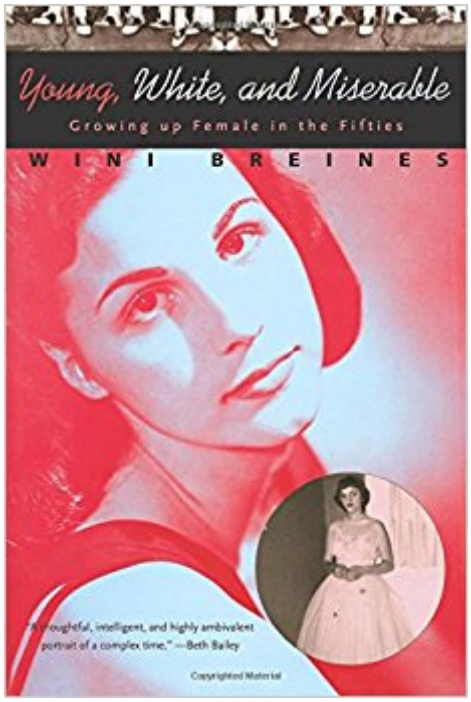
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Young, White, And Miserable: Growing Up Female In The Fifties



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Synopsis

Young, White, and Miserable is a critically acclaimed study that compellingly shows how the feminist movement of the 1960s found momentum in the seemingly peaceable time of the 1950s. Wini Breines explores white middle class America and argues that mixed messages given to girls during this decade lent fuel to the fire that would later become known as feminism. Concluding with a look at the life and suicide of social scientist Anne Parsons, this book is a poignant and important look into conditions that led to the women's movement.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Breines, a Northeastern University sociology professor, here explores a generation of women she believes were protofeminists--unheralded pioneers of the women's to avoid repetition movement. She takes a hard look at the '50s zeitgeist, at the duplicities of the suburban America born at the dawn of the atomic age, at depressed women for whom child-rearing was the only approved source of identity. Yet she argues that this era offered sexual opportunities to young women even as it bound them with puritanical strictures, and that because of such contradictions young women became uniquely concerned with living differently than their self-sacrificing mothers. The study presents a melange of '50s artifacts: explication of such '50s novels as Marjorie Morningstar , snippets from Sylvia Plath's writing, visions of the make-up and barrettes that beckoned teenage girls at the five-and-tenweb . The book is a revelation, especially for those who came of age in the '50s. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or

unavailable edition of this title.

Breines’s book is a sociological account of the socialization process of white American teenage girls growing up in the 1950s. She argues that underneath their happy appearances, these girls in their ponytails and poodle skirts, so idealized and adored by American culture, were under a great deal of pressure to conform to the Fifties model of the perfect teenager and were the very same women who, a decade later, were burning their bras and fighting for women’s rights. Unfortunately, much of the book is repetitious, and Breines fails to provide enough information about the women’s movement to tie her thesis together. The last chapter, however, makes up for what the rest of the book lacks in concision and substance. It is a compassionate case study of Anne Parsons who, by committing suicide, Breines contends, was a victim of the damning effects of this female socialization process that condemned nonconformity, female intellectual pursuits, and a life without marriage and children. Extensively researched and heavily quoted, this book would be useful only for women’s studies collections in academic libraries.- Patricia Sarles, Mt. Sinai Medical Ctr. Lib., New YorkCopyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

What a bizarre culture we were born into! My hat’s off to the women who rejected the postwar knee-jerk conservatism of the 1950s and early ’60s. An eye opening read.

I ordered this book for a history class I was taking. We were required to do a book dissection from a period in history and I chose this one. I ended up loving it! I was born in 1965 my mom in 1945. The show MadMen is the closest thing I have had to understanding how the world looked to her when I was growing up. This book really helped me understand some of the conflicting messages my mom would put out during my youth about marriage, sex, working and motherhood.Thank you Wini Breines) and those who funded your research) for helping me understand how WWII and the emerging consumerism and suburbia had changed everything around her. Thanks for the chapter on how the media and movies and books must have looked to her as they idolized "bad boy" leather-clad, smoking characters (James Dean) those she was forbidden to see - - characters who were loved by "good girls" in sweaters with and full skirts (Annette Funicello and Sandra Dee) like my mom. Thank you for explaining how the world was telling her she might be an equal and could get an education and have a career bolstered by her seeing the women in the neighborhood who looked to have it all with their new houses, appliances, clothes and children. At the same time her

own mother was telling her to keep her virginity, enroll in a secretarial school and marry a good boy (at 18).After seeing all this I now get some of her angst and how hard it must have been raising me and my brother during the uncertainty of Vietnam and the civil rights era here in Birmingham, Alabama. Your book was like watching Mad Men’c characters come to life.You did a good job.

The fifties and sixties have always been an inspiring time that I love studying. My parents grew up and struggled through this era. Many movies and books have been made about this era but Breines really brings new light to girls and women’s lives during this period. Aspects of life that we take for granted these days (such as the increase of music group created solely for the young teen audience) have originated during this time. The same girls who cooed over the Beatles became the feminists of the sixties where they rebelled against the system. Breines examines the aspects of women struggled within this culture and the conflicts they encountered. Dealing with the ideology of domesticity and longing for the freedoms of education and sexual choice. It is a wonderful glance into how women idealized the "superwoman" concept they still suffer with today. An excellent read for anyone interested in the origin of the second wave of feminism or the fifties and sixties in general.

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