

Bad Feminist Summary



1-Sentence-Summary: *Bad Feminist* will show you a new way of looking at equality by revealing some not so common ideas about race, gender, and feminism in the United States.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Have you ever wanted to be a feminist, but felt you didn't quite fit into the mold that you feel they fit into? When you picture it, you probably think of *essential feminism*.

As white, cis, heterosexual women were able to have their views heard in public, they championed this movement. This version of feminism has strict guidelines you follow to be considered a good feminist like rejecting any objectification of women.

But what about the rest of women out there? What about women of color, those who identify as LGBTQIA+, or others?

Roxane Gay is here to tell you to join the movement and be a feminist in your own way. Be a "bad" feminist. In *Bad Feminist: Essays* Gay explores the topic of feminism and how it can come in many forms and have many contradictions. As feminists, we don't let men tell us what to think. So why should we let women tell us how to be a feminist?

Here are 3 lessons I got from this book:

1. Reality TV is counterproductive to the strides women have made in modern society.
2. As a society we have increasingly desensitized to violence against women.

3. In the US, systemic racism and sexism is still prevalent.

Let's dive right in and learn from *Bad Feminist*!

Lesson 1: It may be entertaining, but reality TV dehumanizes women.

Admit it, at one point or another you've probably been watching TV and seen at least a little bit of a reality TV show. These shows suck people in with dramatic confrontations between contestants and often exaggerated romantic connections. But the biggest problem, perhaps, is that they perpetuate damaging stereotypes about women.

Rather than showing real, three-dimensional women, they often portray exaggerated versions that reduce women to a few basic stereotypes. Just look at any reality dating competition where women compete for a bachelor's attention. They all clamor for his attention and seem to be totally infatuated while the man seems like he couldn't care less.

In addition, they portray these women as the worst versions of themselves. They stir up drama and can't seem to get along with other women. **When we reduce women to caricatures, it basically gives the audience permission to make fun of them and tear them apart.** The worse they behave, the better the ratings. People enjoy watching this because seeing others make bad decisions makes them feel better about their own lives.

Makeover shows and those that focus on outward appearance are also damaging. Surgically enhancing female bodies or putting women through harsh workout and diet regimens to achieve an ideal women's body might make for good TV. But these shows tend to completely ignore their internal experience and inner value by focusing on appearance only.

Lesson 2: More and more, we are becoming desensitized when it comes to sexual violence and aggression against women.

Rape is a horrible crime that is often both physically and emotionally damaging for victims. Unfortunately, TV and movies love to add it into storylines for drama. This exposure through media desensitizes us to the horrors of rape culture.

Just think of the popular TV show *Law and Order: SVU*. They have had so many storylines about rape that they have to make each case contain more interesting or gruesome details to keep things interesting. **A story of a man "just" raping a woman isn't seen as shocking or horrifying enough anymore, showing how we are slowly becoming desensitized.**

But it's not just TV. Sexual violence against women is so common we refer to it as "rape culture." This idea almost expects a woman will get assaulted at one point or another. TV and movies are partly to blame. But the way the media reports doesn't help either. The news has been known to focus on the perpetrator rather than the victim and how it affects them.

Politicians also have not been good at helping the cause. Just consider former US Representative Todd Akin's comments about what he called "legitimate rape." Not only did he imply that not all rape cases are legitimate, but he also made comments that if it were really rape the woman's body would reject pregnancy. Not only is this false, but not calling rape what it is only perpetuates rape culture.

Lesson 3: The United States is still very much dealing with the deeply troubling problems of institutional racism and sexism.

It seems as if we are hearing about another mass shooting almost weekly in the US. In fact, you're far more likely to die in one of these random acts of violence than in an act of terrorism. And for some reason, we don't ever consider attacks by white men to be terrorism. **Somehow, there always seems to be an explanation for why a white man would become violent.**

When *Rolling Stone* did a story about one of the Boston Bombers, the story seemed empathetic towards the young white man, calling him a boy next door. The journalist referred to him as a normal and nice guy and searched for an explanation for what went wrong to lead him to this point.

Black teen Trayvon Martin, on the other hand, didn't receive the same treatment when he was tragically shot by a police officer even though he was unarmed. All the boy had on him was Skittles and iced tea. When Fox News reported the incident, they actually attempted to explain how he could've used the Skittles and iced tea as a weapon.

The outlook is also bleak for the equality of women in the United States. Women's reproductive rights and access to birth control are mostly under control of politicians, most of whom are white men. Not to mention other struggles such as pay inequality and lack of access to maternity leave.

This is why Gay encourages all women, especially those who are of color or who don't fit into the feminist stereotype, to be bad feminists with her. Only once society recognizes the disparities women of all backgrounds face can we work to fix them.

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Bad Feminist Review

Gay's writing is entertaining, relateable and easy to read. But if you are looking for a more substantial book and not essays on various feminist topics, *Bad Feminist* isn't for you. Lots of interesting ideas here for anyone who wants a light read about modern feminism. I definitely do agree that we need a more inclusive form of feminism.

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Who would I recommend the Bad Feminist summary to?

The 62-year-old man who is sexist, the 27-year-old that would like to get a better idea of the current state of racial and sexual equality in America, and anyone that's curious about how to make the world a more fair place for all.