

5. Do you think the author intends Mab to be real or imagined? Does it make any difference?

6. How do Barbie's and Griffin's respective encounters with Hamilton Waverly change their lives?

7. Why does Barbie dream of going to New York?

8. The author describes Los Angeles, the San Fernando Valley, and New York as women. Why do you think the author chooses this device? Is it effective?

9. Discuss the significance of cameras in this book. Why does Barbie want to become a photographer?

10. Does Barbie forgive her mother too readily? What do you think Mrs. Marks was like as a girl? What do you think Barbie will be like when she is her mother's age?

11. *I Was a Teenage Fairy* is a work of magic realism. What does that phrase mean to you as a reader? In addition to the character of Mab, are there other magical elements in the book? How does the author mix magic and reality? Could this book be described as a modern fairy tale?

Photo credit: 1996 Claudia Kunin



**Francesca Lia Block,** nurtured by a painter/filmmaker father and a poet mother, wrote most of her first novel, *Weetzie Bat*, while she was studying at the University of California–Berkeley. Since then, Block has written four *Weetzie* sequels—*Witch Baby*, *Cherokee Bat and the Goat Guys*, *Missing Angel Juan*, and *Baby Be Bop*. Like *Weetzie*, all have received high praise and prestigious awards. Ms. Block is also the author of *The Hanged Man* and *Girl Goddess #9*. Francesca Lia Block lives in Los Angeles, California.

If you liked *I Was a Teenage Fairy*, try these other books from HarperCollins:

- **Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins**  
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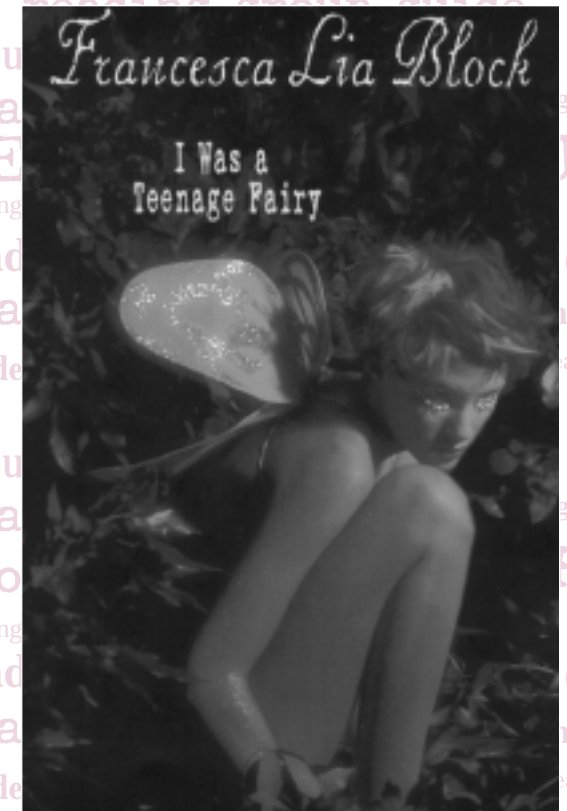
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New York, NY 10022  
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## READING GROUP GUIDE



## I Was a Teenage Fairy

BY

# FRANCESCA LIA BLOCK

## About This Guide:

In *I Was a Teenage Fairy*, novelist Francesca Lia Block crafts a postmodern fairy tale that is, at once, as grim as Grimm and as hopeful as Cinderella. Set in a make-believe L.A. world of movie stars and young models, this coming-of-age novel explores the difficult intersection of fantasy and reality. The discussion topics, suggested reading list, and author biography in this reading group guide for *I Was a Teenage Fairy* are designed to invite discussion of its memorable characters and cutting-edge themes that include pedophilia, emotional deprivation, and sexual identity.

## About This Book:

In her new novel, Francesca Lia Block creates a world that is a breathtaking mix of fairy tale magic and gritty reality. To those who only see her picture in magazines, the life of young model Barbie Marks is the stuff that fantasies are made of. But as Block artfully reveals, the reality of Barbie's life is more nightmare than wish-fulfilling dream. From victimization by her domineering mother to rejection by her physically present but emotionally absent father to a shattering encounter with a sexually predatory fashion photographer, Barbie's is a fractured existence. The only thing that keeps it from falling entirely to pieces is the presence of Mab, a "teenage

girl-thing...the size of most teenage girl's littlest fingers. Is Mab real or imagined? It makes no difference to Barbie, "as long," she tells herself, "as I can see her."

In fact, until Part II of this lushly lyrical novel, Barbie is the only one who CAN see Mab with her gauzily transparent wings and poison red hair. But then Barbie falls in love with actor Todd Range and meets his friend and roommate, beautiful Griffin Tyler, who has a heart full of secrets that will challenge Barbie to find herself, and that will bring a suddenly visible Mab flying to the rescue.

## Previous Praise For Francesca Lia Block

"Block's on-target L.A. assessment combined with her affinity for poetry often leave the reader breathless." *-Sassy*

"Block writes without flinching or condescension. Always able to separate the fascinating from the phony, she addresses real fears and passions with a sassy brand of magic realism and private language." *-The Village Voice*

"Brilliant." *-The Horn Book*

"The burn about coming of age is that it never really ends. And no writer in the '90s has embraced this dilemma like Francesca Lia Block." *-Spin*

"Block's lyrical interplay of leitmotifs and artful allusions continues to be uniquely fascinating and provocative."

*-Kirkus Reviews*

## For Discussion:

1. Why are Griffin and Damian able to see Mab? Are there other people in the book who have had a Mab in their lives? If so, why?
2. Mrs. Marks complains to her husband, "you never say a word to Barbie." [p. 41] Why do you think he is so silent? And why is he so cold to her when Barbie encounters him in Part II? [pp. 81-83]
3. As an eleven-year-old, Barbie thinks that talking to Mab is a lot like talking to herself. How are the two characters alike? And how are they different?
4. Todd comments on how much alike Barbie and Griffin are. In what ways do you think they are alike? How are they different?