



Girls & Sex - Navigating the Complicated New Landscape

Peggy Orenstein

A generation gap has emerged between parents and their daughters. Mothers and fathers have little idea about the pressures and expectations they face or how they feel about them.

Drawing on in-depth interviews with young women and a wide range of psychologists and experts, renowned journalist and bestselling author Peggy Orenstein goes where most others fear to tread, pulling back the curtain on the hidden truths and hard lessons of girls' sex lives in the modern world of our times.

Questions for Discussion

Chapter 1: Matilda Oh Is Not an Object—Except When She Wants to Be

- Has the concept of objectification changed in the last generation? Is it something to protest against or a personal choice and something to be celebrated?
- HOW DO performers like Beyoncé or Kim Kardashian send conflicting messages about female objectification?
- In what ways has the self become a brand? What role do social media play in this?
- What is scripting theory? What are some examples of it?

Chapter 2: Are We Having Fun Yet?

- Why do you think many of the girls felt an expectation or obligation to perform sex acts?
- How does having a negative self-image affect sexuality and sexual experience?

- What might be the reasons why many of the girls interviewed neglected their own pleasure?

Chapter 3: Like a Virgin, Whatever That Is

- What are some of the ways in which **VIRGINITY** is seen differently by boys and girls?
- Do perceptions surrounding virginity **put added pressure on girls**? How does it affect relationship dynamics? Of the four principle characters, who do you identify with most and why?
- Is there a correlation between how virginity is perceived and the way many of the girls perceived their own pleasure?

Chapter 4: Hookups and Hang-Ups

- DESCRIBE the “persistent double standard” that seems to occur in casual relationships. Why do you think many of the girls tolerate them?
- We learn in this chapter that some girls only see rape as a violent attack that occurs in a darkened alleyway. What is the **IMPACT** of such a limited definition?
- On p125, Megan tells Peggy Orenstein “*that every girl’s goal is to be just slutty enough, where you’re not a prude but you’re not a whore.*” DISCUSS whether many girls manage this balancing act, and what forces are pressuring girls to confirm in this way.
- In Megan’s story, she says she had to resist the urge to apologise to Tyler even though he sexually assaulted her. Why do you think she felt that way?

Chapter 5: Out: Online and IRL

- In what ways does the internet create safe spaces for girls questioning their sexuality?
- How did girls in relationships with other girls speak differently about sex than those in relationships with boys?
- Is it surprising to you that there is no discussion in this chapter of sexual coercion in same-sex relationships?

Chapter 6: Blurred Lines, Take Two

- How did the term “date rape” evolve?
- EXPLORE the impact of alcohol on the issue of consent. Why is consent seen as a moving target?



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- DISCUSS why society puts more emphasis on teaching girls how to avoid rape than teaching boys not to do it.
- SUGGEST rules or campaigns you would implement on university campuses to improve education about consent and stamp out sexual assault.

Chapter 7: What If We Told Them the Truth?

- Why are there such drastic differences between how we teach girls and how we teach boys about sex?
- How would you describe the work of Charis Denison?
- Do you think the students she teaches are better prepared for thinking and talking about their sexual experience and sexuality? Why or why not?

About the Author

Peggy Orenstein is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*, *Waiting for Daisy*, *Flux*, and *Schoolgirls*. A contributing writer for the *New York Times Magazine*, she has also written for *USA Today*, *Parenting*, *Salon*, the *New Yorker* and other publications. She lives in Northern California with her husband and daughter.