

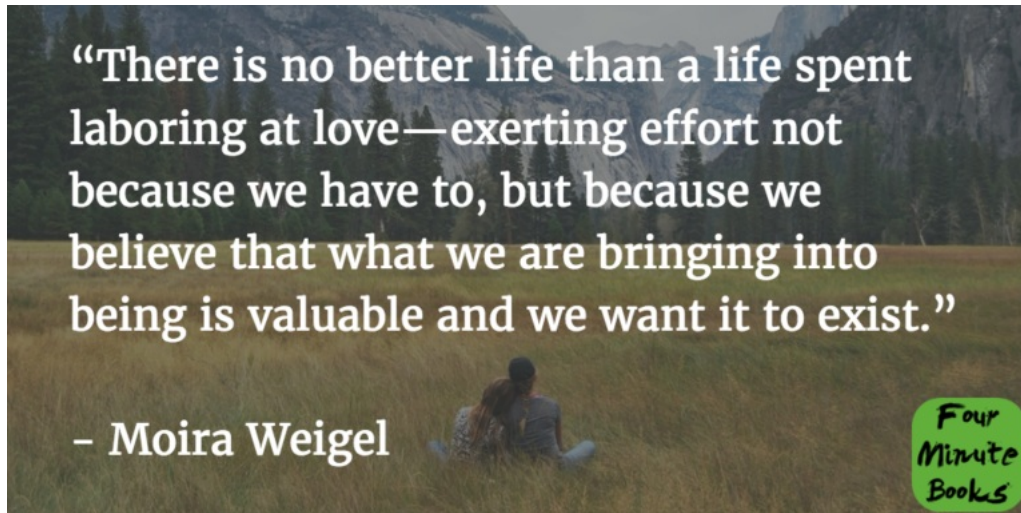
Labor Of Love Summary

 fourminutebooks.com/labor-of-love-summary

1-Sentence-Summary: *Labor of Love illustrates the history of modern dating as we know it, starting from its origins in the late 1800s all the way to the dating websites and apps we know today.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



There's always something to complain about when looking at the current state of dating. Maybe you didn't want an arranged marriage in 1884. Some will have thought it sucked you had to make lots of money to be attractive in the 1920s. And not everyone was happy with the whole "free love" thing in the 60s.

But the fact of the matter is: Dating is going to be what it's going to be. Whatever era you're alive in, you're just gonna have to deal with it and find your way anyway.

As I've been making an effort to bring back some of the long-lost old-time courtship and chivalry to dating myself (no thanks to Tinder), I thought learning more about the history of relationships made sense. Moira Weigel, a PhD candidate at Yale has written just the book for it. It's called *Labor of Love: The Invention of Dating*.

Here are my 3 favorite takeaways:

1. When women started moving to cities during the Industrial Revolution, dating as we know it first began.
2. There's a reason you think it's important what people wear, and it dates back about 100 years.
3. Netflix 'n' chill isn't new. It goes back to the 50s.

Whatever you're trying to master, it always pays to learn about a field's history. Dating is no different, so let's go!

Lesson 1: Dating was invented when women started moving to cities.

Out of all things, the one you'd least expect to yield a big influence over dating is probably economics. Yet, without some economic developments, we wouldn't even be dating at all. The Industrial Revolution with its shift towards big factories and lots of manual labor required a lot of workers in one place. The factories huddled together, creating infrastructure around them and big cities were born.

Women moving to the city worked mostly as:

1. Factory workers.
2. Sales personnel.
3. House servants.

Before then, relationships were in the hands of parents and relatives, the matchmakers of the 19th century. **But now, both men and women were out of the house, independent and had a chance to meet one another.**

Because few people could afford spending money on entertainment like a night at the theater or a restaurant, let alone big apartments that weren't crowded with 7-8 people, most dating was done in public: people snuck away some quiet, romantic time in parks or dark alleyways.

The wealthier middle class "called" on each other instead. Men knocked at a woman's door, a servant would take the name and if the lady was interested, the two would spend some quality time with each other – under strict supervision, of course!

Lesson 2: Consumption became a central part of dating in the 1920s – and it still is today.

The second group from above set up the next big shift in dating. It's the reason dating sites like OkCupid ask for your brand preferences before your personality traits and why Tinder thrives on judging people's looks. The women working as sales reps in shops in the early 1900s, so-called *shopgirls*, infused dating with a big chunk of consumption.

Here's how:

Since only rich people could afford to shop, working in a shop was a good way to meet a rich man and turn him into a rich husband. But how do you convince someone who's three standard deviations away on the social status ladder to go out with you?

You show him you've got the same level of class as the women he's used to dating. **The shopgirls soon mimicked rich women so perfectly in their behavior and exclusive taste that it was hard to tell the difference between who was shopping in a store, and who was working there.**

This new model of judging people based upon their taste and consumer preferences stuck, and it still influences us today: we check what kind of movies, brands and artists people like on Facebook, and a big part of first impressions is how people dress, including what the label says.

Lesson 3: Today's hookup culture started all the way back in the 50s.

Being a parent in the 1950s wasn't a lot of fun, I imagine. All you knew dating was for is finding a spouse and now your children start telling you they're "going steady" with their latest girlfriend or boyfriend.

While technically, going steady meant dating, **it also meant there was a decent chance you'd sleep with each other – or at the very least wouldn't stop at kissing and hugging.**

The younger generation saw this as a ritual for coming of age, much more than a lifetime commitment to a single-person and so premarital sex became more and more accepted. By the mid-50s, going steady was such a huge trend that children tried it as early as 11 years old!

Of course parents were worried a lot about this. They weren't familiar with the idea and afraid their children would just sleep around. The institution of marriage wasn't really hurt in the end, but a significant portion of people who married in the 50s later admitted they had done more than hug and kiss potential partners before finally settling down. A study that proves this is the 20-year Kelly Longitudinal study.

So no, "Netflix and chill" isn't exactly new

Labor of Love Review

If anything, *Labor of Love* makes me reminisce of the "good old times." Sometimes I feel like I was born too late. Courtship, chivalry, I wish these came more natural to us. You're an outsider when you practice them. In fact, you're often laughed at. But it doesn't matter. I believe in a world where we treat each other nicely and with respect, so that's what I'm gonna do.

Love people, use things. Not the other way around.

[Read full summary on Blinkist >>](#)

[Free Preview >>](#)

[Learn more about the author >>](#)

What else can you learn from the blinks?

- How gay people communicated their sexual preferences amongst each other when being gay would land you in prison
- Why dating for black women was a huge challenge in the 1900s
- What a “rent party” is
- The number one love trend of the 60s
- How many male American students had a subscription to Playboy in the 70s
- Which disease put a big damper on casual sex in the 80s and 90s, but ultimately led to better communication about sex worldwide

Who would I recommend the Labor Of Love summary to?

The 15 year old who feels lonely and dissatisfied with all the texting and online dating of his generation, the 32 year old model, who's sick of being treated as a sex object, and anyone who hasn't found their partner for life just yet.