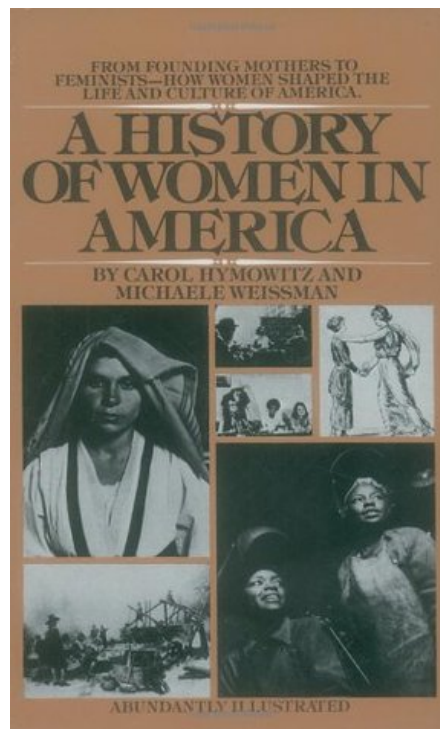




A History of Women in America

Carol Hymowitz , Michaela Weissman

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From colonial to modern-day times this narrative history, incorporating first-person accounts, traces the development of women's roles in America. Against the backdrop of major historical events and movements, the authors examine the issues that changed the roles and lives of women in our society. Includes photographs.

A History of Women in America Details

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From Reader Review A History of Women in America for online ebook

Clio says

I think this book has a good broad overview of what life was like for American women in (insert time period pre-1980s here). I've never felt like I needed feminism (which I have mentioned in other recent reviews of the books I'm trying to read to get myself an understanding of the movement), but this book made me realize how directly affected my life has been by the feminist movement that happened before I was a glimmer in a glimmer of grandma's eye, and by the cultural ideas passed down in America of what a woman's life means and should accomplish.

Just in the past few months I have been privileged to experience being both a working mother and the stay-at-home variety (hence my sudden penchant for nonfiction books). My ideas of homemaking and my role as a woman and a mother have left me feeling more natural now that I am staying at home rather than feeling constantly torn, but I also feel a bit more alone. There were sections of this book that explained a lot of my own feelings to me and made me feel less alone.

For me it was much easier to get through the first couple of chapters about women in "olden times" than the more recent discussions of women's entrances into the American political sphere and following all sorts of ~movements~ since for me that type of thing is an uninteresting distraction from the things that truly matter in life. But it still did lead me to be glad that there are women who fought and still fight for my benefit.

One of the biggest missing pieces the authors intentionally left out of this history is any account of what life was like for Native American women, but all the tribes were so different that it always feels like it will be a huge endeavor to learn about them all. Also the fact that it ends in the 70s means there is a lot more modern history of women to write about now, so hopefully I can find some more modern reads to learn further.

I am so glad I read this book because it helped me let go of the disagreeable feelings I always felt due to my inability to understand modern feminist thought. It all makes a little more sense now that I've got ahold of its roots!

Katie says

An easy history of feminism from precolonial America to the 1970s. Having never taken the time to study feminism, this gave me a great framework with which to begin.

Sarah Copenhaver says

From Colonial Times to today - this book is a true history of the accomplishment of women in the culture of America.

Amy says

This book covers from colonial times through the 1970's. As a plus, it read more like a story then a text book. There were parts that I wish went into more depth, but as it covers such a large time frame each section is rather short. I thought it was a fantastic book, that all women should read, as it is my history and yours.

Esther says

It is amazing how history changes when your focus changes. It is also amazing that when I typed this title into the search box, the first title Goodreads suggested as a match was "Holy Bible, King James Version". Bad indexing, or a philosophical statement?

Dixie Diamond says

Nice compressed general history.

Tyler Hochstetler says

A fascinating historical account of the struggles women have faced since the discovery of America. I found it to be enlightening to the persecution so many groups of people have undergone, and how some people arise out of oppression to create a better future for all.

Liz says

After years of Women Studies and no women's herstory classes, I had to fill in the gaps. This book is not a dry history book but is actually well written and reads like fiction. It's a who's who of american heroines and also gives insight to the plight of women in the develoment of our country. All ethnicites, classes and times included. I couldn't put it down once I started. downer is that it ends in 1978.

Jean Perry says

Wonderful survey history of women in America! Easy to read, covers many issues and events. I've used it many times as the basis for women's history presentations and classes

Christina says

3.5.

I liked the history but I really want to read a nonfiction empty of opinion and bias whether or not I agree with them. To make an opinion on a subject without opinion in the words, at this point is a luxury.

Kieren says

Excellent read, highly educational. Underlined my copy as I progressed.

Molly says

it was interesting but too much like a text book. not the worst summer reading book ever but very close.

Karina says

dry but factual

Book-Bosomed blog says

4.5 Stars

Have you ever considering that using your brain dries up your ovaries? Well in 1874, Harvard Medical School professor Dr. Edward Clarke certainly suggested that education was detrimental to women's reproductive health. (My two children conceived years after obtaining my Master's degree got quite a laugh out of that.)

Sadly a similar mentality may be to blame for robbing courageous women of their accomplishments. It would certainly explain why most students are taught the famous ride of Paul Revere, but not the successful ride of twenty-two year old Deborah Champion who made the same trip without getting caught!

Using a similar format as I did with my review of *Who Cooked the Last Supper?: The Women's History of the World*, here's the lowdown on this informative text on US history for women from the founding of the nation to the bra burning days of the 1970's.

Why this text is still relevant:

"...stop giving lip service to the ideas that there are no battles left to be fought for women in America" (341).

Betty Friedan said it in 1963, but I know many women, myself included, felt it in January 2017 when uninformed women took to social media to criticize and chide three million other women who took to the streets to participate in the women's march. So yes, the answer is pretty clear—this text is still very relevant and would do well to be required reading for all US students. History text books are far from universal, meaning they don't equally depict both sexes. It's books like this one that are needed to know and understand what the women of American were doing and feeling while the men were carving out rights for

themselves and making laws that benefited only one gender; how women participated in the founding and expansion of this country; how women contributed to winning wars while the men touted the victories; how women stood up for not only their cause but the plight of other disadvantaged as well.

I also think that modern women— whether stay at home mothers, working mothers, or single career women— will find places where they are able to relate to the various struggles depicted here.

What does this book cover? This book provides a detailing of the opposition—physical and ideological—against equality for women alongside the biographies of notable women suffragists. The authors state in the introduction that they hoped to balance the lives of ordinary women and extraordinary women. They also aimed to show both the oppression women faced as well as how they overcame it.

This book is organized into 19 chapters under four subsections. Topics addressed include: Life for women in the early colonies (Ch.1); religion & law (Ch. 2); women's roles in the American Revolution (Ch. 3); the conditions of life of slave women and roles of white women during slavery (Ch. 4); 19th century new roles attitudes towards women (Ch. 5); notable early feminist (Ch. 6); the lives of notable early movement organizers alongside the struggles they faced (Ch. 7); the life and conditions for women in the factory system of the 1800's (Ch. 8); women's roles and contributions to the Civil War as well as the injustices suffered by black women after the war (Ch.9); the complicated relationship feminist experienced with abolitionists during Reconstruction as well with proponents of controversial and progressive ideas regarding free love and sexual freedom (Ch. 10); women's lives in the West and its effect on suffrage (Ch. 11); life for immigrant women and families (Ch. 12); women's involvement in social reforms including some of the ironies of their organizations causes (Ch. 13); women's labor force & the conditions thereof in the suffrage fight years (Ch.14); the final organization of women leading up to the right to vote, varying attitudes surrounding it, and interest groups against it (Ch. 15); changes in sexual attitudes post suffrage and the birth control movement (Ch. 16); jobs for women in the post suffrage years and the effects of the Great Depression and the world wars on that (Ch. 17); social roles of women—middle class, working class, and African Americans—in the 1950's (Ch. 18); and new goals and attitudes towards women's liberation in the 1960's and '70's (Ch. 19).

Shortcomings: The authors acknowledge in the introduction that there are omissions in the text as far as coverage for Native American women, African-American women from 1880-1920, women in the arts, and certain professions.

Published in 1978, the discussion of birth control is outdated. The history of it is still important to know. Women's health care, in general, is one topic I felt should have been expanded on. Though it's addressed sparsely throughout, a full chapter would have been useful. Whenever women's health care is addressed or included, its discussion is lacking. For example, S. Weir Mitchell is mentioned, but the detrimental effects of his rest cure are not adequately explained or expanded on. My women's literature studies were far more informative on this controversial treatment. In fact, while Charlotte Perkins Gilman is mentioned, her famous piece "The Yellow Wallpaper" isn't even named.

While the book does a good job of providing the background and biographies for famous women (including but not limited to Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony) associated with suffrage rights, or the first wave of the women's movement, notable second wave participants (such as Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem to name a few) are not given the same background paragraphs.

What Readers Might Find Interesting: The women's movement including the fight for suffrage was not unified front. Many women of the times didn't support it, and even the ones who did were divided on things from organization to ideology.

How I felt reading this book: I nearly celebrated myself when they finally won the right to vote after roughly 75 years and many chapters of detailing their obstacles and setbacks. Every woman in the US should read this book if for nothing else than to understand the long arduous process and decades that women put into the fight allowing women today to have the rights and opportunities that they do. It should also serve as a motivation to not give up the continued fight to retain and advance women's rights.

Is this a feminist text? By definition (cited here from Merriam-Webster dictionary) and largely from a scholarly theorist perspective feminism is "the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes as well as organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests." This book details women's history in the US addressing the fight for political, economic, and social equality. So yes, it's a feminist text.

Bear in mind that over the years the term feminism has taken on a variety of negative connotations (often the work of its opposition in an attempt to discredit it). The later chapters actually touch upon those disparaging assertions that feminist are angry man haters. I think the response voiced by a feminist demonstrator aptly sums up the true position of feminist protestors and activists:

"What I want to cut off is the power men exercise over women. And if a man associates that power with his genitals, that's his problem." (356).

Themes: Despite differences in class, race, and culture, there is a prevalent theme of loneliness and struggle for identity.

Triggers: There are mentions of rape and violence against women but it's not graphically described.

Genre: Non-fiction/US History/ Women's History

Historical Accuracy: I am not a historian, but from my previous knowledge of the subject, the majority of the book appears sound.

How I got this book/Why I read this book/My background:

I ordered this book (paperback edition) from Amazon a few months ago after browsing several books on the subject for consideration for my kids' educational studies. I read it first and made a chapter by chapter study guide for our lessons. I have a background in English literature with a concentration in women's literature and feminist criticism so the general subject matter wasn't previously unfamiliar.

Anne says

Got this one for Christmas from Mags...
