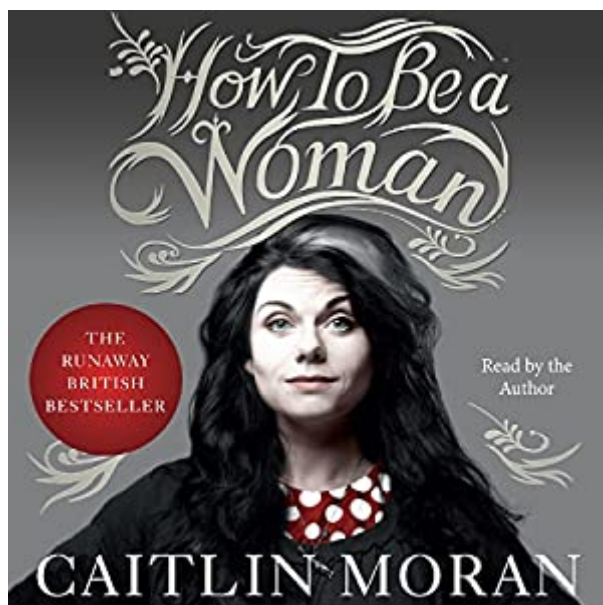


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How To Be A Woman



Synopsis

Though they have the vote and the Pill and haven't been burned as witches since 1727, life isn't exactly a stroll down the catwalk for modern women. They are beset by uncertainties and questions: Why are they supposed to get Brazilians? Why do bras hurt? Why the incessant talk about babies? And do men secretly hate them? Caitlin Moran interweaves provocative observations on women's lives with laugh-out-loud funny scenes from her own, from the riot of adolescence to her development as a writer, wife, and mother. With rapier wit, Moran slices right to the truth - whether it's about the workplace, strip clubs, love, fat, abortion, popular entertainment, or children - to jump-start a new conversation about feminism. With humor, insight, and verve, *How To Be a Woman* lays bare the reasons why female rights and empowerment are essential issues not only for women today but also for society itself.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It is extremely rare that I don't finish a book, but I just couldn't finish this one. I noticed that I was not ever excited to pick it up... which was doubly disappointing because I loved Ms. Moran's book "How To Build a Girl" SO MUCH. I tried to think about what the difference was, and I think it basically comes down to the fact that "How To Be a Woman" is completely autobiographical, and "How To Build a Girl" is not-- it's more of a funny narrative about a girl that the reader really does pity and ultimately root for. And I think this fact allows "How To Build a Girl" to come across with a much lighter tone. (What's even more puzzling about my hugely divergent opinion on both books is that I

have noticed that some of the details in "How To Build A Girl" are actually autobiographical, because I recognize the redundancies in "How To Be a Woman.") To be frank, "How To Be a Woman" is just too strident for me... it reads as more of a soapbox rant. Particularly when Ms. Moran writes about feminism. I definitely identify with being a feminist, but I feel like she takes it a bit too far-- to the point where it's almost an antiquated view of the ideal. Then she extends the rant to not wanting to wear high heels or spend money on high-end handbags... and how any "lingerie" other than basic old school granny panties is ridiculous, painful, and unnecessary... which she brings full circle to go so far as to say that certain types of underwear are anti-feminist. In summary, while I do - as ever - love Ms. Moran's gift for language and metaphor, the TONE of the novel is what prompted my 3-star review. The preaching was just too much for me.

a book I really enjoyed reading. It is part a memoir which focus on how it is to grow up and how to be a woman. I found it funny, and I got thoughts going on. I like the point of view and how Caitlin Moran see feminism and how how we should see it instead of how it is today. It was a perfect read for me at the hospital and I did read it in one sitting. I laughed and the other in the room looked at me as crazy. One thing I do like about the book is how Caitlin shows herself, and not always in the best light, and her road to be a woman, and that she still has no idea how it is to be a woman or what it mean but that it is something we all have to work one. The book is real and hopeful. Really enjoy reading it and I want to read Caitlin Morans other books.

Caitlin Moran wants to argue in favour of feminism (or at least her take on it), help young women to learn how to be a woman (often learning from Moran's own mistakes), and to introduce humour and satire into the mix. Moran was 35 years old when she wrote this book, at a stage in her life when she had overcome the insecurities of adolescence and the booze-fuelled soul searching of her twenties, but still young enough to empathise with young women undergoing those rites of passage. The first ten chapters cover the transition through puberty and teenage to the stage of being a 'grown up'. She deals with the onset of menstruation, the discovery of masturbation, the anguish of dealing with the physical changes as one heads towards adulthood, and how to deal with relationships. In the fourth chapter she introduces feminism and says that all women should identify as feminist. But there is a good deal of confusion about what this means. At one point she says men should be feminists too, but then says that to be a feminist you need to have a vagina and want to be in charge of it. It's a nice sound bite, but what does it really mean? The question is ignored as we skip to another topic. In a later chapter she says that sexism has to be re-framed as behaviour that

separates people into 'winners' and 'losers', pointing out that women are usually seen as 'losers'. To challenge sexism we have to ask: is this behaviour polite? If it's not, then it's sexist and we should reject it. Frankly I found this silly. If we were all just polite to each other, sexism would disappear? The class system in Britain thrives on an ethic of 'politeness' and uses this to thwart challenges to the status quo. Is this what Moran really wants? I had visions of Tony Blair and his ridiculous 'respect' slogan as I read the chapter. The chapters on pornography and fashion, and on what to do about body hair, raise some complex issues but nothing is considered in any detail. Ultimately there are no driving principles that might help a reader get a grip on womanhood. Moran is against removing pubic hair but has no qualms about shaving armpits or waxing legs. The reason for the former is that the fashion is driven, she says, by pornographic film makers, but if she had read some history and anthropology she would have seen that fashions in body hair are far older and more interesting than the porn industry. There are chapters on marriage and having children, filled with anecdotes from her own experiences. Hopefully these will encourage prospective parents to take antenatal visits and parenting classes seriously. Her second birth was easy, the first a painful disaster - preparation made all the difference. The chapter on abortion is the most cogent and sincere. Moran has previously written a newspaper article on her own decision to have an abortion and the discussion here shows that she has spent a bit more time considering the issues involved. Abortion is a topic that rarely gets intelligent reflection so this was welcome. The major weakness in the book is the poor writing style. The first eleven chapter headings all end in exclamation marks and the text is riddled with phrases and sentences in capital letters to show she is BEING FUNNY!! or that THIS IS IMPORTANT!!! Moran was a journalist on Melody Maker, a pop music magazine, and contributes articles on entertainment to The Times newspaper, so the tabloid style is understandable, but it too often distracts from the messages in the book. The other key weakness is Moran's poor skills in satire and comic writing. Much of what she writes is not funny at all. I only chuckled to myself once in the course of reading this book and now I can't even recall what that was about. Timing and a twist in context are central to humour and Moran's writing lacks both of these. While Moran is self-reflective about motherhood and the choice of having children, in other parts of the book she is far less insightful. Consumerism is not really grasped at all. In her chapter on fashion she admits that, like many women, she owns more shoes and bags than she will ever use, but never questions why this is so. She rightly points out that it is not for men - they are utterly uninterested in fashion. Women's fashion is competitive behaviour between and for women. It is wasteful and divisive, but at the same time she is opposed to 'sisterhood'. Elsewhere, Moran is critical of celebrities and the celebrity culture we feed, but says nothing about her own role in this as

a journalist. Instead, she admires Lady Gaga for her `radical agenda'. But what is radical about media and market manipulation to sell lots of product? Feminism could offer a way off the consumerist treadmill, but Moran doesn't even consider that possibility. Sexism is fundamentally about power, so Moran's idea of framing it in terms of `winners' and `losers' contains the germ of an interesting discussion. Unfortunately, it never gets off the ground. I was hoping that this book would be funny and incisive, but in the end I found it superficial and often boring to read. In her teenage years, Moran was inspired by Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch*. Decades have passed since that was published, but it is still a treasury of ideas and a salutary read, even if humour is absent (Greer is Australian). Women and men of all ages would benefit from reading and re-reading Greer's book, but Moran's audience has been short-changed by this often muddle-headed and sadly unfunny approach to being a woman.

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