shape Ann's identity?

3. In the first chapter, Ann takes off running with her baby sister. What provokes her to do this? Do you understand her motives in this instant?

4. Explore Dr. Frost's effect on Ann and her family. How does Ann's mother's relationship with Dr. Frost compare to Ann's relationship with her grandmother? What do you think Dr. Frost's motives are in regards to her relationship to Ann? Is she merely eccentric, or do you think she has deeper psychological problems? Does Ann or her mother resemble Dr. Frost in any way?

5. Stop That Girl has the unusual format of consistently skipping time between chapters. How did this structure function as a way to explore the turning points in Ann's life, and how did it affect your reading experience?

6. In "Life on Comet," how does Ann view her mother's depression? How does Ann's perception of her mother change in "We Know Where We Are, But Not Why" when her family is in Arizona?

7. Many reviewers have called Ann Ransom a surprising and original character. How does she differ from other female characters you've encountered in contemporary fiction?

8. At the end of "Look Out, Kids," Ann says, "It all could have been so much different." What does Ann wish were different? In the broadest sense, why wasn't it?

9. What messages about family does **Stop That Girl** send? How does McKenzie define the variables of family?

10. How does McKenzie use humor to express Ann's worldview?

11. In "S.O.S.," Ann describes her attraction to her boyfriend, Bart, as originating when she realized "He didn't like anybody, felt superior, and coming from where I did I was used to this kind of person. One thing led to another" (154). What does she mean with this statement?

12. Roy is one of the few loyal men in **Stop That Girl**. Why is he so dedicated to Ann's mother and his family? How would you characterize the other male characters that appear throughout the narrative?

13. Ann finds herself in an uncomfortable situation with her employer in "The Possible World." Beyond the immediate circumstances, what do you think brought her to this low point?

14. How and where does the theme of being "last of the tribe" surface in this narrative?

15. Throughout the novel, Ann and her family constantly move. Why can't Ann's mother settle in one place? What effect does this upheaval have on the rest of the family?

16. How would you compare Ann's personality at the end of the novel to her character at age seven? Which elements of her personality have changed, and which have essentially remained the same?

17. What are your predictions for Ann's future? How do you think she'll live her life?

Author Bio

Elizabeth McKenzie is the author of the novels THE DOG OF THE NORTH and THE PORTABLE VEBLEN, the latter of which was longlisted for the National Book Award and shortlisted for the Baileys Women?s Prize; a collection, STOP THAT GIRL, shortlisted for The Story Prize; and the novel MacGREGOR TELLS THE WORLD, a *Chicago Tribune*, *San Francisco Chronicle* and *Library Journal* Best Book of the Year. Her work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *The Best American Nonrequired Reading*, and was recorded for NPR?s "Selected Shorts."

Critical Praise

"A smart, swift-paced debut . . . Ann embraces life with a wary insight that couldn't be more engaging."

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