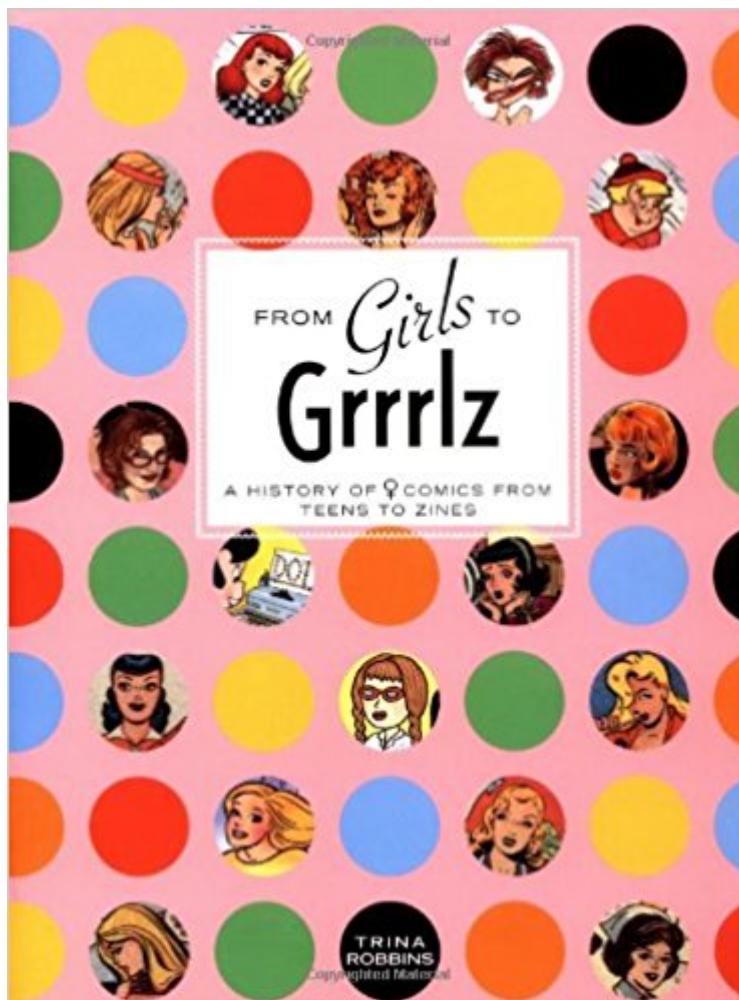


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# From Girls To Grrlz : A History Of Women's Comics From Teens To Zines



## Synopsis

Boys aren't the only ones who read comics—girls do too! From Betty and Veronica to Slutburger and Art Babe, Girls to Grrrlz explores the amazing but true history of girl comics. Pop culture fans will delight in author Trina Robbins' chronological commentary (with attitude) on the authors, artists, trends, and sassy, brassy characters featured in comic books for the last half-century. Meet the bubble-headed bombshells of the '40s, the lovelorn ladies of the '50s, the wimmin libbers of the '70s, and the grrrowling grrrlz of today. Her commentary is paired with a ton of rare comic book art pulled from the best girl comics published since World War II. Bridging the gap between Ms. and Sassy, between Miss America and Naomi Wolf, From Girls to Grrrlz reminds us how comic book characters humorously—and critically—reflect our changing culture.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This collection is in many ways an indispensable history of women in comics since the 1940s. Author Trina Robbins used to hang out in comic book shops with her boyfriend, waiting impatiently, assuming that comics was essentially a boy's medium. Looking closer, Robbins realized there was a hidden history within the comic book world, one that reflected cultural shifts in ideas about women—if you look at how women are drawn, you learn a lot about how women are imagined. Robbins edited the first all-women comic book, *It Ain't Me, Babe*, and her insider knowledge is clearly encyclopedic. Before the grrrl comics like Ellen Forney's *Tomato* or Jessica Abel's *ArtBabe*, there was 1943's *Girl's Life*, narrated by a cartoon teenager named Patsy Walker who wants nothing more than to

become a beautiful movie star. Then there are Betty and Veronica with their impossible breasts, and Wimmin's comics of the early '70s, in which the drawings pulse with angry life, druggy and hopeful. From Girls to Grrrlz occasionally suffers from tunnel vision--analysis is not Robbins's strength. She's so immersed in the world she's documenting, she's never objective about it; she never rises out of the cartoon world for a feminist discussion of what it means for women to start drawing themselves, to start telling their own stories via this boy-dominated medium. Nevertheless, it is a well-organized, beautifully presented tribute to women as creators and characters. The full-page reproduction of "The Further Fattening Adventures of Pudge, Girl Blimp" is by itself worth the price of admission.

--Emily White

At mid-century, female-targeted teen comic series like Archie, My Date and Lovers' Lane dominated the fledgling comic-books market. By the late '50s, macho-fantasy superheroes had taken over, and women's comics were pushed to the margins, much to the detriment of the industry. (Robbins estimates that comics were read by 90% of the population in the 1940s; today it's less than 1%). As the editor in the late '60s of the first women-artists-only comic, *It Ain't Me, Babe*, and as a member of the team that recently produced a Barbie comic-book series (meant to bring back mainstream comics for girls), Robbins is a uniquely qualified tour guide through the tangled history of women's comics, from the squeaky-clean, lindy-hopping antics of Betty and Veronica to the raw mayhem of "Hothead Paisan, Homicidal Lesbian Terrorist." In segueing from mainstream comics to underground comix, this history grows schizoid. In the first half, Robbins offers a distanced, if informative, third-person account of early characters and genres; in the second half, she becomes a character in the story, offering an admirably humble, sometimes even self-critical, first-person account of a scene she helped create. With 150 color and 30 b&w reproductions of panels that are by turns kitschy, acidly funny and confrontational, this lavishly illustrated volume reveals the forces that have shaped contemporary comics and the pleasures they offer, be they aimed at girls or grrrlz.

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Robbins does a fantastic job of revealing the history of women's comics and the role of women in comics throughout the twentieth century. Her research is well rounded and goes in depth, pointing out how society and comics coincided. This book was very helpful for a research paper that I wrote, but it is also very interesting and insightful regardless of whether you use it as a resource or just for a good read!

Trina Robbins is the source to go to for women who made comics in the 60s. I bought this for a research project since my library didn't have it, but I'll still open it from time to time. A good read.

I've owned it before years ago and I gave it away, wanted to revisit. It's definitely not a complete anthology of comics for or by 'grrlz' but it's got a great time line. I do wish it had some on the more popular underground works from the 80's and 90's (which I have a book of anyways) and some of the mainstream characters too, why not?

This book is a great introduction to the world of "girls comics". I think some of the most fun in this book are the really backwards "girls comics" of the 50's that dealt morality on a black/white basis. It is fascinating to see the metamorphosis of the comics as they coincide with the women's movement, and the restrictions of femininity are broken. Trina Robbins is also one of the best people to write this book as she has been an illustrator for many years. One of the best selling points of this book is that it is in full color, on glossy paper. You are definitely getting your money's worth with this book. Enjoy.

Subtitled "A History of [Female] Comics from Teens to Zines", this colorful and attractive book attempts to chronologically plot the development of "girl" comics from 1941 into the '90s. Stuffed with page and cover reproductions, this is a history in which girl's consumed more comics than boys until the 1960s, ranging from preteen fare like Archie to more advanced romance and morality tale comics. In the '60s superheroes began to dominate the market, and the mainstream female comic largely faded into the background. Thus, the late '60s gave rise to "underground" women's comics scene that blossomed in conjunction with the feminist movement. Which eventually begat the full on "grrrlz" comics of the '90s. This makes for fairly quick and simple reading under Robbins' pen, although one that could use a great deal more perspective and analysis. She is more interested in documenting the names or artists, and the plotlines of various comics than she is in a broader discussion of what it all means. She does touch on it from time to time, but these are more interjections (often a little whiny in tone) than a coherent theme. As with most Chronicle books, the production (design, layout, color, quality of reproductions) is outstanding. It's a breezy overview of the subject, but hardly a comprehensive history. I also found myself wishing for information on women's comics from other countries, for comparison.

Where the comic world is oriented toward men, Robbins brings to light the females of the books in a

refreshing way. Beginning in the 1940s with the pretty and innocent young heroines like Patsy Walker and Susie Q. Smith, spanning all the way to today's hard edged grrls like Artbabe, Maggie and Hopy, a lot happened from then until today! There is a lot of obscure and interesting information scattered throughout the book, from zines to Deep Girl to Mystery Date to Strangers in Paradise, and you'll definitely come away knowing much more than you started with. A great deal of this book is Robbins' opinions and not just straight information about girls comics, which is to be expected from a seasoned author, but more information would have been nice. I was also surprised that there was no word of Dave Mack's female-centered crime drama, KABUKI. Overall, the book is highly entertaining, interesting, and a worthwhile read for any comic fan looking to see where the women were while the superheroes were out beating up Lex Luthor.

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