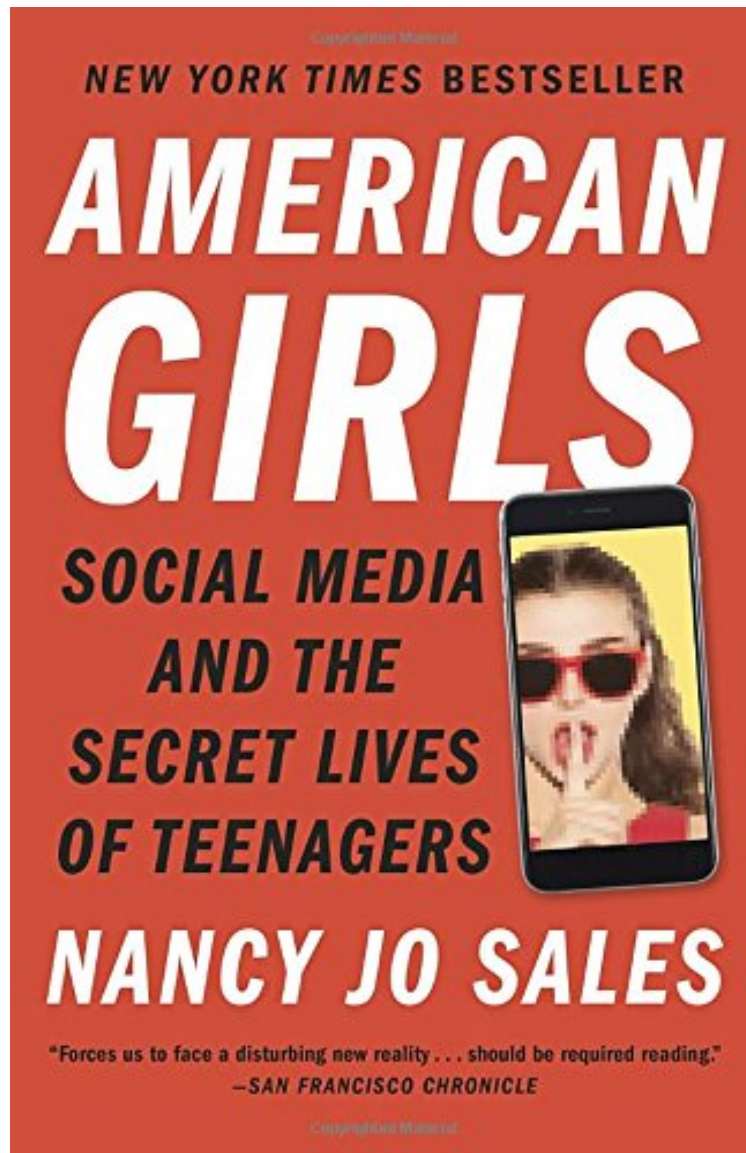


American Girls: Social Media and the Secret Lives of Teenagers

Nancy Jo Sales

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Nancy Jo Sales : American Girls: Social Media and the Secret Lives of Teenagers before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised American Girls: Social Media and the Secret Lives of Teenagers:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Must Read By Customer This book is the most important book I have read in a long time. I haven't been able to talk about anything else while reading it, and am truly sad that it is over. Nancy Jo Sales' journey across America to examine the effects that social media has on teenage girls from the

ages 13-19, is terrifying. She paints a clear portrayal of why girls feel the need to share every waking moment with their followers, and why they feel that they owe their bodies to boys. She states that girls are "in need of a set of critical tools with which to evaluate their experiences as girls and women in the digital age". Navigating social media needs to be a conversation had in every classroom, and at every dinner table. If you have kids, like kids, think that kids deserve to be safe and happy, you need to read this book. You'll hear stories that will break your heart, and realize that now is the time to lift girls up to ensure that they are not lost in the current political narrative. It starts from birth, and we can reverse negative external factors with good parenting and proper sexual education. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I recommend parents read it By Customer Have got to say this is a very detailed and insightful book as to what American teen girls go through. I recommend parents read it, as well as educators and anyone in the mental health field. Only reason I didn't give it a five star rating is because I can read seemingly 20 pages where I'm into it, but then the author feels she has to go on some tangent to explain to me things from decade ago (the history of pornography, the history of the camera dating back to the early 1900's). I'd go to a history book for that. Disrupts the flow of the book. Outside of those historical pieces though, the book is very informative. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Painful but ESSENTIAL information for parents of tweens and teens By Blake Jennings I am a Teaching Pastor at a large evangelical church in Texas. I read this book after hearing Nancy speak at a Technology and Faith conference, and it inspired crucial conversations and sermons in our church. I can't recommend it highly enough for parents of both girl and boy tweens and teens. We've buried our heads in the sand long enough. We need to understand the dangers our children face in the online world BEFORE we hand them internet connected devices so we can help them navigate this brave new world in a safe and healthy way. Nancy's book provides the data and stories we need to make informed parental decisions. Her book is brutally and explicitly honest, and therefore not appropriate for younger children (the language and stories are rough). But that brutal honesty is exactly what parents need to face. May this book inspire life-giving conversations in your own home, ministry, or church.

A New York Times Bestseller Award-winning Vanity Fair writer Nancy Jo Sales crisscrossed the country talking to more than two hundred girls between the ages of thirteen and nineteen about their experiences online and off. They are coming of age online in a hypersexualized culture that has normalized extreme behavior, from pornography to the casual exchange of nude photographs; a culture rife with a virulent new strain of sexism; a culture in which teenagers are spending so much time on technology and social media that they are not developing basic communication skills. The dominant force in the lives of girls coming of age in America today is social media: Instagram, Whisper, Vine, Youtube, Kik, Ask.fm, Tinder. Provocative, explosive, and urgent, *American Girls* will ignite much-needed conversation about how we can help our daughters and sons negotiate the new social and sexual norms that govern their lives.

"*American Girls* is probably one of the most urgent conversation starters I've read in some time." Psychology Today Sales digs into every aspect of girls' online lives, revealing myriad disturbing details. If you have a teenage daughter, read *American Girls*. Have her read it, too. Newsday Adult readers will be shocked [they] might be on Facebook and Twitter, but they probably haven't even heard of most of the apps that teens use, let alone how they use them. What Sales makes clear is just how prevalent social media is in the life of an American teenager. The New York Post "Based on interviews with hundreds of teens from 13 to 19, this exploration of the hypersexualized, social-media-ruled world girls grow up in today is eye-opening and sobering." People Social media is life; social media destroys life. For *American Girls*, Ms. Sales spent two and a half years investigating this paradox, and she's exquisitely unobtrusive as she does it. Conversations that are not safe for adults seem to open like apps under her fingertips. She has sophisticated methods of infiltration. The Wall Street Journal "Sales forces us to face a disturbing new reality in a book that should be required reading for parents, teachers, school administrators, legislators and the boys club of Silicon Valley." The San Francisco Chronicle "Sales painstakingly draws on scholarly research and numerous interviews with girls from New Jersey to California to offer a harrowing glimpse into a world where self-esteem, friendships and sexuality play out, and are defined by the parameters of social media." USA Today In her new book *American Girls: Social Media and the Secret Lives of Teenagers*, readers are afforded the opportunity to understand what is really going on in the lives of teenagers, especially our girls. .. This book stands apart from other books targeted at understanding the concerns and current plight of teenage girls. A must read for all parents. Examiner "This book is an ice-cold, important wake-up call." Kirkus "This is an important book... It's an essential read if you have teenagers or tweens in your life... I highly recommend *American Girls* for anyone who wants to understand how our ongoing revelation is playing out for teenagers." WebInk Now This intelligent, history-grounded investigation by journalist Sales (The Bling Ring) finds dismaying evidence that social media has fostered a culture "very hostile" to girls in which sexism, harassment, and cyberbullying have become the "new normal," along with the "constant chore" of tailoring one's image for public consumption and approval. Parents, educators, administrators, and the purveyors of social media platforms should all take note of this thoughtful, probing, and urgent work. Publishers Weekly *Starred *About the

Author NANCY JO SALES is an award-winning journalist and author who has written for Vanity Fair, New York, Harper's Bazaar, and many other publications. She is known for her reporting on youth culture and crime and for her profiles of pop-culture icons. She won a 2011 Front Page Award for Best Magazine Feature and a 2010 Mirror Award for Best Profile, Digital Media. Her 2013 book, *The Bling Ring: How a Gang of Fame-Obsessed Teens Ripped Off Hollywood and Shocked the World*, tells the true story behind the Sofia Coppola film *The Bling Ring*, which was based on Sales's 2010 Vanity Fair piece *The Suspects Wore Louboutins*. Born in West Palm Beach, Florida, Sales graduated summa cum laude from Yale in 1986. She became a contributing editor at Vanity Fair in 2000. She has a daughter, Zazie, and lives in the East Village in New York City.

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Chapter One

13 Montclair, New Jersey

SEND NOODZ.

The boy sent the message in the middle of the day, when she was walking home from school. He sent it via direct message on Instagram, in the same shaky, childlike font as the new Drake album (*IF YOU'RE READING THIS IT'S TOO LATE*). Sophia stared at her phone. Wait what??? she responded. No answer. She continued along the empty streets. It was a warm spring day and the wide green lawns were full of blooming trees. Montclair was a pretty place, and it was safe, so a lot of kids walked home from school. She'd been with friends, but they had already peeled off and gone inside their houses, so she was all alone. She hoped to see someone she knew, hopefully a girl she could tell: Oh my God, you know Zack, he asked me for nudes! And: What should I do? But there was no one around. She thought about texting someone most things, observations, gossip, jokes, were shared right away, but this seemed like something new. Something almost . . . private. Secret. That rare thing, something no one else could know. She had heard of boys asking girls for nudes before, but it had never happened to her. This was her first time. She didn't know how to respond, or if she should respond. Should she be outraged? Shocked? Her first reaction was: I was like, Whoa, he finds me attractive? That's kind of strange. I never knew he found me attractive . . . She thought about the boy. He was thirteen, the same age as she, a boy from her eighth-grade class. He was a boy like other boys she talked loud and rough and wore baggy shorts and snapback hats and had a swaggering demeanor like Justin Bieber, whom he probably would have dissed. He was cute, but kind of gross. She wondered if he liked her. He never likes anything of mine on Instagram, but why would he ask me that if he hadn't been thinking about me? If I wasn't in his mind? Boys aren't gonna come out and just say, I like you, cause they don't do that. They have, like, their own language . . . When she got to her house, a Victorian house with a wraparound porch, the place where boys had once come calling for girls, she went upstairs to her room. Plugged her phone into the charger. It was almost out of juice. She'd been up most of the night texting under the covers so if her mother walked in she wouldn't see her texting friends in her group chat who were still awake, sending words and emojis and giggling over inside jokes. And then during the day she had texted all through school. She woke up tired a lot of the time, but she said, I just drink a Red Bull. She went into the bathroom and looked in the mirror. Peered at herself. Pursed her lips. Stuck her tongue out to the side, Miley-style. Tossed her hair. She knew that she was attractive, so she wasn't all that surprised that the boy had asked her for nudes. I get, like, a hundred likes on all my pictures and people comment, like, Gorgeous . . . But she wondered what it would be like if someone actually had a naked picture of her, and she wondered what that picture would be. Not like I was gonna do it oh my God, no but if you did, like, what would you send so it looked good, and not ratchet? She wondered if the boy had thought about kissing her. If he was going to be her first kiss. She'd been wondering what it would be like to kiss a boy, to have one want you so bad he would take you into the park or even his room and press his lips against yours, wrapping his arms around you, holding you close. She heard her phone ding from inside the bathroom. A text alert. She ran to see. It was the boy, responding to her message: I really need this cause I have to win a bet I won't show anyone, he wrote. What serious who else did you ask, she texted, her heart beating fast. nobody lol I need it from you please Why so there's this high school kid I think he's a senior who hooks me up with lqbooze he said hell get us as much as we need cause he's rich if me and jack show that we can get nudes no disrespect im just asking you cause you're the prettiest girl and the best person to ask She stared at the phone, thought about it a moment, and wrote: lol New York, New York

At the Barnes Noble on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan in May 2015, Kim Kardashian was launching her latest book, *Selfish*, a collection of selfies and nudes. It was more than 400 pages of Kim staring into the camera, pursing her lips, looking sultry and suggestive. It was Kim naked in a bathroom mirror, naked in a bedroom mirror, clutching her naked breasts, leaning naked over a bathroom sink, sticking her famous behind up in the air; Kim leaning naked over a bed in the grainy dark, Kim in lingerie and bathing suits, lounging beside electric-blue swimming pools, doing leg shots. Oh my God oh my God oh my God oh my God, said a thirteen-year-old girl waiting in the line snaking through the store. There were pictures of Kim from 2006, when she was still an L.A. party girl and friend of Paris Hiltons, to 2014, after she had become one of the most famous women in the world. In those eight years, which had seen the introduction of the iPhone in 2007, and the global spread of social media through mobile technology, Kim had become social media's biggest star. In 2006, she had just 856 friends on Myspace where she announced in her profile, Im a PRINCESS and you're not so there! and now she had 31 million followers on Instagram, second only to Beyonc, whom she would eclipse in a few months, climbing to number one. She had 34 million followers on Twitter, where she posted more selfies daily, most of which got thousands of favorites and retweets. I love her, said another girl in the store. What was the meaning of Kim Kardashian? Why was she here, and why wouldn't she go? Why did anyone care about her, and how had she become so ubiquitous?

Throughout the years of her ascendance, people had been trying to figure this out. Some seemed furious at her success, which in 2015 included TV shows, endorsement deals, makeup, fragrances, clothing lines, one of the most popular of all mobile apps in which a Kim avatar showed you how to become as famous as she and a net worth of \$85 million. Still, she was called vain, shallow, frivolous, egotistical, materialistic, and many other more vulgar insults in endless media pieces and online rants. I have never heard more anger and dismay than when we announced that the people you are about to see were on our list, Barbara Walters told viewers before airing a segment on the Kardashian family in her 10 Most Fascinating People show of 2011. You are all often described as famous for being famous, Walters leveled at sisters Kim, Khlo, Kourtney, and their mother, Kris, who sat before her in sleek couture. You don't really act, you don't sing, you don't dance, you don't have any forgive-me-any talent. The Kardashians tried, in their mild way, but they couldn't quite seem to explain to Walters, who had come of age at a different time, that this was actually the point: talent didn't matter much in becoming famous anymore. Or perhaps what served as talent had transformed. It was now enough to know how to become famous purely for the sake of fame. She's amazing, said another girl in Barnes Noble. The Kardashians, a family of American girls, had come on the scene, swept forward by the gown of Princess Kim, in a kind of perfect cultural storm: there was the fascination with fame that had always danced at the edges of American identity, and now, with the explosion of a celebrity news industry fueled by Internet blogs and TMZ, had taken over the aspirational longings of the young. A 2007 survey by the Pew Research Center found that 51 percent of eighteen- to twenty-five-year-olds said their most or second most important life goal was to become famous. Sixty-four percent said their number one goal was to become rich. A girl waiting in line for Kim said, I want her life. There was reality television, which stoked a thirst for more and more intimate details of the lives of celebrities and newly minted reality show stars. And there was princess culture. For a generation of girls raised on the Disney corporations multibillion-dollar line of so-called princess products, the five sisters of Keeping Up with the Kardashians were real-life princesses who lived in a Calabasas, California, castle, unabashedly focused on the pursuit of beauty treatments, expensive fun, and luxury brands—the latter a national fixation spawned in the luxury revolution of the last thirtysomething years, in which most of the wealth of the country had traveled into the hands of a few, with the rest of the population looking on longingly as the beneficiaries of a new Gilded Age flaunted their high-end stuff. And entertainment media, from Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous to Keeping Up with the Kardashians, provided them with ample opportunities to do just that. I get letters from little girls begging me to adopt them, Kim once told a reporter. The Kardashian lifestyle was the fulfillment of a new American dream that had been embraced by many girls and young women, unsurprisingly enough, at a time when everything around them supported it as an ideal: it was to be beautiful, famous, and rich, and to have amazing clothes, bags, and shoes and tens of millions of followers on social media. It was to get tens or even hundreds of thousands of likes on all your selfies. I want to take a selfie with her, a girl in Barnes Noble said excitedly. Behind the Kardashians lifestyle, there was a mother, but it wasn't Kim; it was Kris Jenner, Kims own mother and tireless manager, who took 10 percent of all her daughters incomes. My job is to take my familys fifteen minutes of fame and turn it into thirty, Kris once declared. That her familys fifteen minutes had begun with a leaked sex tape of her daughter and the singer Ray J didn't seem to give her pause; in fact, it was just after the release of the tape that Kris started shopping her familys reality show, a move she likened to [making] some lemonade out of these lemons. The scandal which Paris Hilton had already endured wasn't much of a scandal anymore. Porn stars were writing best-selling books and appearing on The Oprah Winfrey Show. For the biggest, darkest cloud in the perfect storm that brought Kim Kardashian rising out of the ocean of wannabe celebrities like Venus on a flip phone was the widespread consumption and normalization of online porn. In 2014, Pornhub reported in its Year in that Kim was number eight in the top ten most popular porn stars in the world. Kim, youre doing amazing, sweetie, Kris said in an iconic moment on Keeping Up with the Kardashians, in which Kim, naked except for jewelry and heels, is on her knees, arching her back, and posing as a photographer snaps pictures as does Kris, with a little personal camera. The moment is striking in its depiction of another element of the cultural tempest that delivered us Kim: the hypersexualization of American girls and women. She's hot, said a boy waiting in line to see her. Is Kim Kardashian a feminist role model? asked Jezebel in 2013. The website answered no and nooooooooooooooooooooo. But already the worm of popular opinion was starting to turn. Kim was being touted as a businesswoman. She was being called powerful and didn't achieving power, any kind of power, by any means, make a woman a feminist? So blogs and think pieces argued. Was it Kims marriage to a powerful music industry player and self-described creative genius, Kanye West, or their joint appearance on the cover of Vogue in 2014 a nod from establishment media moving Kim onto the A-list that began to mute her haters? Or was it that Kims true talent, her skill at using social media—the real secret of her success, all along—was finally being recognized for the power it commanded? Something about Kim is very appealing to digital natives, Re/code founder Kara Swisher told Rolling Stone in 2015. Yes, and that something was becoming very clear: Kim successfully used the technological tools now available to almost everyone to get what everyone wanted. What she'd been doing relentlessly since the introduction of smartphones and before, now everybody was doing—using social media to self-promote, to craft an idealized online self; and girls coming of age in the second decade of the twenty-first century were using it to present a sexualized self. My little cousin, she's thirteen, and she posts such inappropriate pictures on Instagram and boys post sexual comments, and she's like, Thank you. Its child porn, and everyones looking

at it on their iPhones in the cafeteria, said a seventeen-year-old girl in New York. Presiding over the pornification of American life was Princess Kim, who had been crowned the Selfie Queen. Posting selfies, once thought to be embarrassingly narcissistic, was now as common as brushing ones teeth or putting on makeup, the subject of many of the selfies in Kims new book. For the last and loudest thunderclap in this perfect storm, the precipitous rise of narcissism in the American psyche charted in studies since the 1970s, and accelerated by social media, according to psychologists was personified and glamorized in the image of a dewy, contoured Kim staring into her iPhone screen. Slate called Selfish riveting. The Atlantic, in a review titled You Win, Kim Kardashian, gushed, In declaring herself, against all common sense, as art, she mocks and dares and provokes. She rejects what came before. And with her candor about who she is and what it takes to make her that way, she might also, against all odds, move us forward. Whatever that might mean. At the Barnes Noble in Manhattan, Kim, then thirty-four, was wearing a tight, high-necked white lace dress and glistening with products. She sat behind a table, signing books for her hundreds of awaiting fans. Youve inspired me to be hot and famous, a teenage girl told her, blushing. Aw, said Kim. I love you. Though there had been a ban on selfies at the signing, Kim stood up and took a selfie with the girl. They posed together, staring into the girls smartphone, pursing their lips. You are a role model for my daughters, said someones mother.