



## The Fiction Class

By Susan Breen

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**The Fiction Class** By Susan Breen

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**A witty, honest, and hugely entertaining story for anyone who loves books, or has a difficult mother. And, let's face it, that's practically everybody . . .**

On paper, Arabella Hicks seems more than qualified to teach her fiction class on the Upper West Side: she's a writer herself; she's passionate about books; she's even named after the heroine in a Georgette Heyer novel.

On the other hand, she's thirty-eight, single, and has been writing the same book for the last seven years. And she *has* been distracted recently: on the same day that Arabella teaches her class she also visits her mother in a nursing home outside the city. And every time they argue. Arabella wants the fighting to stop, but, as her mother puts it, "Just because we're family, doesn't mean we have to like each other." When her class takes a surprising turn and her lessons start to spill over into her weekly visits, she suddenly finds she might be holding the key to her mother's love and, dare she say it, her own inspiration. After all, as a lifelong lover of books, she knows the power of a good story.

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## The Fiction Class By Susan Breen Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The collision of truth and fiction can result in romance or even redemption—or so say the writing exercises and life lessons that make up Breen's debut novel. For years, Arabella Hicks's love life, like her writing life, has felt flat and fruitless. Still, the 38-year-old copy editor and part-time teacher can summon neither the drive to date nor the wherewithal to finish her novel, *Courting Disaster*, now seven years in the rewriting. She's anxious about her mother, Vera, whom she visits in a nursing home every Wednesday after teaching her writing class. Worried about Vera's Parkinson's disease—and still grieving her father's death—Arabella discovers her personal fears seeping into classroom discussions of plot, point of view and dialogue. One student, the well-spoken, well-to-do Chuck, begins a relationship with Arabella and thus installs himself into the mother-daughter drama. Breen, a writing instructor, sometimes overplays her hand, but she does inject a dose of originality into an otherwise familiar setup. (*Feb.*)

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From [Booklist](#)

With a name that conjures up windswept romance novels, you would expect Arabella Hicks' life to be as enchanted as that of a happily-after-heroine. Instead she's a middle-aged writer, teaching a fiction writing class, flirting with one of her students, and taking care of her ailing mother, Vera. As the semester wears on, Arabella and her students slowly reveal more of their private lives to one another, while Vera admits that she has written a story. Unfortunately, she can't think of the perfect ending and wants Arabella and her students to help her. But how can Arabella when she can't even think of an ending for her own unfinished story? Peppered with literary references and Arabella's class assignments, Breen's novel is surprisingly touching. Although Arabella's students resemble stock characters—the wacky old lady, the beautiful girl hiding a terrible secret—this is a poignant yet amusing tale of family relationships rendered even more satisfying by Breen's dispensing of Strunk & White–like advice. Hatton, Hilary

Review

"The Fiction Class" reminds us of what the right words in the proper order can give: pleasure, laughter, heartache, and, on rare and stunning occasions and just in the nick of time, redemption.  
Marisa de los Santos, author, "Love Walked In"

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