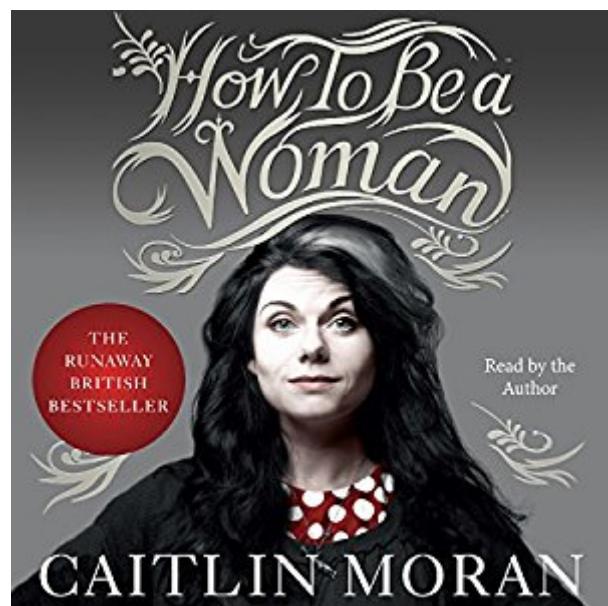


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# How To Be A Woman



## **Synopsis**

Though they have the vote and the Pill and haven't been burned as witches since 1727, life isn't exactly a stroll down the catwalk for modern women. They are beset by uncertainties and questions: Why are they supposed to get Brazilians? Why do bras hurt? Why the incessant talk about babies? And do men secretly hate them? Caitlin Moran interweaves provocative observations on women's lives with laugh-out-loud funny scenes from her own, from the riot of adolescence to her development as a writer, wife, and mother. With rapier wit, Moran slices right to the truth - whether it's about the workplace, strip clubs, love, fat, abortion, popular entertainment, or children - to jump-start a new conversation about feminism. With humor, insight, and verve, *How To Be a Woman* lays bare the reasons why female rights and empowerment are essential issues not only for women today but also for society itself.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

I read this book and laughed a lot while doing so. Then I had to face the acid test. I handed it to my wife - the professional nay-sayer, the woman who thinks that puns are not funny - and told her to open it at random and start reading. I expected to have it back within seconds with a dismissive remark, but instead she started reading it, chuckling occasionally, and when she turned the page she put her fingers under the next page, the quicker to read it. I asked her what the chuckles were for, but she didn't answer and kept on reading. Then she laughed so hard she nearly fell off the chair. She looked at me and said, "She's good." I said "I've finished it, you can read it," but she

insisted that I write my review first. That makes sense, considering that she has a bunch of friends that she passes on books to that she thinks are important (books, that is). So here it is. And the only thing I can say I said in the review title - Buy it. It's the funniest book I've read this year, and probably the last year as well. Billed as a "feminist" book, by American standards it is not academic enough and way too funny, yet it addresses some of the major issues women have like what to name your sexual parts, your pubic hair and so on. There's also a great deal of stuff on how women are sucked up into the vortex of buying clothes and high heels, having Brazilian waxes, and plenty more. The book is a vague memoir of life since she was thirteen, living in close-to-poverty, yet she managed to win a national newspaper essay competition and get on the staff of the prestigious Melody Maker Brit-pop rag in just the next three years. She also started her career as a national newspaper columnist (most of which was spent in the London Times) and hosted some TV shows.

I AM A STRIDENT FEMINIST! There, I said it, as the author instructed. But it's true, and I have been, for as long as I can remember knowing what that even meant. And I have to say, this is the first "feminist book" that actually made me feel hopeful and happy and glad to be a woman. Others (such as "Crazy Salad Plus Nine" by the wonderful Nora Ephron) just made me angry - because so little has changed for women. We're still - 30+ years after she wrote it - marginalized and "different". "How to Be a Woman" explains this 'difference' in a no-nonsense and hilarious way. For example, in the chapter titled "I Encounter Some Sexism!", the author says, "We are, physically, the weaker sex. We're not as good at hefting stones, killing mammoths, and rowing boats. In addition, sex often had the added complication of getting us pregnant and leaving us feeling 'too fat' to lead an army into India." The author honestly and unflinchingly looks at many topics that plaque women: ~what happens when puberty hits (the periods! the hair growth!) ~the 'thin' vs 'fat' issue (and how the term "fat" is used as a curse and a slur) ~sexism (in the workplace and out) ~falling in love, getting married, and having kids (why you should, and why you shouldn't) ~abortion ~the "maintenance" we have to do on ourselves (waxes, etc.) ~and getting older And it's all presented in an uplifting, positive, honest, and hilarious way. I did NOT want this book to end. And I want to give copies to everyone important in my life. A few notes - as other reviewers have stated, there is all kinds of crude language as well as mentions of drug and alcohol use, none of which bothered me personally, but... this is, obviously, not for everyone...

Caitlin Moran wants to argue in favour of feminism (or at least her take on it), help young women to learn how to be a woman (often learning from Moran's own mistakes), and to introduce humour and

satire into the mix. Moran was 35 years old when she wrote this book, at a stage in her life when she had overcome the insecurities of adolescence and the booze-fuelled soul searching of her twenties, but still young enough to empathise with young women undergoing those rites of passage. The first ten chapters cover the transition through puberty and teenage to the stage of being a 'grown up'. She deals with the onset of menstruation, the discovery of masturbation, the anguish of dealing with the physical changes as one heads towards adulthood, and how to deal with relationships. In the fourth chapter she introduces feminism and says that all women should identify as feminist. But there is a good deal of confusion about what this means. At one point she says men should be feminists too, but then says that to be a feminist you need to have a vagina and want to be in charge of it. It's a nice sound bite, but what does it really mean? The question is ignored as we skip to another topic. In a later chapter she says that sexism has to be re-framed as behaviour that separates people into 'winners' and 'losers', pointing out that women are usually seen as 'losers'. To challenge sexism we have to ask: is this behaviour polite? If it's not, then it's sexist and we should reject it. Frankly I found this silly. If we were all just polite to each other, sexism would disappear? The class system in Britain thrives on an ethic of 'politeness' and uses this to thwart challenges to the status quo. Is this what Moran really wants?

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