



Bab: A Sub-Deb

Mary Roberts Rinehart

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Bab, only twenty months younger than her sister, the official debutante, rebels against her treatment by her family. Set during the pre-World War I era, when women's roles were rapidly changing, Bab determines to assert her independence through this series of misadventures and mysteries. . . .

"I am writing all of this as truthfully as I can. I am not defending myself. What I did I was driven to, as any one can see. It takes a real shock to make the average Family wake up to the fact that the youngest daughter is not the Family baby at seventeen. All I was doing was furnishing the shock. If things turned out badly, as they did, it was because I rather overdid the thing. That is all. My motives were perfectly irreproachable." - Bab

And this Bab feels through all of her hilarious and at times dangerous adventures to prove she is not just a Sub-Deb. Written by that master of mystery and humor, Mary Roberts Rinehart, Bab is a delightful combination of both.

Bab: A Sub-Deb Details

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From Reader Review Bab: A Sub-Deb for online ebook

Hayden says

Well, this was an odd little book. I honestly don't know whether I liked it or not. Our heroine, Bab, gets herself into ridiculous, Wodehouse-esque situations, due both to circumstances beyond her control and her own willful stubbornness. I found her rather frustrating and sometimes annoying, since she seems thoroughly convinced of being misunderstood, despite the fact that she often purposefully conceals her feelings! That being said, the book was amusing, though Bab's constant misspellings drove me crazy. I did love the character of Carter Brooks, though- his levelheadedness was a perfect foil to Bab's scatterbrained and somewhat ditzzy schemes. Overall, I think a lot of people would like this book, it's just a little much for me. I can't stand quite as much insensibility and immaturity as Bab displays without getting a slight headache.

Sienna says

A light, very funny read written and set during the first world war. Barbara Archibald is the sort of teenager whose presence would drive most anyone nuts but who possesses an irresistible narrative voice. I mean, seriously:

If I were to write down all the surging thoughts that filled my brain this would have to be a Novel instead of a Short Story. And I am not one who beleives in beginning the life of Letters with a long work. I think one should start with breif Romanse. For is not Romanse itself but breif, the thing of an hour, at least to the Other Sex?

Women and girls, having no interest outside their hearts, such as baseball and hockey and earning saleries, are more likely to hug Romanse to their breasts, until it is finally drowned in their tears.

And a bit of wisdom from Carter Brooks, who occasionally mistakes mothballs for gumballs:

"Bab, just a word of advise for you. Pick your Husband, when the time comes, with care. He ought to have the solidaty of an elephant and the mental agilaty of a flee. But no imagination, or he'll die a lunatic."

Indeed, four of the five stories here — written as diary entries and themes for school, or, more ambitiously, for profit — revolve around Bertie Wooster-style romantical catastrophes. It's the fifth, which finds Bab earnestly pledging herself to her nation's war efforts, that really shines. Naivety and hilarity aside, I was surprised at how moving I found the final pages, in which she faces a much more serious threat than hand-me-down clothing, boys as foolish as she eventually — kind of — proves herself not to be, atrocious spelling and unwise, extravagant purchases. Oh, Bab, I wish you (and your family, and the men who marry into it) nothing but happiness. Thanks to Catherine for bringing *Bab: A Sub-Deb* to my attention: Kindle-users, take

note, for it's free! And your life will be the better for reading passages like this gem:

Now I have a qualaty which is well known at school, and frequently used to obtain holadays and so on. It may be Magnatism, it may be Will. I have a very strong Will, having as a child had a way of lying on the floor and kicking my feet if thwarted. In school, by fixing my eyes ridgidly on the teacher, I have been able to make her do as I wish, such as no calling on me when unprepared, et cetera.

Full well I know the danger of such a Power, unless used for good.

I now made up my mind to use this Will, or Magnatism, on Leila, she being unsuspecting at the time and thinking that the thought of Marriage was her own, and no one else's.

Being still awake when the Familey came upstairs, I went into her room and experamented while she was taking down her hair.

"Well?" she said at last. "You needn't stare like that. I can't do my hair this way without a Swich."

"I was merely thinking," I said in a lofty tone.

"Then go and think in bed."

"Does it or does it not concern you as to what I was thinking?" I demanded.

"It doesn't greatly concern me," she replied, wraping her hair around a kid curler, "but I darsay I know what it was. It's written all over you in letters a foot high. You'd like me to get married and out of the way."

I was exultent yet terrafied at this result of my Experament. Already! I said to my wildly beating heart. And if thus in five minutes what in the entire summer?

(Disaster. Marvelous, awe-inspiring disaster.)

Marci says

There I was, reading through Mary Roberts Rinehart's books in order and expecting another mystery or something slightly serious in tone after the months the author had spent in touring and gathering information at the front in Belgium and France, seeing the horrors of the first year of the Great War up close, and instead she comes out with this completely comical piece narrated by a teenage girl whose penchant for getting into farcical situations rivals Bertie Wooster. Bab, or Barbara, is as funny as can be without being outrageous, silly without being annoying, charming, and ultimately, wise. It was hard to put this book down for any reason, she draws you so. She tells her story, which is a series of five vignettes in the forms of school themes, diary entries, and one final literary effort, the end of which is really touching. I recommend this book highly.

Astraea says

Don't miss this one. You'll laugh your head off. If you're a fan of old movies, picture Mona Freeman (from "Dear Ruth") in the title role, and you'll have Bab perfectly.

Bethany says

This book is *hi-lar-ious*! (I wish I could properly convey how that word is to be said, since I hear my dearest friend's voice in my head saying/almost-singing it.)

Anyway, there really is only that word to describe this book: hilarious. I loved how seriously Barbara (or "Bab") took herself, and also how oblivious she was to, well, almost everything! Especially her lack of finesse in spelling.

Kathryn - though humour can be so subjective, I'd say this is one worth buying! :)

{A part that amused me:

This was fun, though perhaps a little cynical in its subtext, and I would have preferred a single overarching plot instead of a succession of three. I laughed out loud over the first part, smiled over the second, and felt rather tired in the third.

V. Briceland says

It's awfully tempting to compare Mary Roberts Rinehart's hilarious *Bab: A Sub-Deb* with the Anita Loos novel that followed in its footsteps in 1926: *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes: The Diary of a Professional Lady*. Both books feature wildly unreliable narrators whose spelling, to be generous, could make a hapless reader's eyes cross. Both satirize sex and marriage, and society's expectations of women (or lack thereof) in the early twentieth century. Best of all, both are extremely funny.

Loos' Lorelei Lee, however, is infinitely more black at heart: that cloche and those blond tresses disguise a ferocious, almost feral acquisitiveness and a cunning that Machiavelli would envy. Bab, to put it bluntly, is merely a typical seventeen-year-old: ditzy, absent-minded, prone to fancifulness, and apt to stumble when strapping on the metaphorical heels of her elders.

Lorelei certainly was Bab-like during her own adolescence. It may be that given nine years to catch up to her literary older sister, Bab might acquire Lorelei's flapper shrewdness . . . but it's doubtful. Rinehart has made Bab sweet-natured at her core, and Bab's unwitting heroism by the book's end renders her grounded in a way her successor would never appreciate. Readers appreciate Lorelei as a force of nature—but we love Bab, for all her faults and airs.

Mo says

I just can't read anymore of this. What others classified as charming, I found completely distracting... namely, the frequency of misspelled words.

varacious...anticapatory...Holadays... modafied... dipariging... relelve... naturally... unsuported... unluckaly... discrete...tence... deciet... starveing... Familey... terrable... formalaty... hateing... dizernment.....

On and on it went. My eyes started rolling back in my head.

NOTE: Finished Chapter 1, page 37

Kelly says

"Charming" isn't usually a descriptor that attracts me to a book, so it's a good thing I chose this for other reasons. My lost film research turned me onto a series of now-lost films from 1917 starring Marguerite Clarke and based on this novel.

Bab is a clever teen—though not nearly as clever as she thinks she is, which is part of the fun. She's sort of a young female version of a Bertie Wooster or Brigadier Gerard, in that we can tell from her version of events that reality is a bit different from how she perceives it.

I'd kill for these films to be found, but in the meantime, color me completely charmed by the book.

Quirkyreader says

This story was one of Rinehart's earlier works. The main character Bab, tells of her adventures through her diary and "magazine articles". One thing to know about Bab is that she is a terrible speller and it shows in her writing.

I enjoyed reading all of Bab's hi-jinks. But the end of the story got a bit too hawkish. But then again, the story came out during the First World War and echoes the sentiments of the time. If it had been written after the War, Bab would have been classified as a flapper and a member of the Lost Generation. I could just see Bab at one of Gastby's parties.

The story might be easy to find. I downloaded it as a free ebook.

Heather Oakman says

I Loved this book. It was good for quite a few belly laughs.

Jenne says

This was delightful and hilarious!

Peggy says

I thoroughly enjoyed this book, and highly recommend it. The book is written in a series of themed papers or diary entries, written by Bab, a 17 year old during 1917.

Bab is a spoiled, sheltered but neglected second daughter from a well off family. She is constantly writing about how she got into trouble (due to misunderstandings which she creates by her own ignorance, imagination, and unwillingness to explain herself to others). The situations she gets herself into are very humorous to read about, but appalling to her family.

One of the things I enjoyed most about the book was all the misspelling. Bab thinks she is a wonderful speller, and rarely needs the help of a dictionary. She even goes so far to help a schoolmate with her spelling. Yet her stories and diaries are riddled with misspellings.

Emily says

Absolutely delightful. I love Mary Roberts Rinehart. As Jenny E so correctly put it, these are the books Fitzgerald heroines read. If Edith Wharton wrote Nancy Drews, the books would read something like Rinehart's. And Bab: a Sub-Deb is worthy for its title alone, yes?

Jennifer Kincheloe says

Jane Austen meets Lucille Ball. Bab: A Sub-Deb is one of the few popular novels from the 1910s that is still in print today. Bab, a 17 year-old girl in a hurry to grow up, invents a lover so her family will take her more seriously. The fun begins when her make-believe lover actually materializes. It offers a quaint window in the courting rituals of the 1910s. I like the scene where her mother tries to bribe her by offering her the loan of her vibrator (the most popular electric household device after the toaster)

This 1916 best seller was made into a silent film the same year. Author Mary Roberts Rinehart is often called the American Agatha Christie. She was propelled to fame by her 1907 mystery, *The Circular Staircase*, which featured a female detective and sold over a million and a quarter copies. Her articles in the *Saturday Evening Post* were credited for shaping American middle middle-class tastes and manners. Rinehart also has the distinction of being the first woman war correspondent at the Belgian front during World War I.
