

# Hollywood Kids Short Guide

## Hollywood Kids by Jackie Collins

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# Characters

Jordanna Leavitt and Kennedy Chase are the leading female characters in Hollywood Kids. Jordanna is a Hollywood kid, growing up in the formidable shadow of her movie producer father and beautiful actress mother. She has all the privilege and money one might expect and at twenty-seven is at loose ends. She fills her days with lunches with friends and her evenings with one-night stands with her "stud of the night." But she is a strong young woman who finally puts aside her stultifying need for her father's love and recognition, gets a job that is personally satisfying, and discovers that she is worthy of her new-found self-esteem.

Kennedy Chase is an educated professional woman who grew up with loving supportive parents. Not a Hollywood kid, she is nonetheless at loose ends because her husband, who had been her professional partner, died and she still mourns his loss. She never has a problem with self-esteem; her problem is deciding what to do with her life which had been set on one course and now, because of the death of her husband, seems to lack direction.

The other "kids" include Bobby Rush, Cheryl Landers, Grant Lennon, Jr., and Marjory Sanderson. Bobby, son of movie star Jerry Rush, makes it big on his own without any help from his father. Cheryl and Grant go into the call-girl business, mainly for the independent income, the excitement, and an immature conviction that because of who they are they can get away with it. Marjory Sanderson is the psychologically damaged one who cannot seem to rise above her suicidal self-absorption until she nearly succeeds in a suicide attempt.

Michael Scorsinni, Quincy Robbins, Mac Brooks, and Luca Carlotti are major male characters who are not Hollywood kids. Michael is a New York cop in Los Angeles looking for his ex-wife and little girl. Quincy Robbins is Michael's former New York Police partner who now owns a private investigation agency in Los Angeles. Mac Brooks is an established movie director with a past he wants to keep concealed. Luca Carlotti is a New York mobster in Los Angeles to clean up some unfinished business with an errant nephew.

Zane Marion Ricca is the requisite villain, a ruthless psychotic murderer who embodies the worst effects of parental neglect and abuse. As in most Collins novels, there is a beast in human form who threatens the lives of some or all of the major characters. Zane Ricca is that character in Hollywood Kids. A Steven Seagal-wannabe ex-con, he harbors resentments against his mother, every girl in high school who ignored his advances, the one young woman he obsessed over but who rebuffed him, and most immediately, the six females who testified against him in a murder trial. Collins creates a memorable crazy in Ricca, who routinely stands naked in front of a full length mirror to admire his body while planning the next victim to stalk and strangle.

## Social Concerns

Jackie Collins embraces the multiculturalism of the 1990s in this novel. There are several more ethnic characters of substance in *Hollywood Kids* than in previous novels. African Americans abound: Quincy and Amber Robbins, Nix, Tyrone, and various nurses and television people, including a news co-anchor and production assistants. They are portrayed as non-eccentric people, not like the Beverly D'Amo-type who afford a comic relief quality. There is also a Hispanic news anchor, Rosa Alvarez, to add another ethnic element to the mix.

AIDS looms large among the characters' concerns. Condoms and "safe sex" are mentioned so often one might suspect Collins to be on a campaign to neutralize the impact of her previous novels' characters' remorseless sexual promiscuity. Early on, a character, contemplating sex with an attractive but unfamiliar female, thinks "Getting laid is not what it used to be. AIDS was out there now, and casual sex was a thing of the past." Other characters talk about being tested for HIV and showing written verification from a doctor before considering sex. A female character has a one-night stand and is proud of herself for having used protection. Even by the 400th page, two major characters, in the throes of heavy necking, pause to discuss "safe sex" since they have both "recently slept with high-risk partners." And since neither has any condoms on hand, they agree to consummate the relationship later. These are new and different, more socially-conscious Collins characters.

The "Hollywood madam" case of 1993-1994, in which a young woman was tried for running a high price call girl service made news all over America.

Collins creates a similar situation in *Hollywood Kids*, giving an interesting explanation as to why a young woman from a privileged background would get involved in such a risky occupation.



# Techniques

Collins writes in visual scenes; action and dialogue move the story along at a fast clip. Slang and profanity pepper the dialogue. Some are her accustomed colloquial language; some are very 1990s and current—the buzz words of the day.

Instead of flashbacks to introduce the villainous antagonist, she uses in *Hollywood Kids* a peripheral subplot about Ricca, printed in italics, that she intersperses between the episodes dealing with the main characters. Gradually, the relationship between what the outsider Ricca is doing and planning to do becomes clear as his exploits make the news and become known to the other characters. As always, the doings of the "outsider" bring the plot to its climax.

Unlike many previous Collins novels, *Hollywood Kids* does not climax with a huge party or gala where all the major players are gathered like sitting ducks for the antagonist. Instead Jordanna is alone in an isolated setting with Ricca in control. The other characters, Scorsinni, Rush, the police, and even Carlotti are on the way to the rescue. Jordanna, however, saves herself. By the time all parties show up, the villain is dead and Jordanna is triumphant.

Collins has said she was an avid reader of Mickey Spillane, Raymond Chandler, Grace Metalious, Harold Robbins, and Henry Miller. She combines their tough talk, steamy sex, and absorbing crime plots with particular success. Considered by many to be a romance or even a soft porn writer, Collins considers herself mainly a storyteller concerned with characters her readers "really want to know about." Her plots are predictable only in that they invariably end happily and the bad people get their comeuppance. She considers herself a moralist: When her characters do bad things, they pay!

# Themes

Children will sometimes rise above the low expectations of their parents. All human beings need to achieve something in their own right. These two themes are at the base of *Hollywood Kids*, a story described by one reviewer as the "sordid lives of celebrity offspring." Collins's Hollywood parents, wealthy celebrities, are self-centered and in many ways determined to keep their children under their thumbs. Perhaps this is self-protection, to keep the children from becoming an embarrassment or competition. The "kids" acquiesce sometimes for no other reason than that they have nothing else to do and no role models to emulate.

However, by the time they are in their late twenties or early thirties, they begin to realize they have no life of their own and they strike out for independence.

The five offspring Collins shows us eventually make a move to change their lives, and some succeed, even making their parents proud.

That all humans seem to need to make their mark is shown not only in the characters of the "kids," but even in the antagonist, Zane Ricca. A true psychopath with nothing but murder and mayhem on his mind, he is driven by the need to let people know that he indeed was "here," a force to be reckoned with, particularly among those whom he feels wronged him.

Collins explores the concept of being one's own person. Several characters are shown as having so much baggage from their pasts that they cannot see what is possible for them in the future and can barely deal with the present. As events unfold, the characters gain the strength and insight to deal with their problems and ultimately take control of their lives.



## Key Questions

Hollywood Kids completes the "Hollywood" cycle. It is different from the previous two novels in that there is more attention paid to the social pressures on young people—to achieve, to excel— than in the other books. Feminism, multiculturalism, personal and societal morality are all concerns that Collins wants her readers to consider.

1. Jordanna Leavitt is an unusual Collins heroine in that she is a very physical fighter. Is there a correlation between her fight against Ricca and the strong, competent women in 1990s films and television who deal with their opponents with masculine aplomb?

2. Jackie Collins claims to be a moralist.

Given the number of sexual encounters in the novel, do you see a moralistic balance between the sex scenes and the admonitions about safe sex?

3. Do you see a commercial imperative in Collins's inclusion of more ethnic characters in this work? Does it suggest a nod to multiculturalism and social diversity, or is she capturing the true Hollywood scene?

4. Given her background and the risks involved, discuss the logic of Cheryl Landers's decision to be a "madam." To what extent do you think the circumstances of the novel reflect the circumstances of the Heidi Fleiss "Hollywood madam" case?

5. Why does Collins not portray negative black characters?

6. To what extent does the novel describe American society in general—the materialism, parental abuse/neglect, ambition, sexual liberation, and violence?



## Literary Precedents

Collins's mainstream novel incorporates elements of romance, mystery, and crime. Books by Jacquelyn Suzanne and Rona Jaffe come to mind in the way the lives of characters are developed. Collins uses some of the same kinds of urgent ambition to drive the female characters and some of the dastardly qualities of the male chauvinist to pit her male characters against themselves and the females.

Echoes of Irving Wallace's *The Fan Club* (1975; see separate entry) are heard in the Ricca/Jordanna climax where sadistic hostage-taking and female spunk square off with victory going to the lesslikely adversary.



## Related Titles

Hollywood Kids is third in a series of books exploring the theme of life among the Hollywood elite and scum. Hollywood Wives (1983), Collins's ninth book, and Hollywood Husbands (1986; see separate entry), her eleventh, are the other two.

Characters from these two and other Collins books are mentioned (e.g., Lucky Santangelo), but all the major and important minor characters are new. Collins's great asset as a writer is her full delineation of characters so much so that there is no more story left to tell about them in any subsequent book. (A possible exception is her telling of the story of Lucky Santangelo in three volumes.) She mentions the names of some real celebrities and some of her fictional celebrities in passing, giving a kind of credibility and continuity to her story.

Although Hollywood Kids has the same plot structure of the other books of the series, a major difference occurs in Collins's decision not to use her usual climactic crowd or party scene.



# Copyright Information

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