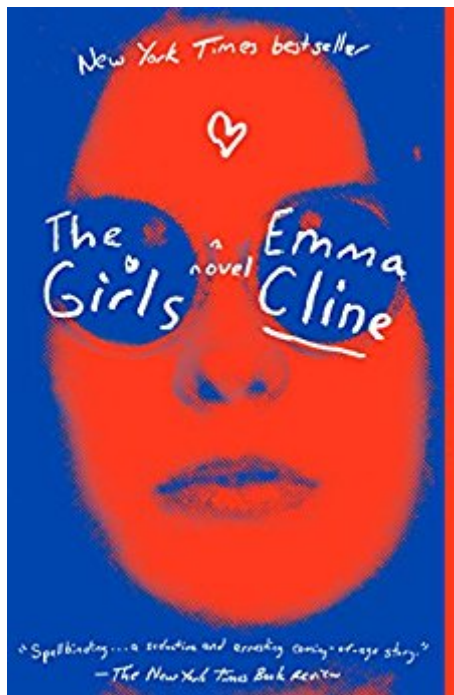


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The Girls: A Novel



Synopsis

An indelible portrait of girls, the women they become, and that moment in life when everything can go horribly wrong—this stunning first novel is perfect for readers of Jeffrey Eugenides, The Virgin Suicides and Jennifer Egan's A Visit from the Goon Squad. Set in Northern California, during the violent end of the 1960s. At the start of summer, a lonely and thoughtful teenager, Evie Boyd, sees a group of girls in the park, and is immediately caught by their freedom, their careless dress, their dangerous aura of abandon. Soon, Evie is in thrall to Suzanne, a mesmerizing older girl, and is drawn into the circle of a soon-to-be infamous cult and the man who is its charismatic leader. Hidden in the hills, their sprawling ranch is eerie and run down, but to Evie, it is exotic, thrilling, charged—a place where she feels desperate to be accepted. As she spends more time away from her mother and the rhythms of her daily life, and as her obsession with Suzanne intensifies, Evie does not realize she is coming closer and closer to unthinkable violence. Emma Cline's remarkable debut novel is gorgeously written and spellbinding, with razor-sharp precision and startling psychological insight. The Girls is a brilliant work of fiction. From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I have mixed feelings about this book. I picked it up because of the hype (kudos to Cline's publishing team) and the first few pages were really impressive. I don't read a lot of literary stuff like this, and Cline's words were mesmerizing at first. Every sentence perfectly and poetically constructed. You could take any snippet from this book, post it anywhere, and it would be obvious how strong a writer Cline is, without even knowing what the story was about. But then it became exhausting. Because while Cline is an incredibly gifted writer, she's not a great storyteller, and it got really tiring reading paragraph after paragraph of beautiful prose that essentially says nothing. The pacing was soooooo sloooooow. It took pages to describe the smallest details. The story, in a nutshell, is about a girl who becomes part of a cult, and the cult commits heinous murders. The premise is fantastic. But in my opinion, it was told from the wrong point of view. What should have been a fabulous imaginative retelling of Manson fell flat, because the protagonist is only a bystander, and a part-time one at that. She doesn't live with the cult - she goes home most nights. She has no memorable relationships with anyone else in the group, other than the one girl she's infatuated with. But because her attraction is one-sided, the relationship never develops. And other than this one girl, the other characters are barely sketched out. They only exist in her peripheral vision, hazy snapshots at best, and this includes the Manson-like character himself. The victims, we don't really know at all, so it's difficult to be horrified about what happens to them. Speaking of which, she's not involved at all in the planning of the murders, and she's even not there when the murders happen. All that build-up, and we don't even see the terrible thing that's the climax of the story. The book is essentially one giant flashback, with a handful of present-day scenes telling us very little about the protagonist's life now (but I get why Cline choose to do it this way - if the story is told in flashback, she can tell it with added insight and hindsight, using lots of "little did she know's" to hint at what's to come - a cheap way to create tension, but I suppose it's better than no tension at all). In the end, though, it's so completely dissatisfying because we don't know what she's learned, or how she's grown. She hints at trying to help a young girl in the present-day, someone who reminds her of herself, but again, it never develops into anything. This is a story that gets lost in its own words. I'm so disappointed. Great premise, great writing, weak story.

The book is overloaded with metaphors and similes. With every word on that page read like a French goose trying to soar over a stilled lake but hampered by the luminous tar that's iced on her

wings from an earlier unnatural encounter. I was as determined as a fruit fly escaping from a cider trap to finish the book. However, my mind drove through each chapter like a commuter on a busy Broadway hitting every red light only to be distracted by pretty and unassuming window shoppers. I have doubted many decisions in my life, but I can tell you with the precision of a surgeons hand, I will not recommend this book. I am just saying, that's how the book reads. Blah!

I was so excited to read this book, yet I wondered about all the hype. Would I be fooled again? I waited for it to become available at my local library, but was too anxious to wait any longer and ended up buying it locally. Did I waste my money? Hmmm. Let's decide. Evie Boyd is the fourteen year old only child of divorced parents. Evie is basically a loner - aside from her one friend, overweight and annoying Connie. Evie spends her days drinking, smoking weed and masturbating. Evie also spends a great deal of time obsessing over her mother's pathetic life. So what does a misunderstood, loner fourteen year old do in California in the summer of 1969? Why, she joins a cult of course. But not just any cult - THE CULT of all cults. Although Charles Manson and his Family are never specifically mentioned, readers can safely assume that's exactly who takes in this little lost, pathetic and misunderstood rich girl. The book starts off with Evie as a "middle-aged woman with varicose veins" (because all middle-aged women have them, right?) cowering in her rental when she hears a noise. Turns out it's just the owner's son coming to party with his girlfriend. The kid recognizes Evie as "that girl from the cult" (how, we have no idea) and is instantly in awe of Evie. Thus prompts the trip down memory lane and hence the story of Evie and The Cult. Unfortunately, everything from there goes rapidly downhill. This book is so incredibly BORING it was literally painful to slog through it. The author is the queen of long-winded prose and similes. Similes are great if they're done well and done sparingly. However, the writing here is so overloaded with them that it completely mangles the story. I got a real sense that the author was trying darn hard to sound deeply profound, but she only succeeded in creating a rambling bowl of superfluous simile soup. It's only 355 pages, but is so heavily padded with randomness that it seems MUCH longer. Ugh. I'm of the belief that simple writing is best. Why use ridiculous and wordy verbiage to describe even the most straightforward passages when simple words and phrases will suffice? This only results in slamming on the book brakes and disrupting the flow of the book. Let's save the flowery writing for poetry, please. And not only was the bulk of the book ramblingly tedious

It was downright WEIRD. Talking about smelling her mother's period in the bathroom? Seriously? A lot of the book didn't even ring true to the time period. Did this mysterious debut author and her team of Random House editors even research 1969? As an example, Suzanne and poor little rich girl Evie are on the road and need gas so they stop at a gas station to pump their own gas with a stolen credit card from someone's mother. One, there were precious few self-service gas stations in 1969 and two, credit cards were rarely used back then AND women couldn't even get them. It's true AND look it up. There were no pump card swipers back then, so wouldn't the attendant have noticed any of this? Apparently not, since "the family" was supposedly living off credit cards. I don't normally blast a book like this, but I'm tired of all the book hype publishers push on unsuspecting readers. The premise of this book was great but the execution was GOD AWFUL. I get it, perfectly good girls being lured into a subservient lifestyle by a masterfully manipulative murderer. Starved for the attention they didn't get at home only to find themselves in a worse environment than before. There is literally NOT ONE likable or even relatable character in this whole mess. All hype and absolutely no substance. Disclaimer: eBook Review Gal was fooled by all the hype and actually wasted good money for this book.

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