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The Feminine Mystique (50th Anniversary Edition)



Synopsis

“If you’ve never read it, read it now.” —Arianna Huffington, O, The Oprah Magazine
Landmark, groundbreaking, classic—these adjectives barely do justice to the pioneering vision and lasting impact of *The Feminine Mystique*. Published in 1963, it gave a pitch-perfect description of “the problem that has no name”: the insidious beliefs and institutions that undermined women’s confidence in their intellectual capabilities and kept them in the home. Writing in a time when the average woman first married in her teens and 60 percent of women students dropped out of college to marry, Betty Friedan captured the frustrations and thwarted ambitions of a generation and showed women how they could reclaim their lives. Part social chronicle, part manifesto, *The Feminine Mystique* is filled with fascinating anecdotes and interviews as well as insights that continue to inspire. This 50th anniversary edition features an afterword by best-selling author Anna Quindlen as well as a new introduction by Gail Collins.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It’s common wisdom to think of *The Feminine Mystique* as a classical feminist text. This is perhaps the case, but I would like to argue that it is so much more than that. The book examines what

society tells women about their lives -- education, career, family, sexuality, goals, values, and anything else. The book discusses what society tells women, who exactly promotes these views about femininity, out of what possible motives, and what toll do these views have on women, their family and their children. The basic thesis of the book is that femininity has been mystified, manipulated, and taught back to women, in their homes and schools and churches, in the novels and magazines they read, etc -- that this mystification of femininity is a monstrous distortion of a person's life, resulting in emotional problems, marital and family tension, stifled careers, and general unhappiness... That we -- society -- have been living in denial of the condition women have been manipulated into, and therefore have been ineffectual in our help. That there are good reasons why things are the way they are -- it's embarrassing to discover just how economically profitable this distortion is. The *Feminine Mystique* is profound and penetrating in that it questions a state of affairs so many of us take (or have taken) for granted. The book appeals to reason. You won't find any "masculine logic" vs. "feminine logic" stuff here; Just logic: The book is a systematic expose of the problem, its toll on women, and its toll on the rest of the family -- men and children.

This is a well-documented and well-researched book that discusses the problems faced by many American housewives. It was written in the sixties, when women were returning to their homes after the sexual revolution and the woman's right movement, when they were proudly filling in forms with "Occupation: Housewife" once again. These women were told by psychoanalysts, who mostly based their findings on Freud's theories, that a woman's sex life and happiness was ultimately found through living her life solely for her husband and children. The women Freidan studied and interviewed for this book were usually suburban wives, living in nice houses with their executive husbands who made a lot of money. These women had done everything right. They had married young: some barely finished or didn't finish high school, others dropped out of college, all for the goal of marrying their sweetheart and fulfilling the perfect image of the feminine mystique. These women had had many babies by natural childbirth, they sewed all their clothes and washed all their dishes by hand, they had breastfed them all, they had doted on their children's and husband's interests and goals so much that they lost sight of their own. And even though these women were living by the perfect standards set by the "feminine mystique", they were dreadfully unhappy. So many were seeing psychoanalysts without positive results, so many were harboring resentful, depressing thoughts, and contemplating everything from an extramarital affair to suicide. And the most common problem of all came to be known as "chronic fatigue syndrome". The women with this problem experienced listlessness and restlessness. They were always tired no matter how much

they slept. Their joints and bones ached.

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