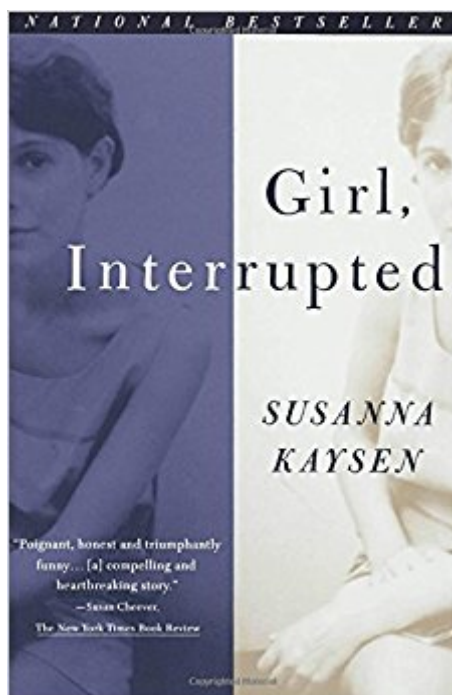


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Girl, Interrupted



Synopsis

In 1967, after a session with a psychiatrist she'd never seen before, eighteen-year-old Susanna Kaysen was put in a taxi and sent to McLean Hospital. She spent most of the next two years in the ward for teenage girls in a psychiatric hospital as renowned for its famous clientele— "Sylvia Plath, Robert Lowell, James Taylor, and Ray Charles"—as for its progressive methods of treating those who could afford its sanctuary. Kaysen's memoir encompasses horror and razor-edged perception while providing vivid portraits of her fellow patients and their keepers. It is a brilliant evocation of a "parallel universe" set within the kaleidoscopically shifting landscape of the late sixties. *Girl, Interrupted* is a clear-sighted, unflinching document that gives lasting and specific dimension to our definitions of sane and insane, mental illness and recovery.

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Customer Reviews

When reality got "too dense" for 18-year-old Susanna Kaysen, she was hospitalized. It was 1967, and reality was too dense for many people. But few who are labeled mad and locked up for refusing to stick to an agreed-upon reality possess Kaysen's lucidity in sorting out a maelstrom of contrary perceptions. Her observations about hospital life are deftly rendered; often darkly funny. Her clarity about the complex province of brain and mind, of neuro-chemical activity and something more, make this book of brief essays an exquisite challenge to conventional thinking about what is normal and what is deviant.

Kaysen's startling account of her two-year stay at a Boston psychiatric hospital 25 years ago was an

eight-week PW bestseller. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Girl, Interrupted written by Susanna Kaysen is about the author's life as a young, ambitious girl in the 1960's who gets admitted into the women's ward of a psychiatric hospital in Massachusetts. Observantly, Kaysen tells the story of her two-year-long stay at the hospital through multiple vague vignettes. She describes another patient named Lisa, who is a proud sociopath, and how her unpredictable personality was a prime source of entertainment for the other women in the ward. Another one of her 'friends' at the hospital is her room mate, who also suffers from depression, named Georgina. Georgina is an ultimately relaxed character and, on the surface, seems pretty normal, but her instability emerges later in the story. For most of the book, Kaysen refuses to accept the fact that she is in the ward because the psychiatrist that admitted her only saw her for 20 minutes and diagnosed her with Borderline Personality Disorder. In one vignette, she recollects her suicide attempt, in which she took 50 baby aspirin and passed out at a grocery store, saying, "It was only part of myself I wanted to kill: the part that wanted to kill herself, that dragged me into the suicide debate" (37). This showcases her unhappiness with only parts of herself and her underlying instability, which seems to be a very important theme throughout the novel. One important event is when Kaysen is released into the world and is forced to participate in life. She struggles with finding a job because of her past and reluctantly accepts an old friend's marriage proposal. Personally, I thoroughly enjoyed this book and found it very insightful. It showcased the struggles of womanhood in the late 1960's, her endless turmoil with her mental state, and her attempts to define the line between sanity and insanity. Throughout the book, her and the other women in the ward frequently watch television and are very engaged in the many civil rights movements going on in that time period. Even after Kaysen leaves the hospital, she struggles with finding a job because of her intolerance with the unfair roles of women in the workplace. Having left the hospital and created a life for herself, she decides to research the disease the doctors claimed she had. She understands some of the parts of the diagnosis; cutting herself and impulsive activities, but she comes to the realization that it is a generalization, which further brings up the problem with the blurry line between sanity and insanity. Her efforts to determine sanity are very relevant, even in modern society, because mental illness is a very real thing and the course of treatment is crucial to a person's development. I would definitely recommend this book to others because of its dark humor and reflective plot.

The main character in *Girl, Interrupted* is Susanna Kaysen. This is a true story about a teenage girl

who is struggling with depression and attempted suicide. After an appointment with her doctor, he decided the best for Kaysen would be to put her in a mental hospital. At the hospital, she would be treated with medication and therapy like all the other kids. She befriends many people her age in the hospital which helps her illness. She also gets proposed to towards the end of the book and has to decide what she really wants. The conflict in this book is Kaysen struggling with her depression and trying to recover over her illness. I was fond of the book overall. Some parts of it are kind of confusing though, like what "checks" are. Kaysen doesn't explain things very thoroughly. Also, the book doesn't talk about before her depression. For example, how she became depressed or what her life was like before. It doesn't talk about any of these things. However there were some things that I enjoyed about it. I liked the conversations between characters because it felt realistic and I felt as if I was in the story. For example, like when Lisa and the nurses would argue about some little thing. I would recommend this book because it gives a different perspective into how depression and mental hospitals are like. It makes people realize how hard it is to go through something like that.

I just finished reading this book. I started reading it before I went to sleep and could not put it down! I stayed up all night long and into the dawn just to keep reading!!! This book is so beautifully written. At times it is casually poetic. It is an account of one 18 year old young womyn's memoirs of her two year stay in a mental hospital in 1967. The author, Susanna Kaysen, offers the reader rich, vivid characters and surroundings laced with humor. Not even once did I find this book sad. I found it funny more often than not, and insightful, pithy and so, so very true! I have spent the evening talking about it with family and friends, begging them to give it a read. Now I'm begging YOU! YOU SIMPLY MUST READ THIS ELOQUENT, FUNNY, CHARMING, WISE BOOK! The insights that are in here are worth hours of pondering. I love the relationships between the young womyn in the ward. She depicts them so well I can see them clearly still in my mind's eye, sitting on yellow vinyl chairs, folding paper flowers ~ Lisa cutting to the heart of any going's on with her twisted humorous, yet uncanny, straight-to-the-heart-of-the-matter insights. This book shows you both the dark and light side of living in a mental institution... and all the questions about culture and existence in between. Loved this book and can't wait to start reading it again! Even more intriguing than the film... and much more insightful.

Unlike the dramatic (and wonderful) narrative movie of the same title, Susanna Kaysen's book is a collection of little vignettes sprinkled with her intelligent self-examination and philosophical musings.

It can be read in small chunks, each of which is thought-provoking. I particularly appreciated her characterizations of the therapists, who weren't any saner than Ms. Kaysen (and that's perfectly realistic given that a significant percentage of people enter the study of psychiatry/psychology for a better understanding of their own maladjustments.) I wish this book was about twice as long, because I read it in a single short sitting and found myself wanting more. Oh, and as to the diagnosis of "borderline personality - recovered," I shared that diagnosis and don't understand it any better than Ms. Kaysen and perhaps her therapists do. I think it represents the intelligent, sensitive person who questions the world around her and finds it wanting.

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