

Love, forgiveness,
enlightenment: lily's
journey in the secret
life of bees



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In *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd, Lily Owens defines herself by her mistakes; the memory of her mother's death haunts every aspect of her life. By escaping from her old life, attempting to overcome guilt and find truth in her actions, Lily realizes that she is seeking knowledge and experience in herself, rather than forgiveness. In Tiburon, Lily learns about love; how to find it where there was once hate, how to forgive, and how to love all. Through this, Lily is able to no longer define herself by her mistakes, but what she learned from them and ultimately, learn to love herself.

Under the tyrannical control of T-ray, Lily has never been allowed opportunities to learn about love, and that one can love someone that they once hated. When Lily comes across June who at first dislikes Lily, she doesn't realize the possibility of loving June despite her harsh ways. The racial tension at the time causes June to initially give Lily the cold shoulder because "she's white". June learns to accept Lily as time goes by, but it takes Lily more than time itself to do the same. Spraying June with the water hose helped Lily realize her love for June despite her initial mean ways, and allowed June to "Hug her while their clothes made sweet, squishy sounds up and down their bodies"(Kidd 170) By finally hugging June, Lily displayed the sisterly intimacy between the two girls and taught Lily how to love the person she used to despise. Learning how to love in this way helped Lily greatly, but with creating new love also comes forgiveness.

Once Lily can understand that love can be created in a place where there once was hate, she can learn to forgive. Lily's relationship with T-ray was anything but paternal, "daddy never fit him".(Kidd, 2), but Lily needs to realize that love comes in many forms that are not necessarily as obvious as <https://assignbuster.com/love-forgiveness-enlightenment-lilys-journey-in-the-secret-life-of-bees/>

others. T-ray's incapability to show affection for Lily leads her to believe that he doesn't love her, thinking "so what if he doesn't know the color you love best?" (Kidd, 160). To Lily, not knowing or caring about the little things about her tells her that T-ray does not truly love her. However, while keeping bees, August teaches Lily "there are 32 names for love in the eskimo language" (Kidd, 140). From this Lily concludes that if there are 32 names for love, then there are as many different types of love, T-ray's not being the only kind she knew before. Now that Lily knows T-ray does truly love her but shows it in a way she used to not be able to comprehend, she can call him "Daddy", a word that once did not fit him. By forgiving others, Lily can forgive herself and develop one love for all things.

In order for Lily to completely figure out what she is searching for, she has to learn how to link all of her experiences together, creating one love. Lily can never attain full inner peace with herself until she understands the concept of unity, a single love for all things and everyone. While tending to the bees, Lily desperately tries to send love to all of them, crying, "I love you, I love you. She tried to say it in 32 ways." (Kidd, 149). Lily knows she has to achieve one love but is overwhelmed and confused, thinking that just her words and thoughts will achieve this goal. However, this goal is nothing more than a concept until Lily can perform it with her actions. Eventually Lily realizes this and "traces black Mary's heart with her finger. You are the mother of thousands" (Kidd, 164). The spiritual black Madonna guides Lily through the process of showing and accepting love with everyone. By touching Mary's heart, she has let Mary's love in, therefore letting her own love out to thousands.

The process by which Lily goes through to find inner enlightenment teaches her ideas she would not have been capable of doing on her own. By learning to find love where there isn't any, she learns to forgive, and eventually can find one inner love for all. Despite her new knowledge, Lily never comes to complete closure on the death of her mother. Likewise, it was never closure on Lily's mistake years ago that she needed, but closure on herself and her own inner acceptance. By learning these new things, Lily is no longer defined by her mistakes, but what she learned from them and the people who helped her along the way.