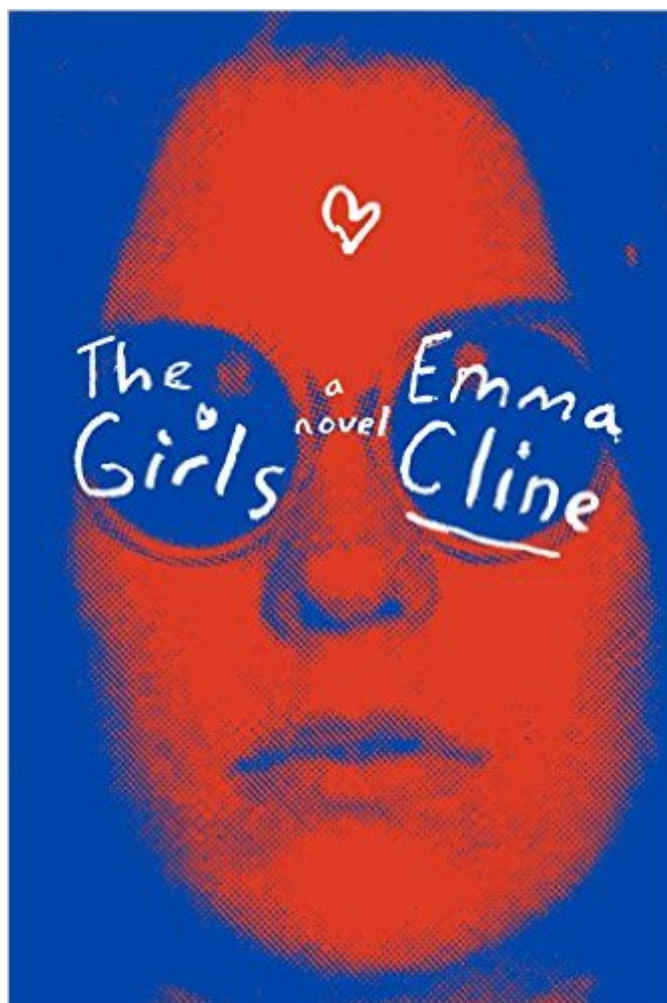


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The Girls: A Novel (Random House Large Print)



Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • 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*. 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. Praise for *The Girls* • Spellbinding . . . A seductive and arresting coming-of-age story hinged on Charles Manson, told in sentences at times so finely wrought they could almost be worn as jewelry . . . [Emma] Cline gorgeously maps the topography of one loneliness-ravaged adolescent heart. She gives us the fictional truth of a girl chasing danger beyond her comprehension, in a Summer of Longing and Loss. • "The New York Times Book Review" • [The Girls] reimagines] the American novel . . . Like Mary Gaitskill's *Veronica* or Lorrie Moore's *Who Will Run the Frog Hospital?*, *The Girls* captures a defining friendship in its full humanity with a touch of rock-memoir, tell-it-like-it-really-was attitude. • "Vogue" • Debut novels like this are rare, indeed. . . . The most remarkable quality of this novel is Cline's ability to articulate the anxieties of adolescence in language that's gorgeously poetic without mangling the authenticity of a teenager's consciousness. The adult's melancholy reflection and the girl's swelling impetuosity are flawlessly braided together. . . . For a story that traffics in the lurid notoriety of the Manson murders, *The Girls* is an extraordinary act of restraint. With the maturity of a writer twice her age, Cline has written a wise novel that's never showy: a quiet, seething confession of yearning and terror. • "The Washington Post" • Emma Cline has an unparalleled eye for the intricacies of girlhood, turning the stuff of myth into something altogether more intimate. She reminds us that behind so many of our culture's fables exists a girl: unseen, unheard, angry. This book will break your heart and blow your mind. • "Lena Dunham" • Emma Cline's first novel positively hums with fresh, startling, luminous prose. *The Girls* announces the

arrival of a thrilling new voice in American fiction. "Jennifer Egan doesn't know which is more amazing, Emma Cline's understanding of human beings or her mastery of language." —Mark Haddon, New York Times bestselling author of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*

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? 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 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 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.

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. It's completely convincing. You feel like you are inside the Manson family compound, the rotting food, the lice-ridden children, the insanity just below the surface, and the hypnotic appeal. You can feel how a girl like Evie would get drawn in... until you can't. For me, the book lost some steam about two-thirds of the way through. The closer we get to the murders, the less clear it all becomes. If the question Ms. Cline is asking is "how did this happen?" then the answer starts to feel like "I don't know." Russell's appeal is clear at first - he is charismatic, he "sees" the Evie who feels invisible, he offers confidence when she is uncertain, he offers belonging when she feels lost. You can see how she would overlook the uglier parts of the family. This all works. Until it becomes time to descend into the true madness, and then both Evie and the author pull back. For someone like me - who read the stories of the Manson family growing up - the appeal of this book was to get a new perspective on "why it happened" or "how it happened." And that is clearly the story the author set out to tell. But the strong set up fades; the strong characters get blurry; and finally - without any spoilers - the book kind of ends, with the climactic events taking place off screen, so to speak; and with the dramatic follow up (which in so many ways seems like it should be the crux of the story - how do you find your way back?) also being quickly handled in just a few pages. What was strong and clear and compelling up front - the attraction of a cult, the sense of time and place - gets cloudier and cloudier as the story progresses, until by the end, I was left feeling a bit dissatisfied and disappointed, like the book had posed some questions and then never answered them. An interesting read, if you like strong writing and have an interest in the Manson family; but for me, ultimately, a bit unsatisfying.

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