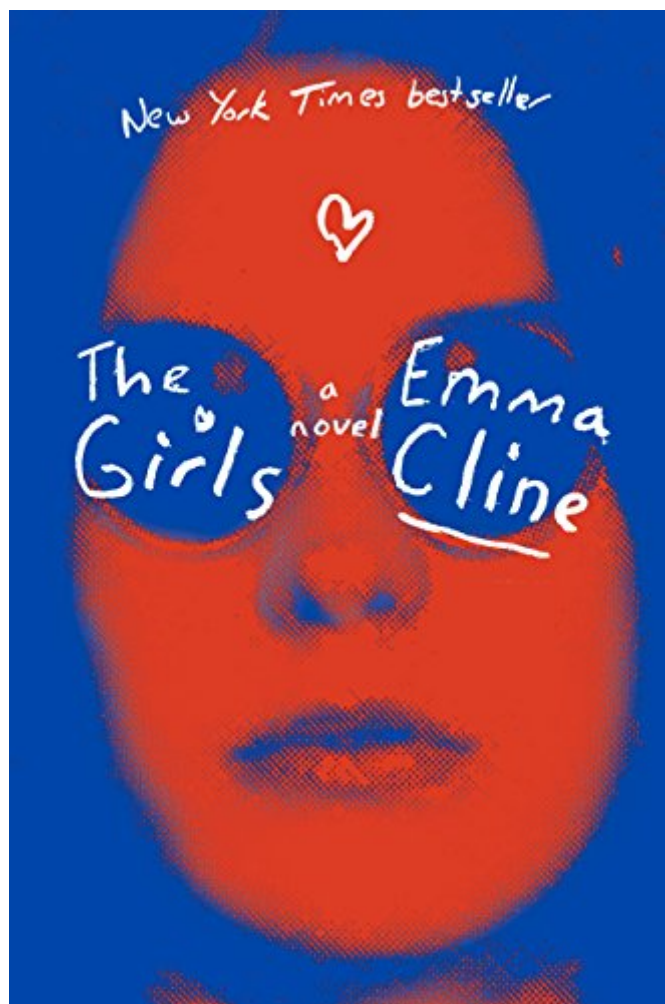


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The Girls: A Novel



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's *The Virgin Suicides* and Jennifer Egan's *A Visit from the Goon Squad*. 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 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? Hmmmâ letâ™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 motherâ™s pathetic life. So what does a misunderstood, loner fourteen year old do in California in the summer of â™69? Why, she joins a cult of course. But not just any cult â “ THE CULT of all cults. Although Charles Manson and his Family are never specifically mentioned, readers can safely assume thatâ™s exactly who takes in this little lost, pathetic and misunderstood rich girl. The book starts off with Evie as a âœmiddle-aged woman with varicose veinsâ • (because all middle-aged women have them, right?) cowering in her rental when she hears a noise. Turns out itâ™s just the ownerâ™s son coming to party with his girlfriend. The kid recognizes Evie as âœthat girl from the cultâ • (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 greatâ if theyâ™re done well and done sparingly. However, the writing here is so overloaded with them that it completely mangles the story.

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.

The late 1960s, Northern California. Evie Lloyd, only 14, is adrift, feeling disconnected from her parents, clinging to one close friend she doesn't even like that much, when she spots The Girls. A group of laughing, clustered, independent young girls, in a public park, long-hair and don't care, rummaging through a garbage bin for food. One girl shoots one glance back and Evie connects. In this strange girl, Evie sees something: certainty. Identity. Confidence of who she is and where she belongs. Evie is drawn into this cult, and to their elusive leader, Russell, the manic, charismatic, vessel into which all the girls pour themselves. In joining this group, is Evie found? Or is she lost? It's impossible to read this book without thinking about the Manson Family; the entire cult is a transparent re-imagining of the Manson family, such that it seems clear that the only reason the names were changed were to free the author to create scenes and characters without legal ramifications. The character of Russell looks like Charlie Manson, has all the personality traits and physical characteristics specifically ascribed to Manson, down to his obsession and appeal to B-level musicians and his own aspiring music. Even the specifics of Manson's downfall - his failed recording session - are related here. And of course, the supporting players of the Manson family, all those young girls, are the stars of the show: Emma Cline is asking, who were these girls? Who would leave a family to follow such a clearly deranged man? How do you fall into such a trap, and how - if at all - can you find your way out? It's a fascinating question, and much of the book is fascinating. The writing is so clean and clear that it's like reading a diary written by a girl at the time.

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