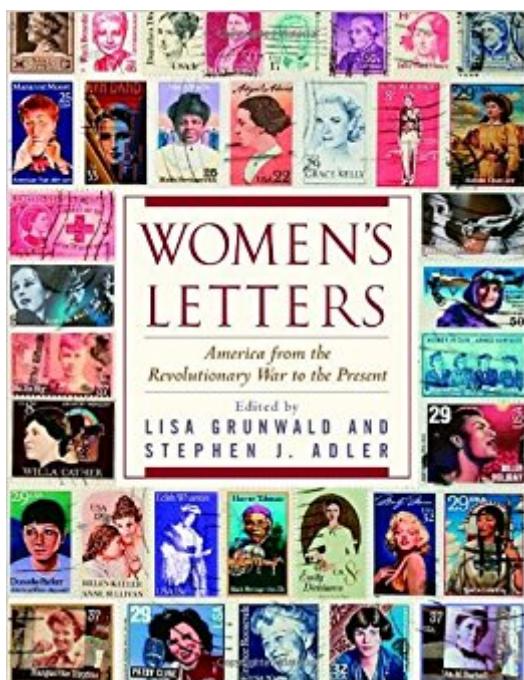


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Women's Letters: America From The Revolutionary War To The Present



Synopsis

Historical events of the last three centuries come alive through these women's singular correspondences—often their only form of public expression. In 1775, Rachel Revere tries to send financial aid to her husband, Paul, in a note that is confiscated by the British; First Lady Dolley Madison tells her sister about rescuing George Washington's portrait during the War of 1812; one week after JFK's assassination, Jacqueline Kennedy pens a heartfelt letter to Nikita Khrushchev; and on September 12, 2001, a schoolgirl writes a note of thanks to a New York City firefighter, asking him, "Were you afraid?" The letters gathered here also offer fresh insight into the personal milestones in women's lives. Here is a mid-nineteenth-century missionary describing a mastectomy performed without anesthesia; Marilyn Monroe asking her doctor to spare her ovaries in a handwritten note she taped to her stomach before appendix surgery; an eighteen-year-old telling her mother about her decision to have an abortion the year after *Roe v. Wade*; and a woman writing to her parents and in-laws about adopting a Chinese baby. With more than 400 letters and over 100 stunning photographs, *Women's Letters* is a work of astonishing breadth and scope, and a remarkable testament to the women who lived and made history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In *Letters of the Century*, Grunwald and Adler offered an epistolary romp through American life in the 20th century. Now the husband-and-wife duo turn their considerable talents to the letters of

American women. Some of the letters capture grand historical events—e.g., Abigail Adams gushing to husband John about a July 1776 public reading of the Declaration of Independence. At the other end of the timeline are a handful of letters written on or shortly after 9/11. But many letters dwell on the everyday—sickness, loneliness, childrearing. Some of the letters are by obscure women, and some—such as a February 1861 note from "A Lady" warning Abraham Lincoln of a rumored assassination plot—are anonymous. As the editors note, for most of our history, "women simply had no public forum.... Letters... were among their only outlets for recording what they saw, and how they felt...." This is a delightful collection of belles lettres in the most literal sense of the term, and a worthy successor to the editors' previous volume. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Adult/High School—This collection of more than 400 entries begins with a letter written by Abigail Grant, accusing her husband of cowardice in battle, and ends with an e-mail by Wall Street Journal correspondent Farnaz Fassihi on the stark state of affairs in war-torn Iraq. In between, a wide variety of compelling subjects is covered. The letter Amelia Earhart presented to her husband on their wedding day detailing her terms for the marriage is included as are the send-a-dime chain letter sent more than a billion times during the Depression and a letter addressed to Michael Powell, head of the Federal Communications Commission, complaining about the winner of Fox Network's 2003 American Idol competition. The book is divided by time period, and each section is illustrated with black-and-white graphics representative of the age. The letters are accompanied by information about the topics included, biographical details about the author and the recipient, and other interesting facts.—Debra Shumate, Bull Run Regional Library, Manassas, VA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

great item, fast shipping

What a fantastic collection of historical letters!

An amazing book. These letters provide a true snapshot of life from our country's beginning to 9-11. Even better these snapshots are from a woman's point of view, something that has often been overlooked. It's obvious that we American women come from hardy stock. This would be an interesting book for most men to read as well!!!

My daughter's American history class in college was presented only through letters written about the era, and I was envious of her reading "live" history at her age. Now I have it, and from the unique perspective of women. The book is appropriate for both genders, but girls and women of all ages in particular will be moved in ways textbooks can never do. The editors have done a great job in the variety of walks of life and experiences. It inspires me to write my own perspective for my grandchildren.

As described

I bought this book for my mother, who enjoys it very much. Its easy reading, but powerful, insightful, and uplifting. Highly recommended.

I was very happy to receive this book. I wanted to give it for a Mother's Day gift. It was just the right thing because it is very educational. She loved it.JQ

Lisa Grunwald and Stephen J. Adler, the powerhouse couple behind LETTERS OF THE CENTURY --- and now WOMEN'S LETTERS --- make history both accessible and captivating, presenting it in the format of correspondences written throughout our nation's history. With this epistolary approach Grunwald and Adler illuminate the events that molded and defined America.LETTERS OF THE CENTURY looked at the writings of men and women over the course of a century. With WOMEN'S LETTERS, the editors have narrowed their focus and broadened their time frame, but by no means have they restricted their scope. Indeed, by presenting letters written solely by women --- to their sisters, their husbands, their friends and lovers --- Grunwald and Adler have only heightened the impact of their detailed and meticulous presentation of history.In school we are forced to memorize the "dates, monarchs, generals and macro issues" and thus we associate history with a kind of teeth-grinding tedium and exam-related anxiety. History can be overwhelming and alienating --- much of what we learn about the rise and fall of civilizations, the birth and growth of nations, felt utterly separate and un-relatable when we were in school, and that feeling of being divided from our nation's past has endured. By drawing us into the minutiae, WOMEN'S LETTERS renders the "macro issues" both lucid and graspable. There is something deeply revelatory and ultimately reassuring about this conception of a past.Beginning in 1775 and ending in 2005, the letters collected in this volume deal with themes that are vastly different and yet transcendent. They are snapshots of the lives of women from a wide range of educations, experiences, racial and economic

backgrounds. From Martha Washington to Anais Nin to Betty Freidan, these letters reveal much about women we have heard about, women we thought we knew, and women whose voices resound and defy their obscurity. Every one of these women has something to say. The letters bring them together, revealing the themes that run parallel in their lives. Loneliness, anger, loss, birth, death --- all these concepts pulse through the 760 pages of *WOMEN'S LETTERS*, and they are still deeply relevant today. This rich stew of transcendent ideas and inevitable truths in the lives of women serves both to link the singular letter writers revealed within these pages and establish a common ground with each individual reader. We all will find something that resonates deep within us in these pages --- some sentiment that sings. Those who loathe the study of history with facts and data will appreciate this work. It reminded this reviewer of a line from the historical fiction novelist Jacqueline Winspear, who said, "I have always been far more interested in social history, the details of how ordinary people lived, how they were impacted by the events of the time...I could easily sleep through a whole lesson on the parliamentary acts of Elizabeth I, but tell me that her teeth were completely black and I'm listening." It is the minute details, the very specific individual experience, that these letters portray. The resulting work is authoritative, but not textbook. *WOMEN'S LETTERS* is not a "women's book" and it should not be thought of as such. Indeed it is crucially important for men to dip into these pages as well and glimpse lives that unfolded in drawing rooms, bedrooms, kitchens and behind closed doors. Men and women equally will find inspiration in the words of these women that for so long went unheard. The elocution and attention to detail, form and grace that typify so many of the letters written before the mid-20th century bespeak the very lack of those qualities in contemporary correspondence. As technical advancements propel us to a kind of hyper-efficiency, we have lost the need to devote time and craft to communication. The actual implications of the phrase "letter-writing is a lost art" can only be fully examined when we are aware just how artful the creation of a letter can be. *WOMEN'S LETTERS* demands that its readers question just what we have given up in exchange for that efficiency. And when readers do flip through the last 80 or so pages, dated 1980-2005, they will be jarred not just by the dominating artlessness that has overtaken the form, but by the relative loss of humanity these letters depict. Where the letters of the preceding pages established humanity on a grand scale, with a few notable exceptions, these last pages of letters searingly depict a growing trend of inhumanity. From the plaintive words of Nicole Brown Simpson writing to her husband to the rage-fueled preaching of an abortion clinic bomber writing to the Pensacola News, there is something deeply unsettling about such a stark display of human frailty. These last few pages beg the question: What have we, as a nation and as a people, lost as we have stopped writing? The question may sound dire, but the

conversation that can follow it is a vital one. It is a multi-ethnic, multi-gendered, all-encompassing conversation that should be had among parents and children, among friends and across the dinner table. Grunwald and Adler have tapped a well-spring of potential dialogue and their collection is a mighty conversation-starter. And despite its physical and intellectual weight, it is a breathtakingly easy read. A book that is meant to be dipped into, at random perhaps, savored for an hour, an afternoon, alone or read aloud --- it demands no rigorous examination; the potency of the words on the page are not dependent on the fashion by which they are read. WOMEN'S LETTERS does more than just reveal the blackened teeth; it looks deep under the skin and into the minds of the women who quietly --- and not so quietly --- shaped and were shaped by our nation's history. --- Reviewed by Jennifer Krieger

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