

Chapter 1 : Whose Feminism Is It Anyway? Meg Wolitzer's "The Female Persuasion" - Los Angeles

*While THE FEMALE PERSUASION alternates between the lives of four characters, the main focus is on a young adult, Greer about to graduate high school, her relationship with her boyfriend, lesbian best friend, unusual parents and an older woman who turns out to be her mentor.*

It can skew our judgment, luring us into moral equivocation and thin justifications for what we do in pursuit of our goals. It can also make us arrogant, dismissive of those we regard as aiming lower and striving less than we do. In her latest novel, *The Female Persuasion*, Meg Wolitzer looks at personal ambition in the context of social activism and feminist identity. The book critiques the assumption that feminism is defined only by organized public acts and mobilized demonstrations and not by the quiet, humble, everyday acts of individuals. These themes are confidently articulated within the framework of a classic coming-of-age story: Greer idolizes Faith and sees in her the traits "nurturing, attentive, sophisticated, and socially engaged" she always wished of her hippie parents, who spend their days smoking pot and selling protein bars from their home. She quietly resents them and grabs onto Faith as a role model and provider of the emotional support and encouragement that she craves. That you could work toward something important, and there would be this person there who actually took an interest in you, which was the best feeling. Though revered for her beneficence, Faith is not always kindhearted. She can be calculating in her deft manipulation of those who would stand in her way. She exerts control by conveying softness, a caring, emotional intimacy that contrasts with the way men wield power: The light touch of this powerful woman was profound. So too was her choice to use her power in this tender way. When women got into positions of power, they calibrated and recalibrated tenderness and strength, modulating and correcting. It is a moment freighted with significance, the point when Greer comes into her own and establishes the ethical boundaries that will shape her future. Feminism is not a monolithic movement. It takes on many shades, and Wolitzer rejects the notion that effecting social change necessarily means joining an organized movement or participating in demonstrations and public forums. Instead, she privileges the quiet and quotidian "those unremarkable, private acts that have a direct, positive impact on individual lives. This is the most resonant and powerful theme of the novel, and Wolitzer illustrates it through the experiences of the two people closest to Greer: Cory abandons a promising consulting career to move home and take care of his mother following a family tragedy. Greer cannot understand his decision. It seems to her that he has given up on life, and she has contempt for the choice he has made. He moves back in with his mother and takes care of her. Oh, and he cleans his own house, and the ones she used to clean. But I feel like Cory is kind of a big feminist, right? In college, it was Zee who introduced Greer to the feminist movement, and for a time Zee, too, aspired to work for Faith. Instead, Zee takes a job as a high school teacher in a rough neighborhood, a position that serves as her entry to a career counseling trauma survivors: By contrast, the foundation carries out its mandate to organize events, but these too often serve only to generate more events or produce diffuse results that fall short of their intention. In this way, the novel emphasizes that the power to make positive change rests not with a celebrity but in the unassuming, collective acts of many. Everyone can jump in. The need for public recognition, accolades, and the smug affirmation of group endeavor crippled her ability to find purpose and pursue fulfilling work. Over time Greer discovers how to use her ambition as a tool in shaping her identity rather than allowing it to control who she becomes. The timing of *The Female Persuasion* is favorable since it coincides with our national discussion about sexual harassment, equal pay, and female empowerment "a dialogue reignited by the MeToo movement. In less capable hands, a novel about feminism could be a caricature, either polemical or anodyne. It is a work of imagination and intelligence that deserves a wide readership. Ours is a pivotal time in the progression of feminism, and with this engaging and perceptive novel Wolitzer reminds us of the fraught contexts and assumptions that weight the attainment and execution of female leadership.

Chapter 2 : The Female Persuasion by Meg Wolitzer – review | Books | The Guardian

*THE FEMALE PERSUASION touches on many timely issues--sexual identity and feminism, color and economics in feminism, workplace harassment, ambition versus values, the hollowness of some philanthropic organizations--and concludes with a chapter about the Women's March of and the horrors of Trump without ever mentioning by name the monster in the White House.*

Praise Praise for *The Interestings*: With this book [Wolitzer] has surpassed herself. But the very human moments in her work hit you harder than the big ideas. Might every privileged schoolchild have a bright future in dance or theater or glass blowing? The novel is thick and thickly populated. And yet Wolitzer is brilliant at keeping the reader close by her side as she takes her story back and forth across time, in and out of multiple lives, and into the tangle of countless continuing, sometimes compromising, conversations. Through well-tuned drama and compassionate humor, Wolitzer chronicles the living organism that is friendship, and arcs it over the course of more than thirty years. Greer, a freshman then at this undistinguished school in southern Connecticut, was selectively and furiously shy. She could give answers easily, but rarely opinions. So what was it about her that Faith Frank recognized and liked? But plenty of college girls had hair partially dipped the colors of frozen and spun treats found at county fairs. Or maybe Faith was automatically generous and attentive around young people who were uncomfortable in the world. But what she knew for sure, eventually, was that meeting Faith Frank was the thrilling beginning of everything. It would be a very long time before the unspeakable end. She had been at college for seven weeks before Faith appeared. Much of that time, that excruciating buildup, had been spent absorbed in her own unhappiness, practically curating it. It soon became an ambient roar, as if there were a generator somewhere deep in the building. The class of was starting college in a time of supposed coed assertiveness—a time of female soccer stars and condoms zipped confidently inside the pocket of a purse, the ring shape pressing itself into the wrapper like a gravestone rubbing. She watched the girls standing with heads tilted and elbows jutting, pushing in earrings, and the boys aerosolizing themselves with a body spray called Stadium, which seemed to be half pine sap, half A. Then, overstimulated, they all fled the dorm and spread out across campus, heading toward various darkish parties that vibrated with identically shattering bass. There was a boy from Iran who appeared very sad, his eyelashes clustered together in little wet starbursts. The family image swept across the computer screen and gently bounced against one side, before slowly heading back. How long would he watch his bouncing family? And besides that, he was also pining for his family. She knew what it was like to miss someone, for she missed Cory so continually and pressingly that the feeling was like its own shattering bass vibrating through her, and he was only miles away at Princeton, not across the world. The girl accepted their responses with a grim weariness, and then for lack of anything else to do she sat down too. Curling through the porous walls came the smell of dairy butter plus tertiary butylhydroquinone, seductive but inadequate to the task of cheering anyone up. Moments later this was followed by the source of the smell, a big plastic tub of popcorn conveyed by a girl in a robe and slippers. Apparently, Greer thought, these are going to be my people, tonight and perhaps every weekend night. Greer was about to sit down and attempt a conversation; they could tell one another about themselves, how bleak they felt. She would stay in this lounge, even though Cory had encouraged her earlier on Skype not to stay in tonight, but to go out to a party or some sort of campus event. Books were an antidepressant, a powerful SSRI. What she responded to most powerfully, sometimes even physically, were novels. Once Greer read *Anna Karenina* for such a long, unbroken bout that her eyes grew strained and bloodshot, and she had to lie in bed with a washcloth over them as if she herself were a literary heroine from the past. Novels had accompanied her throughout her childhood, that period of protracted isolation, and they would probably do so during whatever lay ahead in adulthood. Regardless of how bad it got at Ryland, she knew that at least she would be able to read there, because this was college, and reading was what you did. But tonight, books were unsexy, and so they remained untouched, ignored. Tonight college was only about partying, or sitting in a bland dormitory lounge, bookless and self-punishing. Bitterness, she knew, could give you an edge. Unlike pure unhappiness, bitterness had a taste. This display of bitterness

would be for no one but herself. He had gotten dressed in a good sweater and gone out to a party. Give me two more seconds. I just have to deal with this. A girl walked by the room and stopped; later on she admitted that she had done this more out of kindness than interest. She resembled a slender, sexy boy, perfectly made, with a Joan of Arc aesthetic that immediately read as gay. The girl with the popcorn just kept eating, and the girl in distress was now debating with someone on her cell phone about whether or not she should go to Health Services. In the dim hall, they pushed through the heavy fire doors. Only when Greer was outside in the wind, feeling it ripple along the thin material of her shirt, did she remember she was coatless. Zee led them to Spanish House, a freestanding clapboard building on the edge of campus. For years it had been enough to be the intelligent one. All that had meant, in the beginning, was that you could answer the kinds of questions that your teachers asked. Facts appeared before her, and then she simply articulated them, and in this way she became known as the smartest one in her class. How Zee, a freshman, knew about these parties was unclear; there had been no mention of them in the Ryland Weekly Blast. The air in the studio was sharp with turpentine, which almost served as a sexual accelerant, for the art students, all upperclassmen, seemed unusually attracted to one another. The art students were into one another and one another only. It was as if Greer and Zee had stumbled upon a subculture in the clearing of a forest. She and Zee slipped away not long after arriving, and once outside again they were almost immediately joined by another freshman who confidently and unapologetically attached herself to them. She had wound up in the art studio by mistake, she told them; she was actually looking for Theta Gamma Psi. Did she want to go to an actual frat party? She thought of Cory leaning against a wall at a party right this minute, laughing at something. She saw an array of people looking up at him—“he was the tallest person in any room”—and laughing back. Greer, Zee, and Chloe were an unlikely trio, but she had heard this was typical of social life in the first weeks of college. People who had nothing in common were briefly and emotionally joined, like the members of a jury or the survivors of a plane crash. The Ryland website showed a few nominal photos of students in goggles doing something with a torch in a laboratory, or squinting over a whiteboard jammed with calculations, but the rest of the photos were social, cornball: When nighttime fell, though, the college came into its own. Their destination tonight was a large, corroding frat house thundering with sound. Greek life, the college catalogues had called this. The Female Persuasion is about the relationship between a young woman and her mentor. What does Greer learn from Faith, and vice versa? In what ways do Greer and Faith surprise or disappoint each other? Have you ever had someone come into your life and change it forever? Greer and Cory are high school sweethearts, but their romance is much deeper than their age might suggest. How do the social settings of their hometown and their families turn them into the couple that they are? Cory is entirely consumed by grief after a family tragedy. Is she right to give him space? Is he right to push her away? Could this moment in their relationship have gone any other way? Have their backgrounds influenced the people they have grown up to be, or the decisions they make, or the ambitions they follow? What do their generational differences show about the nature of progress? Faith Frank and Emmett Schrader have a long and complicated history. Do you judge Faith for accepting his funding? At the end of the novel, Greer is forced to make a difficult decision about the Ecuador project. Do you think she makes the right choice? Would Faith have made the same choice if their roles were reversed? By the end of the book, did you still love Faith Frank the way Greer did, despite her flaws, or had your opinion changed? Wolitzer suggests that there are certain key people, events, and relationships that change the course of our lives. Obviously, Faith does this for Greer. Which other relationships might illustrate this kind of power?

**Chapter 3 : THE FEMALE PERSUASION by Meg Wolitzer | Kirkus Reviews**

*In 'The Female Persuasion, Meg Wolitzer looks at feminism and college sexual misconduct and writes a page-turner.*

But do we need another pep talk for white middle-class women? If novels can be both mirrors and windows, this one was the former. Her interest arose only recently, after she was groped by a predatory frat guy at a party, and she helped spearhead an unsuccessful campaign to get him kicked out. Still, Faith, who founded an earnest feminist magazine and regularly appeared on TV, takes an inexplicable interest in Greer. As I read, I related to Greer Kadetsky so hard that it was both exhilarating and somewhat embarrassing. We fell in love with Ultimate-Frisbee-playing Princeton boys from immigrant families, and those romances fell apart. We moved to Brooklyn. We worried about our privileges, our failings, the ways we were letting people down. People with power saw potential in us, gave us opportunities. As 30 approached, we got married and decided to start families. I felt so seen by the book that I started to feel something else: Of course I loved the book. And the eminently Instagrammable, eminently relatable Female Persuasion could not have been more precisely calibrated to appeal to us. Wolitzer has a mastery over the realist novel form that alone makes her books worth reading. But the book makes broader claims than that. The expansive scope of The Female Persuasion is right there in the title: In that, The Female Persuasion falters. That it should be grittier, less beholden to existing institutions, more suspicious of corporate messaging and GirlBoss swag, more inclusive, not just centered around and represented by cis white women especially high-achieving, well-packaged white women but women of color, LGBTQ women and nonbinary people, poor women, disabled women. The Female Persuasion covers almost half a century, two generations and a small ensemble of focal characters in order to build out a detailed portrait of feminist activism through the decades. Greer, the protagonist, is a prime example, but so is Faith, her feminist mentor, and Zee, her college bestie, who is queer. Greer, who expected the two of them would be movers and shakers in New York City after graduation, is at first supportive, then baffled, when Princeton-educated Cory gives up lucrative career opportunities to scrub toilets and cook for his mom. Showing up for loved ones matters more than making bank; caring for family is more important than having an impressive career. Zee, who went to college with dreams of becoming a feminist agitator, also finds herself humbled by the end of the book. These are both valuable lessons, and ones that privileged white feminists often need to learn. But Greer, whose experience is the spine of the novel, does not have to learn them, or only has to learn them secondhand. Zee stops speaking to her for a little while; she has a falling out with Faith over the charity debacle and leaves her job. But she repairs things with Zee; she finds a new, successful direction for her career. But her successes are. Throughout, Wolitzer seems aware of this critique, but the result is anticipatorily defensive rather than expansive. This critique is presented as slightly unfair; Bloomer has a diverse staff and covers diversity. I felt swaddled, as I finished the book, in reassurance that I, like Greer, am deserving and lovable despite my privilege and my fuck-ups. Greer gets married and has a baby, and, of course, writes a book, an uplifting feminist manifesto called Outside Voices that sets up camp on the bestseller lists for months. The book urges girls and women to speak loudly and unapologetically, to advocate for themselves and for women. Many women, most women, were so, so much farther outside of privilege and access than Greer Kadetsky was.

**Chapter 4 : The Female Persuasion Study Guide from LitCharts | The creators of SparkNotes**

*In The Female Persuasion, those increasingly loud voices in today's feminism — the voices of black women, Muslim women, trans women, and others — are only heard as faint echoes, and the*

**Chapter 5 : 'The Female Persuasion' Is Another Mirror For Privileged White Women Like Me | HuffPost**

*The Female Persuasion is about graduating from college and finding one's way in the world, about renegotiating youthful friendships and romantic relationships as an adult, about power and*

## Chapter 6 : The Female Persuasion by Meg Wolitzer

*The Female Persuasion examines what it means to be a feminist and a social activist in the broadest sense. Feminism is not a monolithic movement. Feminism is not a monolithic movement.*

## Chapter 7 : NPR Choice page

*At its heart, The Female Persuasion is about the flame we all believe is flickering inside of us, waiting to be seen and fanned by the right person at the right time. It's a story about the people who guide and the people who follow (and how those roles evolve over time), and the desire within all of us to be pulled into the light.*

## Chapter 8 : Nicole Kidman, Amazon Studios Team for "The Female Persuasion" " Variety

*"The Female Persuasion is the best kind of social novel" a brilliant book about relationships set against a backdrop of principles, movements and change." " Newsday "A big, fat, delicious book about feminism and the power of female mentorship." -Los Angeles Times.*

## Chapter 9 : Chicago Tribune - We are currently unavailable in your region

*"The Female Persuasion" may fall short of perfection, but it's still plenty strong enough to remind us that we can change the world, one woman at a time, even in the big terribleness.*